

The Evolution of Sacrifice in Taoist Folklore from the Perspective of Feminism

Yuebin Wang

School of Foreign Languages, Peking University, Beijing, 100091, China

Abstract: The advancement of feminism has facilitated a high-quality development in terms of sacrifice in Taoist folk practices. With women being the primary figure in the pursuit of gender equality, it is necessary to put forward research proposals that can better serve women's needs for self-identity and cultural inheritance. Therefore, an analytical framework is established to explain the evolution of sacrifice in the Taoist context, which is based on the dynamic progression of Taoist folk customs and the internal logic of sacrifice. This framework highlights Taoist sacrifice as a joint product of the evolution mechanism, the belief mechanism of women and gods, and the cultural mechanism of women and society. By examining the evolution of sacrificial practices in Taoist folklore based on historical changes and practical interpretations from a feminist perspective, it can be concluded that the purpose of sacrificial evolution is to provide women with beliefs and culture that meet the expected standards and continuously enhance women's satisfaction. To this end, it is crucial to further Taoist folklore research and develop a mechanism for interaction and identification between women and Taoist folklore, as well as an evaluation system to evaluate the progress of women and society. This will provide a platform for the liberation of women and improve their living quality, thus achieving the desired societal functions of feminist folklore.

Keywords: Feminism, Taoist folklore, Evolution of sacrifice, High-quality development.

1. Introduction

With the development of feminism, an increasing number of scholars have begun to pay attention to the status and role of women in different cultural and historical backgrounds, especially their performance and changes in religious folklore. As a native religion in China, the sacrificial activities in Taoism are an essential component to embody Taoism belief, Taoism law, morality and Taoist magic arts. It is also an important way to show female subjectivity, identity and cultural inheritance. However, in the current research world, a systematic and in-depth discussion of the evolution of ritual sacrifice in Taoist folklore from a feminist perspective is still lacking and needs to be analyzed and evaluated.

Based on the widespread existence of the above problems in the field of Taoist research, this paper mainly investigates the evolution of sacrifice in Taoist folklore from the perspective of feminism based on historical documents and field investigations. Feminist theory-based analyses are conducted on priestesses, objects of sacrifice, the content of sacrifice, and methods of sacrifice in different eras and regions, effectively revealing the internal mechanisms and external influences of the evolution of sacrifice in Taoist folklore.

This paper applies feminist theory, historical literature analysis, field investigation, and other methods and systematically sorts out and interprets the historical changes and practical deduction of sacrificial sacrifices in Taoist folklore, providing important support for the field of Taoist research. This paper argues that the purpose of sacrificial Evolution in Taoist folklore is to provide women with beliefs and culture that meet the expected standards, continuously improve women's social status, and enhance women's satisfaction. It is thus necessary to strengthen Taoist folklore research based on feminism to develop a mechanism for interaction and identification between women and Taoist

folklore, and establish an evaluation system for women and society. This will provide a platform for the liberation of women and increase their satisfaction, thus achieving the desired societal functions of feminist folklore. [1].

2. Research Background on the Evolution of Sacrifice in Taoist Folklore Based on Feminist Perspective

2.1. The Significance of Taoist Folklore Research from the Perspective of Feminism

The study of Taoist folklore from the perspective of feminism is a concept developed in parallel with feminist theory, which is "soaked" with feminist concepts of equality, liberation, and diversity, highlighting women's subjectivity, sense of identity, and cultural inheritance in Taoist folklore, reflecting Taoist folk customs' innovation and development strategy since the reform and opening up [2]. However, when researchers try to employ certain western or modern standards to construct the definition and essence of Taoist folklore from the perspective of feminism, it is still difficult to obtain an objective, comprehensive, and in-depth understanding.

2.2. Research Status of Sacrifice Evolution in Taoist Folklore from the Perspective of Feminism

The evolution of sacrificial offerings in Taoist folklore, from a feminist perspective, is an analysis and evaluation of historical changes and practical deductions of sacrificial activities. Sacrifice is a key element of Taoist folk customs and a manifestation of Taoist beliefs, morality, and Taoism [3]. Feminist and Taoist researchers have debated different definitions of the evolution of female victims in Taoist folklore from historical, cultural, social, and psychological

