

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR SACRIFICE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION: A SOCIAL CULTURAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: *The reality which religious thought expresses in the life of diverse religious adherents across the world cannot be over emphasized. For instance, sacrificial rite is one of the religious dimensions that occupies a unique place in every religious tradition. This paper therefore takes up the challenge to investigate, examine and re-appraise the concept of sacrifice in order to explicate its meaning, structure, religious connotation and symbolic dimension in human behavior essentially among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Besides, the intrinsic values of sacrifice are thereby underscored as it fastens unity among those who are involved; expressing gratitude to their spiritual beings; fulfilling a vow; establishing a communion between man and the spiritual beings; averting the anger of the divinities and spirits; warding off the attack and evil machinations of enemies; purifying a person or a community when a taboo has been broken or sin committed; preventing or expelling epidemics; and strengthening the worshippers against malign influences. Furthermore, ethical principles vis-a-vis guidelines in the performance of sacrifice are equally explored. More importantly, this paper indicates that the interconnectivity of the concepts of sacrificial rites and ethical dimensions often go together, but devoid to exist except in the social context.*

KEYWORDS: Ethical Guideline, Sacrifice, Ritual, African Traditional Religion, Socio-Cultural Approach,

INTRODUCTION

Dopamu (1985) argue that ever before the Europeans found themselves in Africa, Africans had their ways of life regarding their cultures, religious beliefs and practices, medical systems and other areas of life..He equally submit that even till today when the whole of Africa has equally been infiltrated by western culture and systems, the fact remains that African age-old systems still persist enduringly (Dopamu,1985:66). In similar but different dimension Olupona (1990) opines that the nature of sacrifice cum ritual and its place in any belief system has always been a central theme of discussion among scholars, especially social scientist, ethicist and historians of religions. According to Mary Douglas, a British anthropologist, describes ritual as a *viable means of communication* (Douglas 1970:21). While another anthropologist, Victor Turner, defines sacrifice as *formal behavior prescribed for occasions not given over to technological routine that have reference to belief in mystical beings or power* (Turner1967: 19). In the context of this paper, we owe to Turner the view of sacrifice as a process and to Douglas as a form of communication. Besides, historian of religion in contrast to anthropologists, have been much more concerned with the essence of sacrifice as the repetition of primordial events and as the transformation of individual and community lives. It has also been claimed that sacrifice is *the foremost religious document of*

a primal societies. Certainly, it implies that the relationship between myth and ritual is more complex, it is not a lineal relationship which one precedes the other, and rather both are interwoven.

In corollary, it has been argued by several scholars of preliterate religion, that what is important is not the primacy of belief over sacrificial rites or action over word but that power of words that support ritual acts. Therefore, Olupona (1990) manifests that it is true within African traditional religious life that the spoken words, songs, incantations or sacred myths are made meaningful in ritual contexts (Olupona,1990:2). In view of the nature of sacrifice as identified above, this study demands to be approached from a multidisciplinary perspective. Thus, we hereby adopt a socio-cultural approach, that is, to explore the functional role of sacrifice within the context of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. This approach will provide an important insight into the meaning and essence of the ritual process; while at the same time taking cognizance of the structural context within which sacrifice functions among the Yoruba people. The religious nature of African ritual, as historians of religions have stressed, is such that: *A ritual is religious, if it carries an ultimate value, meaning, sacrality and significance for someone, that is, if it somehow functions for someone as the foundation of what is considered real and sacred* (Richard1978: 65). Nevertheless, rituals are not static occurrences, in many cases they function within a social frame of reference which Hulkrantz (1979) informs that it includes *kinship systems, political systems, and other structural forms of society*. These structures are reflected in and are models for ritual organization, ritual expressions as ritual values (Hultrantz 1979:136). In a similar but different dimension, Tamuno (1994) remarks further on the essence of sacrifice that in African belief systems there are vital agents be it visible or invisible, human or supernatural that require appeasement through sacrifice to cleanse their respective abodes of impurities attributed to acts of abomination (Tamuno,1994:27). Idowu (1996) in his own perspective, explicates sacrifice as the essence of the religion the world has ever known. It is inconceivable to have a religion without some form of sacrifice, however modified or refined it may be. He explains sacrifice as a means of maintaining an established relationship between an adherent and his object of worship. However, whatever that is offered and how it is offered depends upon the nature of the particular cult as well as the occasion of the sacrifice (Idowu 1996.119).This is because each people from each locality has different approach towards the use of sacrifice.

