

## Cannibalism and Islamic Doctrine of Protection of Life and Wealth Cited in the Encyclopedia of Religion (Lindsay Jones): A Comparative Study

Dr. Sadna Zeb

Assistant professor Islamic studies/post-doctoral research fellow, IRI, IIU, Islamabad at-  
[sadnazeb@gmail.com](mailto:sadnazeb@gmail.com)

Dr. Hafiz Aftab Ahmad

Head, Department of Comparative Study of World Religions; Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Faisal Masjid Campus, Islamabad at- [aftab.ahmad@iiu.edu.pk](mailto:aftab.ahmad@iiu.edu.pk)

### Abstract

Cannibalism is a practice that has remained sensitive in many societies and in history has an interesting relationship with Islamic law that prohibits the taking of the life or wealth of other people as highlighted by Lindsay Jones Encyclopedia of Religion. This paper seeks to discuss some of the cultural and religious differences within cannibalism and expanded the knowledge that Islam only permits the consumption of human flesh in exceptional situations for instance when the person is starved to death. Cannibalism in the historical context is analyzed considering such case studies as the Siege of Baghdad in 1258 and the Siege of Ta if in 630 AD to describe the ethical and moral factors that might have influenced the use of this practice at the time. The work also focuses on the psychological plane where the motifs of cannibalism signify and where the dichotomy between self and other is highly fluid. But in modern days, this research becomes vital as the expansion of globalization and shift in the culture's social expectations bring into question the true intent of cannibalism by the Muslim community. It is up religious scholars to explain and give insight on anti-cannibalism legislations in the religion as it has tolerance, fairness and human dignity. This proves the assertion that none of the religions of the world or the Islam recognize such actions and reaffirms the ban on cannibalism. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that various forms of cannibalism are still present in today's societies in some shape or form, whether symbolic or metaphoric, which makes it crucial for ethicists to keep evaluating it. The criminals studied recommend that although cases of modern day cannibalism might not be commonplace, the issues of moral and ethology may still effectively exist. Subsequent research could establish the occurrences of the practice in the era of the Muslim-majority population and ethical dilemmas in Arabian societies. Therefore, it can be said that this study has indeed shed some light and contributed to the analysis of the practical ethical and moral questions related to cannibalism, directly contrasting it with the Islamic principles. Thus, by revealing the discrepancy between cannibalism and the religion of Islam, the created study enhances the understanding of the given universal ethical issues, which stem from the fact that no religion allows such horrific actions.

**Keywords:** Cannibalism, Historical, Analysis, Religious, Islamic Principles, Human Dignity, Symbolic, Metaphoric, Effectively Exist, Horrific Actions

### Introduction

This research yields ample information related to cannibalism in society and religions. Through the Encyclopedia of Religion, it explores religious, cultural, and historical implications that are

relevant to cannibalistic beliefs and practices. The contrasting way of looking at the spiritual, social and immoral implications of cannibalism brings an opportunity for learning deeper. Furthermore, morally, the study argues that Islamic morality puts life and property first and discourages cannibalism to abominable acts. The article, in the meanwhile, depicts the paradigm of religion and ethics in the historical period and also examines similarities and contradictions among its societies. Besides, it studies the notion of Islam's jurisprudence involving the right to life and property in the light of prohibition of cannibalism, thereby making tow in the discipline of human rights, justice standards, and cultural ideologies. Consequently, the research contributes to the discovery of patterns and correlation in relation to violence and food intake, creating a better understanding of norms and culture.

Human history perceive cannibalism both as a concept and as a real practice through the deep eyeglass of death, life, and social codes. It carries gain past merely survival, symbolizing ultrastructure with forceful effects that challenge traditional values and social norms. From rituals during festivals to extremes in scarcity, cannibalism has preponderantly found a place in diverse cultures and eras either by helping in retaining harmony between people or by instilling fear of the unknown, which in turn leads to a stronger connection with the divine force. The phenomenon represents a transformative experience, blurring the lines between self and others, often symbolizing a profound shift in consciousness or identity. In some cultures, it is linked to power, dominance, and social hierarchy, while in others, it is seen as a sacred act, offering spiritual connection or enlightenment. Cannibalism is intertwined with religious beliefs and practices, serving as a means of communication with the divine or renewing spiritual connections. It also carries social and political implications, reflecting the complex interplay between cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social structures.

