

# Cannibalism: as sanctioned by a cultural norm



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What would you choose, eat or be eaten? Will you save your life or save others? It's a very hard decision, to cannibalize your fellow humans. It's a matter of choice. Many of us are not convinced with this kind of matter, it's very hard to accept that cannibalism sometimes use for survival. It's because the practice of cannibalism can also be considered as a crime.

(Adams, 2004)

“... Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed ...”

– New Testament, John 6: 53-55

Cannibalism is also called anthropophagy, eating of human flesh by another human. There are some reasons for cannibalism, in some tribes; it is a part of their culture, so the act of cannibalism is being practiced. Another reason is that cannibalism is a form of survival. The hungry people for instance trapped in a wild place, the tendency of it is for them to find a food source, and if they can't find any food it can lead to Cannibalism or what we called the survival cannibalism. And the most common reason for cannibalism is the insanity of people. (Adams, 2004)

“ It was considered a great triumph among the Marquesans to eat the body of a dead man. They treated their captives with great cruelty. They broke their legs to prevent them from attempting to escape before being eaten, but kept them alive so that they could brood over their impending fate. ...

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With this tribe, as with many others, the bodies of women were in great demand. ... “

– Rubinstein, W. D. (2004)

The anthropologist Tim White suggests that cannibalism was common in human societies before the beginning of the upper Palaeolithic period. He based his theory on the “ butchered human” bones that found in Neanderthal and another low/middle Palaeolithic sites. (White, 2006)

Cannibalism lower and in middle Palaeolithic may have occurred because of food scarcity. (Owen, 2006)

In early history cannibalism is mentioned many times. In bible (2 kings 6: 25-30) wherein two women decided to eat their children (...) the same story that was told by Flavius Josephus during the invasion of Jerusalem by Rome, cannibalism is also documented during the starvation in Egypt that caused by the failure of Nile river to flood for eight years (1073-1064 BC). (Against Jovanius-Book II, 1893)

As in modern times, (modern era) there are many cases of cannibalism especially during World War II, the brutality of Japanese is spread, due to lack of food sources. Even soldiers probably killed and ate during and after the battle. During starvation, soldiers are forced to eat the diseased prisoner even though it is disgusting, but they have no choice because that is the only way for them to survive. It is an example of survival cannibalism. (Ang, 2005)

“ Anthropologists have made no serious attempt to disabuse the public of the widespread notion of the ubiquity of anthropophagists. ... in the deft hands and fertile imaginations of anthropologists, former or contemporary anthropophagists have multiplied with the advance of civilization and fieldwork in formerly unstudied culture areas. ...The existence of man-eating peoples just beyond the pale of civilization is a common ethnographic suggestion.”

– Arens, 1981

“ The manners of the Androphagi are more savage than those of any other race. They neither observe justice, nor are governed, by any laws. They are nomads, and their dress is Scythian; but the language which they speak is peculiar to themselves. Unlike any other nation in these parts, they are cannibals.”

Rawlinson, 1858-1860

The Anthropophagi, whom we have previously mentioned as dwelling ten days' journey beyond the Borysthenes, according to the account of Isigonus of Nicæa, were in the habit of drinking out of human skulls, and placing the scalps, with the hair attached, upon their breasts, like so many napkins.

– Bostock and Riley 1855

“ I believe that when man evolves a civilization higher than the mechanized but still primitive one he has now, the eating of human flesh will be sanctioned. For then man will have thrown off all of his superstitions and irrational taboos.”

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-Diego Rivera

When humans eat the flesh of other humans in able for them to survive this is what we called survival cannibalism. This is the only generally accepted form of cannibalism but still it is punishable by the law. Some people think that all people have the capacity to eat other people if you put them in right circumstances. As mentioned a while ago regarding the cannibalism during World War II, it is considered as survival cannibalism because of famine.

(<http://www.trutv.com/>)

“... Eating someone who has died in order to survive is incorporating their substance, and it is quite possible to compare this with a graft. Flesh survives when assimilated by someone in extreme need, just as it does when an eye or heart of a dead man is grafted onto a living man...” (Auxiliary Bishop of Montevideo. Read, pp. 1974. Alive. Avon, New York)

In early 1942 an Indian soldier Hatam Ali was a witness of

cannibalism during World War II. He tried to escape from the hand of the Japanese but before he leaves, he witnessed the brutality of Japanese among the prisoners as well as the soldiers because they are lack of food sources, they ate the diseased prisoner sometimes they draw lots. Whoever was picked was the one who will be killed and cooked. Could you imagine you are eating human flesh everyday? (Armando, 2005)

“ Nothing more strongly arouses our disgust than cannibalism, yet we make the same impression on Buddhists and vegetarians, for we feed on babies, though not our own.” – Steevenson 1850

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Ritualistic and Epicurean Cannibalism, the modern forms of this type of cannibalism is very similar and can be seen in some other tribes. The only difference is that this type of cannibalism is associated with satanic and cult group rituals. Epicurean and nutritional cannibalism is the rarer and is usually considered as a sub-motivation of other forms of cannibalism, such as the survival cannibalism and the sexual cannibalism.