This paper intends investigate and examine the meaning, types, essence, nature and structure of sacrifice among African traditional adherents with particular references to the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The paper explores some of the ethical principles and guidelines for sacrifice among the Yoruba people of Nigeria with a view to re-validating the age-long intrinsic values and as well re-awakening on the efficacy of sacrifice in the modern world, but not to see it as an uncivilized and unprogressive way of life within the context of the Yoruba people of Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Human Ethical Principles

Naturally, a human person has the facilities of knowing, thinking, reasoning, deciding choosing and exercising free-will. These intellectual powers or abilities enable a person or

abilities enable a person not to act forthwith in accordance with his dominant desires. The individual does not act under blind impulses because he has capabilities for rationalization. As a result of human or intellectual capabilities, an individual can initiate, plan, execute, suspend, postpone, delay, stop, prevent or avoid an action. His human abilities enable him to choose from available alternative actions. He does not act under compulsion and coercion. It is in this context that the individual is held responsible and accountable for his actions (Dzurgba 1998:80). Thus, the individual is morally responsible and accountable for his actions, including thoughts, motives, intentions, desires, utterances, and deals.

Religious Ethics

In this section of our paper, we shall examine what is called religious ethics. Is there a distinctive religious ethics that is different from the human ethics that we have discussed above in this work? Religious ethics is not distinctive or different from human ethics. In religious ethics, the same ethical principles are used to evaluate people, actions and performance. For example, truth-telling, honesty, justice and partiality are human and nervous system in general. Therefore, everybody is sufficiently ethical in character. As a result, an irreligious man or woman can have an outstanding moral character or conduct while a religious man or woman may have a poor moral character or conduct. This is an undisputable fact known to many people. What then makes human ethical values to become religious ethical values? In the context of religion, human ethical or secular ethical values including truth-telling, honesty, justice and impartiality, become commands issued by the supernatural being. For example, God in Christian, Allah in Islam and Obatala in Yoruba Traditional Religion. The divine command makes the human ethical standards is punished directly by the divine authorities and may be punished also by a religious ethics. For example, Christian Ethics, Islamic Ethics and African Traditional Religious Ethics are mainly permeate in Nigerian society. Christian ethics appropriates the Qur'an, Islamic theology and prophetic traditions in which the saying and deeds of prophet Mohammed are recorded and referred to also as the trodden path (Ayantayo 2009:36-37). African Traditional Religion does appropriate the poly-ethic religions each of which is ethic-bound in terms of membership, scripture, theology, beliefs, worship, offences, penalties and deities. Each religion has its own code of ethics (Ayantayo 2009:20-21)

THE CONCEPTUAL ISSUES ON SACRIFICE AND ITS RELIGIOUS CONNOTATION

Meaning of the term Sacrifice from Secular Perspective

Awolalu (1981) observes that technically, the word sacrifice is a religious term, but when used in a general sense, it also has a secular meaning (Awolalu, 1981 :134). From general or secular perspective, sacrifice means forgoing for a particular cause that which is precious; denying oneself certain benefits and advantages for a particular purpose. For example, one can deny himself certain pleasure and comfort in order to be able to actualize a goal or attain knowledge. The person in question have to forgo buying costly dresses and even sell valuable belongings to provide the opportunity of achieving his aim. The person could claim that he has 'sacrificed' his comfort and pleasure to have his way. There are series of illuminating examples, during the civil war in Nigeria, the military government made appeals to Nigerians to make sacrifice by way of donating generously to the 'Armed Forces

Comfort Fund'. And, in response to this appeal, many salary earners did forgo certain percentages of their salaries. While young men volunteered to enlist in the army; some men and women joined the Red Cross to bring relief to the wounded and the sick. All these various gestures can be referred to as sacrifice. This is because since the different donors and volunteers are clearly denying themselves certain things. From the above examples, it is clear that something precious is given away for a definite purpose. Whatever the purpose may be, it is obvious that something is renounced in order that a certain end may be achieved. Whether material or spiritual, sacrifice is often costly. It may be in form of time, clothe, food, money or life which is part of self. However, Awolalu (1981) observes that this general sense of the word sacrifice, as illustrated above, has become so popular that many suppose it to be basic or core meaning of the concept, but this is not so. He argues that the secular sense of the word, as shown above, is only an extension of the core meaning or a metaphorical use of sacrifice. Although, in this metaphorical sense, sacrifice may be defined as the giving up of a thing for sake of another that is higher or more urgent. Also, it may refer to that which is given up for a cause or for something else. However, he remarks that when the Yoruba speak or think of sacrifice, it is never in this metaphorical or general sense but always in a religious sense as the paper shall try to shed more lights in our present study.

