

## **Rick Goldberg**

In ancestral environments, our detection and response to sensational colors provided valuable domain-specific information. Exciting the nervous system, vivid coloration generates memory imprinting, a useful tool for foraging in evolutionary landscapes. Thus color recognition enhanced the descendant-leaving success of those best able to discern color patterns and variations. Impressionable yellow and red objects can be static or moving, comforting or threatening. The prodigious effects of fire, controlled or wild, and blood, contained or escaping, are discussed and depicted at length in this paper. We humans maintain a cautious appreciation of blood and fire under containment. But when blood flows or fire rages we can be terrified, but when we find ourselves out of danger we are quickly comforted.

Display of fire and blood in religious sacrificing has been found universally since the emergence of sedentary living. Ritualized for millennia, religious sacrificing became the most popular public event—it was surely the “greatest show on earth.” Rappaport described the ceremonial offering of humans and animals as “the central ritual of the religions of all ancient and traditional civilizations.” Blood and gore sacrificing may be celebratory, but it is not intrinsically designed to instill fear, to torture or to punish. Too narrowly understood, sacrificing is often seen as a brutal, prosaic religious phenomenon. However, I would argue the ritual’s popularity and longevity is due to its value as cohesion-building entertainment. Traditional sacrificing was paramount in sustaining the multi-generational authority of religious orders.

In conclusion, ritual sacrificing is an appropriate case study of the natural, powerful impact of phenomenal coloration. Textual and pictographic evidence of religious sacrificing practiced by many religions will be presented.