Cannibalism can be manifested in a variety of forms and patterns in relation to time and space, reflecting complex cultural figures and approaches. The practice of endocannibalism which is the process of eating members from your own community and these types of rituals are often done as part of mortuary rites and shows devotion to family. The Wari' and Guayaquí indigenous peoples from Brazil bury their dead by eating them because this is a way of paying homage to the deceased and further strengthens the spiritual bonds between the living and the dead. However, cannibalism of the foreigners and also people that the enemy group considers outsiders is called exocannibalism and it's correlated with war and other power problems. Such as the Aztec civilization that was conducted during the conquest wars by practicing exocannibalism so as to wield dominance above the losers and to seek favor of the gods by sacrifice. While a type of cannibalism has sustainability and conservation implications, it is also socially and culturally significant in their contexts.

Warfare was his means in dominant by means of exocannibalism, because this made the enemies scared and gained power over the adversary groups. The bloodthirsty display of butchering and eating the flesh of an opponent, which occurred after the victory in battle, literally demonstrated the unyielding nature of the dictator while it carried with it the implicit threat of the horrors of such an act that would result from any resistance to the dominant power. Therefore,

exocannibalism was frequently wrapped in the ceremonials and rituals that justified the act and granted it with a cultural and religious meaning. The sacrificial victim eating of the Aztecs believed in the cancellation of the deities which were the center of the universe and the guarantee of the continuous development of the community<sup>i</sup>.

Another type of cannibalism is survivor cannibalism, which is found in people in the extreme situations of hunger or need. Reports of survival cannibalism have been made throughout the world and it was observed in arctic expeditions, instances of shipwrecks or during record low supplies of food. For instance, the infamous case of the Donner Party during the middle 19th century when a group of pioneers facing stormy winter conditions in the Sierra Nevada Mountains resorted to eating human flesh to survive showcases the severe extent to which a person can go when in extreme conditions<sup>ii</sup>. On the contrary, some tribes practice ritual or symbolic cannibalism, and that is done for cultural or ceremonial reasons rather than for the purpose of conquering and surviving. This form of cannibalism may involve the consumption of symbolic representations of human flesh, such as bread or wine in Christian communion rituals, or the metaphorical ingestion of the flesh and blood of deities in certain religious ceremonies. These practices are often deeply ingrained in cultural traditions and carry symbolic meanings related to sacrifice, renewal, and communion with the divine<sup>iii</sup>.

The *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Lindsay Jones, offers a comprehensive exploration of cannibalism within its broader religious and cultural contexts, defining it as a complex practice and concept involving themes of death, sustenance, sacrifice, and the transformation of human beings into consumable entities. It highlights the diverse manifestations of cannibalism across different cultures and historical periods, emphasizing its symbolic significance and the blurred boundaries between the self and others. Within religious contexts, the encyclopedia discusses how cannibalism is often associated with rituals and ceremonies symbolizing an exchange between individuals and cosmic powers, such as promoting union with the divine or renewing spiritual relations. It explores the social and political implications of cannibalism, including asserting dominance over enemies or expressing familial bonds. The encyclopedia delves into various forms of cannibalism, such as endocannibalism and exocannibalism, shaped by cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social structures, providing insights into their historical significance and contemporary relevance<sup>iv</sup>.

The Islamic theory of protection of life and property is deeply rooted in the Quran and Hadith, forming the foundation of Islamic law and ethics. In Islam, the preservation of human life is considered paramount, and the taking of innocent life is strictly prohibited. The Quran emphasizes the sanctity of life, stating that "whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption in the land it is as if he had slain mankind entirely"<sup>v</sup>.

“وَمَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا”

Similarly, the following Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad emphasizes the importance of safeguarding human life, stating that "A believer is sacred to another believer: his blood, his wealth, and his honor"<sup>vi</sup>.

“الْمُؤْمِنُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ حَرَامٌ، دَمُهُ وَمَالُهُ وَعَرَضُهُ”

This principle extends not only to Muslims but to all individuals, regardless of their faith, race, or social status. Furthermore, Islam also gives a high importance to the protection of property by denouncing theft and deception. The Quran orders its believers to not spend property unlawfully or hand it to governors as a bribe with a purpose to eat from the wealth violated others or not justified<sup>vii</sup>.

“وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِنَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ”  
The Islamic belief advocates the concepts of honesty, fairness, as well as, respect for private property rights as being crucial elements of a just and orderly society.

The Islamic philosophy of protection of life and property not only has further principles like justice, mercy, and social responsibility but they are also applied to the whole society in different forms. Islamic rulings provides security of the persons' legal rights and preservation of societal equilibrium as its maximal tasks. An example of such punishment is that Islamic law mandates severe penalties for the crimes that endanger big property and life such as murder, robbery, and theft. Nevertheless, these punishments are achieved within the structure of the due process and mercy framework that is when strict conditions and requirements for evidence and witnesses are observed. In addition to that, charity, compassion and support to the community, which are familiar to Islam, are the main factors that ensure the favorable circumstances and, consequently, offer protection from the anxiety associated with vulnerability<sup>viii</sup>. It is the Islamic theory of protection of life and property that ensures the justice, equality, and dignity of human-kind; therefore, it encourages the Muslims to incorporate these vital values in their activities with others and the governance of the society.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is based on the two methods of qualitative and comparative analysis to investigate this complex connection between cannibalism and Islamic doctrine of protection of life and property. Qualitative research methods such as content analysis of relevant sections in Encyclopedia of Religion are used to collect data on cannibalism and Islam doctrine. It entails carefully scrutinizing and analyzing the textual evidence to identify main themes and ideas about cannibalism and Islamic teachings. Through content analysis of encyclopedia, researchers will be able to get a clear picture of the historical and cultural context where cannibalism and Islamic principles are happening, giving researchers a chance to understand the issue fully. Apart from this, comparative analysis is used to put the study of cannibalism in the same context with Islamic fundamental teachings. The contrastive approach enables the researchers to discover equality, variety and recurrence among different cultures and the religious traditions.

Through analyzing whether cannibalism is aligned with Islamic teachings on the sanctity of life and property, researchers can point out what are the moral predicaments and principles that struggle with contexts in which cannibalism is practiced. Also, comparative analysis enables researchers to examine the impact of cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social structures on attitudes towards cannibalism within Islamic societies. The combination of qualitative and comparative analysis methodologies is essential for this study as it provides a holistic understanding of the dynamics of cannibalism and its intersection with Islamic doctrine.

Qualitative methods allow for in-depth exploration of textual sources, while comparative analysis facilitates the identification of commonalities and differences across cultures and religious traditions<sup>ix</sup>. Together, these approaches enable researchers to uncover the ethical complexities and moral implications of cannibalism within Islamic societies, shedding light on a topic that intersects cultural, religious, and ethical dimensions.

### **Cannibalism in Islamic Law**

Cannibalism in Islamic Law delves into the profound religious and ethical implications outlined in the Quran and Hadith regarding the prohibition of cannibalism. Both primary sources within Islam condemn the act of consuming human flesh as a grievous offense against the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human being<sup>x</sup>.

“وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ”

The Quran, regarded as the literal word of God in Islam, articulates the foundational principles of ethical conduct, emphasizing the inherent value of human life and the imperative to treat others with compassion and respect<sup>xi</sup>. Likewise, the Hadith, which comprises the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, reinforces these teachings provides additional guidance on moral conduct, behavior, and successes<sup>xii</sup>.

“بَشَّرْتُ بِالْوَقْعَةِ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، مَتَى هِيَ؟ قَالَ: أَنْتُمْ تَقْدُمُونَ عَلَيْهَا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ، وَكَثْرَةُ وَقْفِكُمْ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ”

Together, these religious texts serve as the cornerstone of Islamic jurisprudence, shaping legal rulings and ethical norms within the Muslim community.