Religious Connotation of Sacrifice

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics defines sacrifice as a rite in the course of which something is forfeited or destroyed, its object being to establish relation between a source of spiritual strength and one in need of such strength, for the benefit of the latter (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics Vol.11 p.1). James (1962) defines sacrifice in terms of its purpose, according to him, sacrifice involves the destruction of a victim for the purpose of maintaining or restoring a right relationship of man to the sacred order. It may effect a bond of union with the divinity to whom it is offered or constitute a particular expiation to cover, wipe out, neutralize or carry away evil guilt contracted wittingly or unwittingly (James, 1962 :7). In one sense, sacrifice can be seen as an act of making an offering of animal or vegetable life, of food, drink or of any objects) to a deity or spiritual being. In another sense, sacrifice can be seen as something consecrated and offered to God or a divinity. In other word, an offering of any kind laid on an altar or otherwise presented to a deity or divinities for definite purposes is a sacrifice. Nevertheless, observation reveals that sacrificial practices among the Yoruba manifests that sacrifice is a religious act; that it generally takes the form of rendering something to a supernatural being ; that the practice varies from religion in details but essentially similar; and that it has various intents and purposes.

All over the world, and throughout history, whenever mankind has worshipped divine being, he encounters the practice of sacrifice. There are illuminating examples of the Babylonian sufferer who gives a lamb to the gods to ransom himself from the sin he suppose to be the cause of his suffering; the Mexican Aztec who kills a young man and offers his heart to the sun-god in order to secure the vital forces of the sun for his land; and the Moabite King *Mesha* who offers his son to his national god in order to win a victory over the attack of Israel (2kings 3:27) .All these and thousands of others are examples of the world-wide religious practice we refer to as sacrifice (Awolalu 1981:136). Such practical examples of sacrifice are not uncommon among the Yoruba, whose diviners constantly recommended *Ebo* (Sacrifice) and *Riru ebo* (Offering sacrifice),and whose Priests give guidance in the way of making the *Ebo*. Thus, when the Yoruba speak of *Ebo or Ru ebo* (Offer sacrifice),it is always in a

religious sense (Awolalu 1981:136). The Yoruba believe in the existence of the Supreme Being who is the creator of heaven and earth and in a number of divinities and spirits who are under the control and supervision of the Supreme Being. These divinities and spirits are higher and more powerful than men, they can be of great help to those who are loyal worshippers and who observe the family taboos and the ethics of the community; but can be detrimental to those who are negligent. In addition, the Yoruba believe in the existence and the power of the forces of evil sorcery and witchcraft which are believed capable of reversing man's good fortune and making life unpleasant for him (Awolalu 1981:136). In consequences of this kind of belief, sacrifice among the Yoruba has its ethical guidelines.

Types of Sacrifice

According to Olupona (1990) the categorization of sacrifice cum ritual forms in African traditional religion is highly problematic, and that even though useful typology developed in the disciplines of anthropology and history of religions that are supposed to have universal application (Olupona, 1990:3). He goes further to say that while some of these models may have universal application or heuristic values, and that they are very often not meaningful to the African situation. Not even the primal religions in general. The second option now is to look for categories within the religious traditions that will be authentic to the people being studied. However, this again presents another slightly different problem of cultural and linguistic variations in the continent. The approach in this study, from socio-cultural perspective, broadly emphasizes two categories of sacrifice among the Yoruba. These are the feasts, partaken of first by the supernatural beings and then by the community of worshippers; and those which are intended to avert calamity and atone for the offences which provoke such sacrifices (Awolalu 1981:143). The first category of sacrifice is offered in the midst of joy and jubilation, the second category is joyless and fearful. However, these two categories are sub-divided into: thanksgiving, votive, propitiatory, preventive, substitutionary and foundation sacrifice. We shall now examine each of these as observed among the Yoruba.