perspectives. Some scholars suggest that the evolution of sacrifices in Taoist folklore from a feminist viewpoint is reflective of female subjectivity, identity, cultural inheritance, and status in society. This is precise because the development of sacrifice in Taoist folklore belongs to the more egalitarian, liberating, to some extent pluralistic, and female-dominant folkloric studies. Relevant research can be traced back to the late 19th-century feminist movement, which mainly focused on research and analysis of female sacrificers, sacrificial objects, sacrificial content, and sacrificial methods in Taoist folklore. The concepts and methods of sacrifice evolution in Taoist folklore from the perspective of feminism are closely related to social changes and cultural innovation since the reform and opening up. Through historical document analysis, field investigation, and other methods, the evolution of

sacrificial offerings in Taoist folklore has become an effective way to reveal the internal mechanism and external influence of Taoist folklore. Studies on the sacrificial evolution in Taoist folklore during the period of reform and opening up has mainly focused on qualitative measures based on historical documents and field survey attributes [4]. This has contributed to the strengthening of Taoist folklore studies from a feminist perspective, the establishment of mechanisms of interaction and identification between women and Taoist folklore, and the evaluation system for women and society.

The research framework of sacrifice evolution in Taoist folklore from the perspective of feminism is shown in Figure 1.

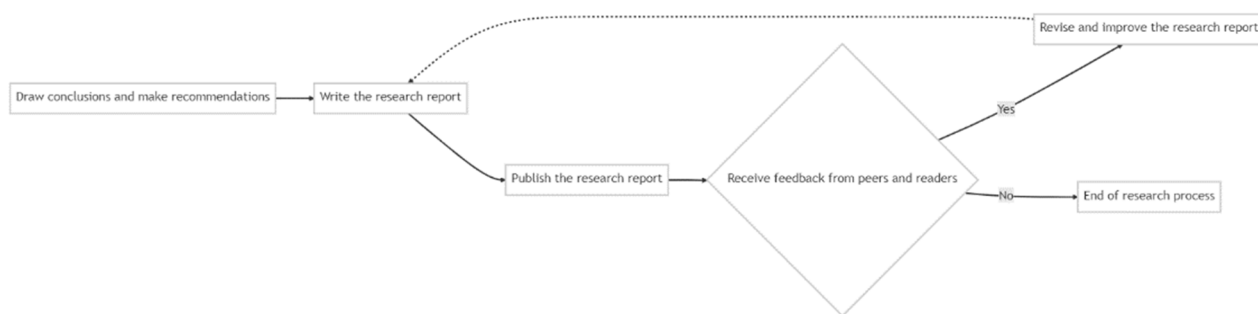


Figure 1. Research framework of the evolution of sacrifices in Taoist folklore from the perspective of feminism

3. Research Basis for the Evolution of Ritual Sacrifice in Taoist Folklore from a Feminist Point of View

3.1. Concepts and Types of Rituals

Research into the evolution of ritual sacrifice in Taoist folklore from a feminist point of view provides insight into the spiritual trajectory of humanity and the cultural strategies of society throughout history. However, when trying to apply certain academic standards to construct the definition and essence of sacrifice, it is still challenging to reach a consensus. On the one hand, sacrifice is a social behavior involving the communication and interaction between human beings, humans and nature, and humans and the supernatural, which has complex social functions and meanings. On the other hand, sacrifice is also a cultural phenomenon, which contains rich cultural symbols, semiotic implications, and reflects values and world views in different cultural backgrounds [5]. Therefore, discussing and analyzing it from multiple angles and levels is necessary to fully understand the definition and essence of sacrifice.

3.2. The Historical Development and Social Function of Sacrifice

Sacrifice is an important standard of religion and an expression of reverence for gods. Max Weber and Emile Durkheim discussed different definitions of religion from sociological and anthropological perspectives. Other scholars believe that religion is the degree of belief or ideology. It is a universal phenomenon that falls within the scope of social sciences, as it has a human purpose. The history of religious sacrifice even dates back to primitive societies, with main activities consisting of prayer, offerings, and offering up a

sacrifice. The concept and form of sacrifice is closely associated with the culture and system of a particular society. Through sacrifice, human beings become integral participants in the universe. The major contribution of the theory of sacrifice in modernity is to uncover the relationship between sacrifice and social cohesion, values, and moral norms. Therefore, the concept of ritual primarily focused on the measurement of belief based on the characteristics of religious norms.