Islamic scholars and jurists have extensively interpreted the Quranic verses and Hadiths to elucidate the prohibition against cannibalism and its implications in Islamic law. They emphasize the gravity of this transgression and underscore the importance of upholding the principles of mercy and compassion towards fellow human beings<sup>xiii</sup>. Cannibalism is categorically condemned in Islam, with scholars emphasizing that it represents a fundamental violation of human dignity and a departure from the moral teachings of the faith<sup>xiv</sup>. Consequently, Islamic law imposes severe penalties for those found guilty of engaging in cannibalistic practices, reflecting the profound moral repugnance and societal condemnation associated with such acts<sup>xv</sup>. Through its unequivocal stance on cannibalism, Islam reinforces the fundamental principle that human life is sacred and inviolable, underscoring the importance of respecting the dignity and rights of all individuals.

In Islamic Law, while cannibalism is obviously prohibited, exceptions to these prohibitions are recognized in cases of extreme hunger or necessity. Islamic jurisprudence acknowledges the principle of necessity (*darurah*) as a valid justification for acts that would otherwise be prohibited<sup>xvi</sup>. Scholars cite Quranic verses and Hadiths that allow for exceptions to dietary restrictions, including the consumption of normally forbidden foods in situations of dire need<sup>xvii</sup>. The Quran states, "But if one is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then there is no sin on him"<sup>xviii</sup>.

“وَلَا تُكْتَبُ فِي النَّهْيِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَخْفُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُضْطَرُّوا إِلَى الْمَكْرُوهِ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ”

Similarly, Hadiths narrated by the Prophet Muhammad indicate that in times of extreme hunger or starvation, Muslims may consume prohibited foods, including carrion, blood, and pork, to sustain themselves the Quran states “Dead animals have been made permissible to you for three days: on the day of Uhud, on the day of the Trench, and on a journey of hardship for you”<sup>xix</sup>.

”أُبِيحَتْ لَكُمْ الْمَيْتَةُ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ: يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ، وَيَوْمَ الْخَنْدَقِ، وَسَفَرٍ لَكُمْ شَدِيدًا”

However, these exceptions are limited to situations where there is a genuine risk to life and no alternative food sources are available. Islamic scholars emphasize that the principle of necessity should be applied judiciously and only in cases of dire need<sup>xx</sup>. Moreover, the allowance for consuming forbidden foods is temporary and ceases once the necessity subsides<sup>xxi</sup>. Scholars also stress the importance of seeking lawful alternatives whenever possible to avoid resorting to prohibited acts. However, there are a few extreme situations where cannibalism may be allowed, but it is always under the condition that this forbidden act is the last line of defense and is performed out of necessity<sup>xxii</sup>. Here is a demonstration of Islamic perspective on taking good care of life and humankind, even though the situation might be a bizarre one and very hard.

The severity of punishment for the crime of cannibalism is indicative of the fact that the Islamic law takes these acts very seriously in its legal framework. The practice of cannibalism is held in high regard by Islam as it is considered a heinous against human kind and a transgression of the holiness of life. According to all Islamic fiqh (Islamic jurisdiction), the criminals verdict as cannibalism are put under judgment, this might vary by the scene of the offense and the context of the judicial interpretations<sup>xxiii</sup>. The Quran and Hadeeth record the condemnation of cannibalism and therefore give guidance on the penalty for cannibalism, highlighting the significance of maintaining law and order and protecting human dignity. The Islamic jurists and scholars agree that cannibalism deserves distinction penalty being that it represents crimes of innermost offence Islamic principles and societal norms<sup>xxiv</sup>. Although the precise penalties for cannibalism are not mentioned in the Holy text, Muslim legal scholars abide by the general principles of Sharia law, among which are life preservation, human dignity, and avoidance of bodily harm<sup>xxv</sup>.

The accused will get the harshest penalty in accordance with the other Islamic laws when cannibalism causes the death of a victim. This could be a qisas (punishment) or retaliation in kind<sup>xxvi</sup>. Indeed, offenders may face additional penalties beyond paying the diyah, such as being thrown in prison, fined, or otherwise subjected to any forms of punishment decided upon by the Islamic jurists. The severity of punishment for cannibalism underscores Islam's commitment to upholding justice and protecting the rights of individuals within society<sup>xxvii</sup>. Islamic law seeks to deter acts of cannibalism through stringent legal sanctions and aims to safeguard the sanctity of life and the dignity of human beings<sup>xxviii</sup>. By imposing strict penalties for cannibalism, Islamic jurisprudence sends a clear message about the abhorrent nature of such acts and underscores the importance of respecting the inherent value of human life<sup>xxix</sup>. Generally, punishment for cannibalism under Islamic law reflects the Islamic principles of justice, compassion, and the protection of human rights.