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The ritual cannibalism is more complicated type of cannibalism compare to other types, because human flesh are sold as a medicine in various human diseases. This is something exotic, because the medicines are came from human flesh, some American food cultist studied about the use of human placenta as a remedy in any human diseases. (Janzen, 1980)

In Helsinki, Finland in 1999, there two men and a teen-aged girl arrested because of the torture, murder and cannibalism of a twenty-three year old man. They claimed that they are satanic and they perform a ritualistic killing.

(<http://www.trutv.com/>)

The cannibalistic practice among criminals is increasing over the last century particularly in the western hemisphere. The law makers around the world are forced to establish or to update the law regarding cannibalism. Because many crime including criminal cannibalism has been reported and well documented. In some cultures the act of criminal cannibalism maybe an acceptable element for another culture.

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There are many people who refuse to believe that cannibalism is being practiced in this modern civilized age. Somehow there is much proof suggesting that it does occurred and with some frequency. There are so many documented cases of cannibalism particularly during the last 100 years.

(<http://www.trutv.com/>)

Self cannibalism is a practice of eating oneself. The other term for self cannibalism is auto cannibalism or auto sarcophagi. (<http://meish.org>) Some people are engaged in self cannibalism because of body modification for example eating your own skin because of body modification or by drinking your own blood. This practice is called auto vampirism. But sucking blood from wounds is not considered as cannibalism. (Anonymous) On January 13, 2007 the Chilean artist Marco Evaristti was a host in a dinner party for his friends. The main meal is agnolotti pasta which was topped with a meatball made from artist own fat. (<http://www.news.com.au/> )

Self-cannibalism sometimes used in brutality as a torture method. Like Erzebet Bathor, she tortured her servants by forcing them to eat their own flesh. (Adams, 1986)

In 16th century, during the time of Spaniards, they forced the native people to eat their own testicles as a capital punishment. (De La Torre, 1986)

The Chijon family were a gang of cannibals in South Korea. This group of cannibals was founded by Kim Ki Hwan, a former convict and six other prisoners joined the gang. The Chijon family is composed of 7 criminals, the objective of this gang is to kidnap rich people and extort money from their

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families, Because of the anger of this gang to the rich people, forced them to kill the best customers in one of the most exclusive department store in Seoul, South Korea. After the crime the six members of chijon family were found guilty in murdering five people in 1994. After the crime, one member of chijon family confessed in front of many people that he ate the flesh of one of the victims and saying that he wanted to renounce his humanity. The gang realized that they need more tactical and more effective way to kidnap a wealthy old men. The gang was able to get the list from renegade personnel. The list contained the name of the big time customers. With the use of that list they choose who the next victim is. On November 1, 1994 the chijon family was sentenced to death because of the five people they killed. (<http://www. imaeil. com/>)

Another case of cannibalism has been reported in South Korea. A self-confessed cannibal named Yoo Young-chul that was born in 1970 in South Korea admitted that he killed 21 people; most of them are prostitutes and rich old men. The Seoul central district court accused him of 20 murders (one case dismissed on a technicality). He burned three of his victims and chopped the body of at least 11 of them and after that he confessed that he ate the livers of some of his victims. This crime was happened between September 2003 and July 2004. When Yoo was arrested, in front of media he explains his motive, Yoo said that: "... women shouldn't be sluts and the rich should know what they've done ..." On July 19, 2005 he was sentenced by death by the Supreme Court. Because of that case, the South Koreans open their minds about the capital punishment in South Korea. (<http://trutv. com>)



Cannibalism exists because of the hungry people, due to lack of food sources, many people are forced to cannibalize their fellow human because that is the only thing that they can do in able for them to survive. There are many cases of cannibalism in different countries like in China, Korea and Japan. Some people are practicing the act of cannibalism because it's a part of their culture, but some other people are practicing the act of cannibalism because of insanity. The most generally accepted form of cannibalism is the survival cannibalism but it's still punishable by the law. If you put yourself in a situation wherein you're going to choose, to eat or be eaten, it's a very hard decision, as a matter of fact many people choose to eat human flesh rather than to die because of hunger. Based on my study, I found out that there are three things why cannibalism has been practiced in some other countries. First, the insanity of People, second, as sanctioned by a cultural norm and lastly, for survival.