3.3. Cultural Characteristics and Value Orientation of Female Sacrifice

Compared with male sacrifice, female sacrifice is an ecological phenomenon that places emphasis on the relationship between people and nature. Although some scholars have questioned the notion that women have a direct relationship with nature, most have argued that women can make rational judgments about it. Caroline Mercer and others proposed a classic analytical model for female ecology which encompasses four elements, and has since become a standard tool for female priests, thus enriching the concept of female mythology. These scholars believe that female sacrifice is a “source of life” that can bring peace and prosperity to society, if women are in harmony with nature. Female sacrifice is categorized as the result of ecological balance. Some scholars also generalize women's sacrifice into two models, a negative model based on the moon and a positive model based on the sun. The former is concerned with periodicity, while the latter is focused on energy, specifically fire. Despite experiencing some historical oppression, female sacrifice can be inherited and renewed from a cultural perspective, and the concept of feminism has become increasingly accepted in research and practice concerning female sacrifice.

3.4. Analytical Methods and Evaluation Criteria for Sacrifice

The concept of sacrifice is rooted in the communication between humans and gods. Sacrifice is the application of religious thinking in social practice. To overcome the defects of traditional functionalism and structuralism, it enters the research field as a new alternative model—the symbolic framework, to explore the practice of worship. This framework indicates that worship should ensure effective communication between believers and gods; set professional standards for sacrificial activities; "capture" the will of gods through techniques such as rituals, symbols, and metaphors; and uses cultural analysis methods to measure the effects of sacrifices. The symbolic framework reconstructs the meaning of sacrifice, emphasizing the need to reinforce believers' subjectivity and building on the meaning, values, emotions, and creativity of sacrifice [6].

4. A Detailed Study of the Evolution Process of Sacrifices in Taoist Folk Customs from the Perspective of Feminism

4.1. The Motivation and Law of the Sacrifice Evolution Process

Sacrifice is the central manifestation of religion, serving to facilitate communication between believers and deities while reflecting the shifting conditions of society and culture

through rituals, symbols, and metaphors. The development of sacrificial elements and the accompanying evaluation systems were gradually taken into consideration. However, from a feminist perspective, certain male-dominant sacrificial practices remain oppressive and exclusionary towards women, contradicting the logical framework and generative mechanisms of female mythology and perpetuating gender inequality. Thus, the symbolic framework for reflecting and promoting women's status and rights must be further developed, which is also an essential area of inquiry for feminist research.

4.2. The Pattern and Characteristics of the Sacrificial Rituals Evolution Process

From the cultural perspective, sacrifice is the core embodiment of culture, fundamentally linked to religion and expressed through symbols that are adopted by adherents. Symbols serve both as the main generating logic and tool. From a feminist viewpoint, three prominent forms of female sacrifice have emerged in order to attain symbolic control: the creation of female myths to affirm human-nature balance, the establishment of standards for female sacrifice through which the standardized control of female sacrificial activities is guaranteed; and the re-engineering of female sacrifice through creative means to promote females' rights and improve their status. Nevertheless, female sacrifice has yet to achieve the same level of influence as male sacrifice.

The pattern of the sacrificial evolution process is shown in Figure 2.