### Comparative Analysis of Cannibalism in Different Cultures

A comparative analysis of cannibalism in different cultures reveals varying perspectives and attitudes toward this practice, including how Islamic views on cannibalism differ from those of other religions. In Islam, cannibalism is unequivocally condemned as a grave offense against the sanctity of life and human dignity<sup>xxx</sup>. Islamic teachings emphasize the preservation of life and the prohibition of harm to others, with cannibalism viewed as a violation of these fundamental principles. In contrast, certain cultures and religions have historically incorporated cannibalistic practices into their rituals and beliefs, albeit with differing interpretations and justifications. For example, some indigenous cultures in the Pacific Islands and South America have engaged in cannibalism as part of mortuary rites or religious ceremonies, where the consumption of human flesh is believed to facilitate spiritual communion or symbolize a form of rebirth<sup>xxxi</sup>. Similarly, certain historical accounts document instances of cannibalism in ancient civilizations, such as the Aztec and Maya cultures of Mesoamerica, where human sacrifice and ritualistic cannibalism were integral to religious practices and cosmological beliefs<sup>xxxii</sup>.

However, it is essential to note that despite these cultural and religious variations, cannibalism remains a deeply contentious and morally fraught issue across societies. While some cultures may justify cannibalistic practices within specific religious or cultural contexts, others vehemently condemn such acts as barbaric and inhumane<sup>xxxiii</sup>. In the case of Islam, the unequivocal prohibition of cannibalism reflects the religion's emphasis on upholding ethical and moral standards that prioritize the well-being and dignity of all individuals. Through comparative analysis, scholars can gain insights into the diverse cultural and religious perspectives on cannibalism, facilitating a deeper understanding of its historical, social, and ethical dimensions. Cannibalism has been documented in various parts of the Pacific Islands, particularly in Melanesia and Polynesia, where raiding enemy villages and consuming enemy dead or captives was practiced<sup>xxxiv</sup>. Ross Bowden (1984) reports that among the Maori in New Zealand, cannibalism in warfare not only provided sustenance but also had symbolic significance, particularly in degrading the slain enemy by converting their flesh into food and their bones into common objects<sup>xxxv</sup>.

In Fiji, there is a historical connection between cannibalism and cultural practices such as the exchange of women for valuable items like whale teeth. Human sacrifice was part of ceremonial activities, and cannibal victims were consecrated to the major war god, symbolized by the chief. Anthropologists have documented cannibalistic practices in Melanesia, such as in the northern fore region of the New Guinea highlands, where enemies were consumed by both men and women. In the southern region, women and children ate kin and deceased members of the residential group<sup>xxxvi</sup>. Among the Gimi people, cannibalism served ritual purposes, preventing the decomposition of bodies and alleviating sorrow-induced hunger. Gimi practices were shaped by kinship relations, gender dynamics, and myths associating cannibalism with wildness and female sexuality<sup>xxxvii</sup>. In other parts of the New Guinea highlands, such as among the Bimin-Kuskusmin and the Miyanmin, warfare cannibalism was influenced by concerns related to fertility and gender. The Great Pandanus Tree Rite, involving feasting upon game and human victims obtained

through raiding nearby groups, underscored the cultural significance of gendered substances and the ritual expression of myth<sup>xxxviii</sup>.

Through these examples, it becomes evident that cannibalism in the Pacific Islands was deeply intertwined with cultural practices, social dynamics, and religious beliefs, reflecting complex relationships between warfare, kinship, and ritual symbolism. Such practices served not only as a means of sustenance but also carried significant cultural and symbolic meanings, shaping the worldview and social organization of these societies. Cannibalism has been intertwined with occult practices in various cultures and societies, often associated with rituals aimed at acquiring or renewing supernatural powers. Among the Asmat people of Papua New Guinea, for instance, the consumption of enemies was linked to the construction of masculinity through head-hunting and initiation rituals. Similarly, in West Africa, secret societies like the Human Leopard and Alligator among the Sherbro reportedly required head-hunting and cannibalism for membership, indicating the deep connection between cannibalism and occult beliefs<sup>xxxix</sup>.