Thanksgiving and Communion sacrifice -*Ebo ope ati idapo*

This type of sacrifice serves as a means of expressing thanks to, and of holding communion with, the supernatural Being or the divinities. The Yoruba sacrifice of thanksgiving is almost always accompanied by feasting. The worshippers and divinity (though the latter is invisible) share a common meal. In this way, beneficial relation is established.

Votive sacrifice- *Ebo Eje*

As sacrifice is used as a means of expressing thanks to the supernatural beings, so also it is used to fulfill vows. This, in a sense, is a sort of thanksgiving sacrifice. It is a common practice among the Yoruba for devotees of some divinities to go before their divinities to pour out their minds and to promise that if their needs are met, they will give specified offerings in return. Vows could be made at any time but especially when a person is under some strain, and when the times seem troublesome and human aid is of no avail. The Yoruba believe that whatever promise is made it must be fulfilled, especially when the promise is made by man or woman before a divinity. To fail to fulfill the promise is to incur the displeasure of the divinity and to lose the benefit already received and many more.

Propitiatory sacrifice -*Ebo Etutu*

Failure of crops, famine, outbreak of plague and disease, protracted illness and sudden death or similar calamities are attributed to the anger of the gods, the machinations of evil spirits or to some ritual error or defilement committed by men. Efforts are made to locate the causes of the trouble and to remove them, calm the wrath of the divinities or spirits and win back their favour. The means employed by the Yoruba is the propitiatory sacrifice, that is, a sacrifice that is believed to be capable of propitiating the anger of the gods and spirits and of purity for individuals and the community.

Preventive sacrifice - *Ebo Ojukoribi*

It is strongly believed by the Yoruba that as sacrifice removes evils from the community or from an individual, so also does it keep off evil or misfortune. In consequence of this belief, precautionary measures are taken to prevent imminent danger and disaster. People get to know the dangers ahead by means of oracles. For example, before a man takes a wife or a woman a husband, before a person undertakes a journey or begins an enterprise, he or she consults the Oracle which gives him or her guidance as to what the future looks like, what dangers lie ahead and what can be done to change unpleasant circumstances. Once a person goes by the directive of the Oracle, it is believed, he will easily avoid getting into trouble. But when the order or the directive of the Oracle is defied, the consequences can be grave.

Substitutionary sacrifice- *Ebo Ayepinun*

This form of sacrifice has an element of propitiation as well as of prevention and substitution in the sense that something (rather than the person who should have suffered privation, discomfort or even death) is offered to propitiate a thirsty divinity or spirit who plans evil against man. The sacrifice also saves the person who offers it from premature death.

Foundation sacrifice- *Ebo Ipile*

We cannot complete this survey of the different types of sacrifice without discussing the many purposes served by the foundation sacrifice. In some respect, it is preventive while in another, it is propitiatory, and yet in another, it is thanksgiving (Awolalu, 1981 :142-159 & Idowu, 1996:124-128). It is difficult to classify foundation sacrifice under one of the categories earlier discussed.

Theoretical Framework on the Purpose of Sacrifice

There is no aimlessness in making an offering, we assert that no one ever makes a sacrifice without having a goal in view. While scholars readily agree that sacrifice is an important element in religion, they find it difficult, if not impossible, to agree on the purposes of sacrifice. E.B. Tylor(1958) says, sacrifice serves as a means of bribing the gods or of paying homage to them in the same way as men pay homage to their over-lords (Tylor, 1958 : 461). Van de Leeuw (1963) sees it as a gift to enable the receiver (god) to act as favourably as possible to those who give them gifts (Leeuw,1963: 351) ; Robertson Smith sees it as a means of cementing a communion between man and the supernatural beings (Robertson cited in Awolalu 1981,p.138). F.B. Jevons (1921), like Robertson Smith, emphasizes the communal aspect of sacrifice as this is noticeable in totemism (Jevons,1921:154). Westermarch (1932) sees sacrifice as a means of providing food for the gods to encourage them to be kind to men, to bestow blessings upon men, to avert dangers or prevent epidemics,

and he sees human sacrifice as a means of giving life to have life (Westermarch,1932 :98ff). The various theories propounded by the different scholars attempt to spell out the purposes of sacrifice, but we do not consider it necessary to regard one theory alone as correct, each theory has an element of truth in it. Some of the purposes of sacrifice are hereby stated below:

The Intrinsic Purposes of Sacrifice among the Yoruba People

A survey of the beliefs of the Yoruba people will not be complete without examining the people's belief in what we can call mysterious powers. These mystical ,preternatural and esoteric powers are virtually inexplicable, but they cannot escape notice when they are manipulated by those who have access to them. From the foregoing ,we can rightly say that sacrifice meets certain basic needs and aspirations of the Yoruba people, which include the following:

- Expressing gratitude to the spiritual beings;
- Fulfilling a vow;
- Establishing a communion between man and the spiritual beings;
- Averting the anger of the divinities and spirits;
- Warding off the attack and evil machinations of enemies
- Purifying a person or a community when a taboo has been broken or sin committed;
- Preventing or expelling epidemics; and
- Strengthening the worshippers against malign influences.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF SACRIFICE AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE OF NIGERIA.

Victims and materials of sacrifice

Awolalu (1981) observes that before a man comes forward for the rite of sacrifice, he must make sure that he has procured the required materials and victims of sacrifice as dictated either by an oracle or by the prevailing circumstances of convention. For example, when a sacrifice is to be offered to a well-known divinity, convention rather than an oracle dictates what things are to be offered. This is because such periodic sacrifices has come to assume a fixed form in consequence of regular and constant observance. If an oracle is consulted on such occasions, this is merely to find out if other forms of offering, in addition to the conventional ones, are required for the whole worship to be fully acceptable. But where the offerings are to be made to the ancestral and other spirits, or where sacrifice is demanded by circumstances, what to offer will depend solely on the direction of the oracle. If the offering is in fulfillment of a vow, what the supplicant is to provide will depend upon the vow made (Awolalu 1981:161\$ Idowu 1996:119-121). And even then the person making the vow must make sure that he vows to bring to the particular divinity what is normally acceptable to him(the divinity), and usually what the Offered himself thinks that he can afford.

Victims and materials of sacrifice vary from one circumstance to another and from divinity to another. But, on the whole, things offered are those which are used by human beings in their day-to-day life. They range from the smallest living and non-living things to a big domestic animal like a cow. The materials for sacrifice are thus drawn from both the animal world and

the plant kingdom. The Yoruba do not have different names for the sacrifice of animals and the sacrifice of plant or other things. All sacrificial acts, whether they involve the offering of plants or animals, are known in Yoruba by the single term *Ebo*. A man may be able to offer his dress *Aso* as a sacrifice just as he may be asked to offer a goat *Ewure*. Both materials of sacrifice are referred to as *Ebo*. In sacrifice the Yoruba offer almost all kinds of foods and drinks, and all kinds of living things. Two things must be taken into consideration. First, each divinity by tradition has his own particular 'taste' which must be respected. Therefore, there are foods which are customarily offered to each of them. For example, *Orisa-nla* divinity delights in snails cooked in shea-butter although his priests make sure that he has something more substantial from time to time. *Orunmila* divinity normally prefers rat and fish to anything else. The staple food of Sango is ram. *Ogun* divinity relishes dogs and roasted yams and snails, while *Esu* divinity will do anything for a cock. Everyone of the divinities takes kola-nuts with the exception is Sango who would rather have *orogbo* (bitter kola). (Awolalu 1981 :162 & Idowu, 1996:119)

Secondly, there are certain foods or drinks which are taboo to each divinity. For example, *Orisa-nla* divinity does not drink palm-wine and it should not be taken near his shrine, and his worshippers should not touch it. *Esu* divinity does not like palm-kernel oil. Anyone who brings it near him is therefore asking for trouble upon himself or upon someone else.

For special types of sacrifice as outlined below, the offerings vary according to the type of sacrifice or the prescription of the Oracle. In theory, all sacrifices belong entirely to the divinities, but in practice worshippers often partake of them, especially of things which can be eaten. These sacrifices of which the worshippers can partake are of the nature of communion. In that case, bits of everything offered are placed on or before the shrine as a token and then the rest is eaten up by the worshippers. The parts thus left on or before the shrine in case of animals, bird or reptile victims, are the entrails and the extremities. When, however, the ritual demand or the Oracular behest is that the sacrifice should be given up wholly to the divinity, then the sacrifice is exposed, or buried (Awolalu, 1981: 164).