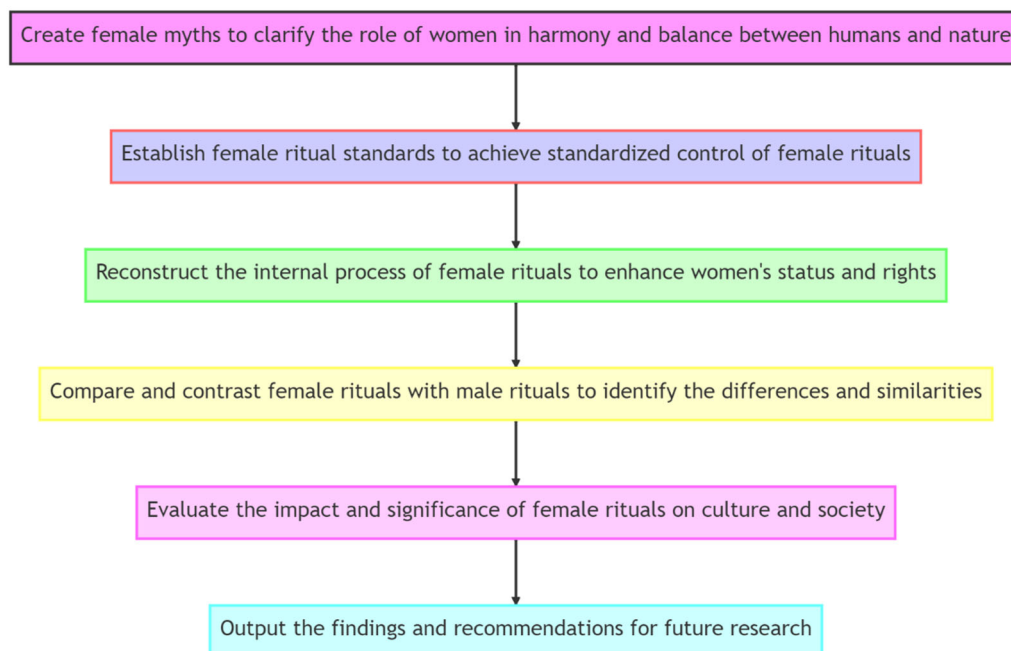


Figure 2. The pattern of the sacrificial evolution process

The development of female sacrifice seeks to construct a symbolic framework that promotes female status and rights by equipping females with beliefs and cultures in line with expected standards. While female sacrifice has been an ongoing topic, feminism incorporates elements such as ecology, equality, and innovation in a symbolic way to emphasize the cultural aspect of female sacrifice, and to develop the technical implications of female sacrifice. This

has allowed female sacrifice to gain value through the integration of nature, society, and the individual. Female sacrifice has been effectively demonstrated through networking, standardization, and innovation, providing practical experience and reference for female culture. However, in order to meet the requirements of the current feminist theoretical construction and mechanism design, the development of female sacrifice must continue to be

optimized by responding to women's needs for feminist folklore.

4.3. The Influence and Evaluation of the Sacrifice Evolution Process

From a social standpoint, the long-standing subjugation of women has constrained their capacity for development. The emergence of the feminist movement in the twentieth century has facilitated a transformation in female culture through sacrifice, though the enduring detriments of traditional male sacrifice still obstruct female sacrifice. Female sacrifice is incomplete not only due to social pressures but also as a consequence of the cultural implications. Under the umbrella of equality, female sacrifice is viewed as a means of elevating female status and rights. However, its actual role in society is still a topic of debate. At the same time, female sacrifice is additionally impeded by a lack of resources, hampering its capacity to reach the intended goals. Consequently, female sacrifice is not only a technical issue but a political one as well. Overall, there is still room for improvement in the perception and assessment of female sacrifice, and its effectiveness needs to be heightened, which is an important focus for future feminist research.

5. Conclusion

The concept of feminism has been shifting in recent years, thus posing new challenges and requirements for the evolution of sacrifices in Taoist folklore. Sacrifice is a symbol of religious belief and an important means of culture. It has also become a prominent tool for promoting female subjectivity and upholding female rights, which essentially demonstrates the inherent demands of feminism. Deriving from female-oriented proposition, the evolution of sacrifice has adopted a theoretical analysis framework and practical mechanisms that are rooted in feminist principles. The emergence and advancement of modern technologies, such as

the Internet of Things and cloud computing, coupled with education diffusion, have had a positive impact on the evolution of sacrifices. Through the interconnecting platform, women are empowered to participate in and innovate ritual activities that better accommodate the modern world and their life experiences, thus leading to more accurate and scientific sacrifices that fit with the internal logic of feminism. In this way, the evolution of sacrifice has become an important part of the feminist movement, which has enabled women to take part in religious practices and rituals that have been traditionally exclusive to men. Generally, the sustained progress and development of sacrifice will not only better reflect and promote women's culture, but also help to further the development of feminist ideas.

References

- [1] Ormerod E. Level with us, regional development is still 'man shaped': feminism, futurity and leadership[J]. *Regional Studies*, 2023: 1-10.
- [2] Douglass M D, Stirrat M, Koehn M A, et al. The relationship between the Dark Triad and attitudes towards feminism[J]. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2023, 200: 111889.
- [3] Zhang C, Zhu J. The Scripture on the Five Emperors in the Five Directions: Evidence of the Spread of Taoism Amongst the Naxi[J]. *SAGE Open*, 2023, 13(1): 21582440231153125.
- [4] Hoang G, La V P. Academic writing and AI: Day-5 experiment with cultural additivity[J]. 2023.
- [5] Li X, Hu Y, Dong F, et al. Non-noble-metallic Ni₂P nanoparticles modified OV-BiOBr with boosting photoelectrochemical hydrogen evolution without sacrificial agent[J]. *Applied Catalysis B: Environmental*, 2023, 325: 122341.
- [6] Wang Y, Yang C, Guo L, et al. Plate-on-plate structured MoS₂/Cd_{0.6}Zn_{0.4}S Z-scheme heterostructure with enhanced photocatalytic hydrogen production activity via hole sacrificial agent synchronously strengthens half-reactions[J]. *Journal of Colloid and Interface Science*, 2023, 630: 341-351.