Witches and sorcerers in different regions acquired their powers by consuming human flesh, believed to absorb the deceased's powers and strengthen their own. In some contemporary societies like the Sherbro of Sierra Leone, accusations of cannibalism serve as potent political weapons, highlighting the enduring influence of these beliefs. Witchcraft is often associated with cannibalism, serving as a means for individuals to gain supernatural abilities. In the New Guinea highlands, among groups like the Onabasulu, witches executed for their crimes were cooked and consumed symbolically, denying their humanity and moral status. Elsewhere, witches are believed to consume their victims to obtain personal power or mana. The belief in witchcraft as a source of cannibalism is widespread, with the notion that witches feed upon the blood and body of their victims leading to their death<sup>xl</sup>. In some cultures, there are cult groups of witches believed to teach and share cannibalistic acts, whether real or symbolic, while in others, the belief in solitary cannibal-witches persists. Neil Whitehead describes how sorcerers in the highlands of Guyana extract fluids from decomposing corpses as a gift to divine beings, ensuring the fertility of plants, fish, and animals<sup>xli</sup>. These cases demonstrate, on the one hand, how many cultures' superstitious perceptions of cannibalism, the occult, and power and fertility are deeply rooted in their cultures.

Cultural and social components that contributed in shaping the perception of cannibalism are briefly unveiled and the complexity of the issue is also thus explained through customs and circumstances. In many societies, cannibalism is integral to their culture, religious beliefs, traditional rituals, and social customs, the practice is both accepted and criticized, thus, forming the societies<sup>xlii</sup>. Cultural variables like spiritual or healing limited scope, which are included in the traditional beliefs about human meat, may be seen as helping attitudes towards cannibalism, since some take it as a blessed act whereas others would call it an evil deed<sup>xliii</sup>. Often the social influences of the differences in wealth, wars and ecological issues among others have a detrimental impact on traditions that are connected with cannibalism. In the same way, if we found ourselves in the situation of mass starvation or food shortages in the society which could either be a desperate option or an act of moral corruption<sup>xliv</sup>.

However, historical background is strong factor which is shaping the current social ideas about cannibalism, and the past methods of life explain the existing approaches<sup>xlv</sup>. In the example of those cultures that have a history that includes cannibalism or war, the views of these cultures towards cannibalism might differ from those cultures in which cannibalism is less common<sup>xlvi</sup>. Additionally, colonialism, globalization, and cultural exchange have impacted attitudes towards cannibalism by introducing new cultural norms and values that may challenge or reinforce existing beliefs<sup>xlvii</sup>. Generally, the discussion of cultural and social factors provides valuable insights into the diverse perspectives on cannibalism and the complex relationship of religious, cultural, and historical influences that shape attitudes towards this practice.

The analysis of the psychological motivations behind cannibalism reveals complex and varied factors that influence individuals or groups to engage in such extreme behavior. One psychological perspective suggests that cannibalism may stem from a combination of factors, including cultural beliefs, social pressures, and individual psychological states<sup>xlviii</sup>. For some cultures, cannibalism may be ritualistic, serving as a means of asserting dominance, expressing religious beliefs, or fulfilling spiritual needs<sup>xlix</sup>. In such cases, individuals may perceive cannibalism as a way to maintain social cohesion or to establish a connection with supernatural forces. Additionally, psychological studies have indicated that extreme hunger or starvation can lead to a breakdown in moral inhibitions, prompting individuals to resort to cannibalism as a last resort survival strategy<sup>l</sup>.

Furthermore, psychoanalytic theories propose that cannibalism may be linked to unconscious desires, fears, or traumatic experiences<sup>li</sup>. For example, Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that cannibalistic fantasies or behaviors may arise from unresolved conflicts related to early childhood experiences, such as feelings of abandonment or aggression<sup>lii</sup>. Furthermore, psychodynamic approaches highlight the role of unconscious drives, such as the desire for power, control, or gratification, in motivating cannibalistic acts<sup>liii</sup>. In some cases, individuals may turn to cannibalism as a means of exerting control over their environment or as a response to feelings of helplessness or inadequacy<sup>liv</sup>.