Classification of Materials used for Sacrifice among the Yoruba are as follow:

Foodcrops: kola-nut(obi),bitter-kola (*orogbo*),yams (*isu*), plantains (*ogede*), corn-meal (*eko*),maize (*agbado*),coconuts (*agbon*), sugar-cane (*ireke*).

Birds: hens(*obi adie*),chickens (*oromadie*),cocks (*akuko*),ducks (*pepeye*),pigeons (*eyele*).

Animals: she-goats (*ewure*), hegoats (*obuko*), sheep (*agutan*),rams (*agbo*),pigs (*elede*),cows (*eranla*).

Liquid: cold water (*omi tutu*), palm win (*emu*), gin (*oti*), palm-oil (*epo pupa*)

Others: articles of garments or pieces of cloth, money (including cowries) fish, especially mud-fish (*eja aro*) (Awolalu 1981:162-163; Idowu, 1996 :119 ; Benjamin 2000:47-55).

It is from this great diversity of materials that selection is made for the purposes of sacrifices. From convention and experience the Yoruba know what the traditional 'tastes' of the divinities are and they make sure that they meet these 'tastes'. They are thus guided in their choices or selection of what to offer. They believe that anything short of the tastes of the divinities will render the sacrifice unacceptable. Traditionally, it is believed that:

Ogun (god of iron) is very fond of dogs, palm-wine, roasted yams, oil, snails, tortoises and in some cases, rams.

Orunmila(god of divination) loves rats and mud-fish.

Obatala or Orisa-nla(the arch-divinity)is fond of snails fried in shea-butter, cooked while maize(egbo),white kola-nut(obi-ifin),or bitter-kola (orogbo).

Sango (god of thunder)prefers a ram to any other thing. The bitter-kola (orogbo) is his special nut.

Osun (the spirit dwelling in the Osun river) loves efo-yanrin (a kind of vegetable),goat and fowls.

Esu(the `Messenger')is fond of black fowls, cowries and half kobo and palm-oil.)**Soponno** (the spirit whose scourge is the smallpox) is fond of cocks, palm-wine, palm-oil, cooked maize and old-meal (eko tutu)

Orisa-oko (the divinity controlling planting and harvesting) loves pangolin(akika),goats, fish and melon-stew (obe egunsi) with pounded yam and wine from guinea-corn(out sekete)(Awolalu,1981:163).

SOME OF THE UNETHICAL/FORBIDDEN FIXED MATERIALS TO THE DIVINITIES IN ORDER NOT TO INVITE FOR THEIR WRATH:

Orisa-nla divinity has aversion for palm-wine, his worshippers are, therefore, forbidden to drink it.

Esu divinity loves palm-oil but detest palm-kernel oil (*adin*),to bring the latter to him is to incur his displeasure.

Efo Yanrin (one special vegetable) is the favourite food of *Osun river goddess*; while a vegetable *Efo-odu* is abhorrent to her.

Soponno(or Obaluwaiye) divinity abhor fried maize but loves palm-oil and cocks.

Therefore, worshippers are expected to know the likes and dislikes of their different divinities. For a man to agree to be a devotee of a particular deity means that he must be ready to supply the offerings involved (Awolalu, 1981: 163-164).

CONCLUSION

This paper has set the platform that the Yoruba people of Nigeria believed that life should be preserved, and its preservation and continuation depend up on the favour of the beings which have the power to sustain or destroy it. As a result of this, there is a strong desire on the part of the Yoruba to maintain communion with them .They know that they depend upon these spiritual powers for material prosperity , for good health ,increase in crops, in cattle and in the family. They consider it expedient to show their gratitude to the givers of the good things. This is why thanks, which are due to the benefactors are given in form of thanksgiving

sacrifice which is prominent on annual festival occasions. It is believed that they can feel, sense, see, hear and share emotion. They have appetites, wants, and taboos similar to those of human beings. In order to come before such deities, man needs to bring those things that are believed to be liked by them. It is also believed that when a man does this regularly and in the right manner, he will have favour with the supernatural beings who can give him his heart's desires such as peace, cohesion and joy in addition to the material blessings (Awolalu 1981:137-138).

On the other hand, sacrifice is offered to counteract the powers of destruction by witches and sorcerers who are wantonly wicked and who hate seeing men's progress in life. The Yoruba come to associate mishaps that befall them such as the losses they sustain, the pains they experience, sudden and premature deaths with the machinations of enemies who use their nefarious deeds to harm men and make life uncomfortable.

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