Moreover, sociocultural factors, such as socialization, cultural norms, and historical contexts, play a significant role in shaping the psychological motivations behind cannibalism<sup>lv</sup>. Social psychologists argue that individuals may be influenced by group dynamics, peer pressure, or cultural practices that normalize or sanction cannibalistic behavior<sup>lvi</sup>. Also, historical traumas, such as war, famine, or colonialism, can contribute to the normalization of cannibalism within certain societies, where it may be viewed as a survival strategy or a form of resistance against oppression<sup>lvii</sup>. Understanding the psychological motivations behind cannibalism requires a multidimensional approach that considers individual, cultural, and historical factors, shedding light on the complex interplay between human behavior and societal influences.

### **Case Studies of Cannibalism in Islamic History**

The examination of historical incidents of cannibalism in Islamic societies offers valuable insights into the complexities of cultural, social, and religious dynamics throughout history. While cannibalism is generally considered taboo in Islamic teachings, there have been rare instances

where it has occurred, often in times of extreme hardship or conflict. One notable historical incident is the Siege of Baghdad in 1258, was a devastating event in history, marking the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate and the destruction of one of the most renowned cities of the Islamic world. The Mongolian army, commanded by Hulagu Khan, surrounded Baghdad for months and finally entered the city. The siege was concluded by the confession of the city and sacking of Baghdad, absorbing the lives of almost all of its population. During the siege of Baghdad, people experienced hunger, fatigue and desperation so much that many narrations reported famine and starvation among the residents of Baghdad. In the time when all food supply was exhausted and no relief was possible many people with desperation in eyes had to go to limits to survive. The historical accounts tell us that some of the locals could not but help resorting to cannibalism when starving, a desperate way to get rid of the hunger growing in them with the Mongols' destruction of everything around them<sup>lviii</sup>. Likewise, the Siege of Ta'if in 630 CE as some sources have said cannibalism could have been the niche of the besieged people due to their desire to survive<sup>lix</sup>. These case studies show how war, famine, social disorganization and their effects may be inevitably leading people to extreme behavior like eating human meat.

The practice of cannibalism was encountered in the Islamic history as well, and there were several historical incidents can prove the ethical and moral dilemma. Indeed, these situations are infrequent and often happen in unusual or extremely eccentric conditions, but they bring forth the issue of the threshold of the human nature and the adaptability of traditional human norms when disaster strikes. Case studies in this instance provide a window into the psyche of the individuals and the complex systems, as well as an inquiry into moral and ethical collapse. Moreover, it gives people a chance to look back upon the role played by religion, governance, and their entire society in creating order and protecting human dignity when the world is falling apart<sup>lx</sup>. It is also crucial to reviewing historical incidents in Islamic history where cannibalism occurred in order to be able to provide a background to contemporary discussions on humanitarian disasters and conflict resolution. By being aware of the reasons that have become the causes of the human cannibalism in the past, through the means of various socioeconomic measures, scholars and public authority may find ways to deal with new similar predicaments in the present day. These encompass interventions geared towards famine prevention, offering aid to the less privileged members of society, and resolving conflicts with peace and reconciliation in mind. Interestingly, studying the historical case studies of cannibalism in Islamic societies is also a lesson about the need to observe human rights and human dignity even under the worst of circumstances<sup>lxi</sup>.

Historical incidences of cannibalism, such as the Siege of Baghdad in 1258 and the Siege of Ta'if in 630 CE, were caused by the resultant interrelation of social, economic, and political pressures. The city of Baghdad was the victim of a siege that had immense and lasting consequences. It lasted for almost two months, the devastating assault by the Mongols under Hulagu Khan. Life in the city was not the same anymore, as people were reduced to extreme hunger and depravity, and therefore, resorted to such dreadful things like satisfying their bodies with human flesh<sup>lxii</sup>. The breakdown of social structures and the breakdown of food supplies

caused the paradox in which cannibalism was the only cause that facilitated survival<sup>lxiii</sup>. Furthermore, the economic devastation caused by the siege, including the destruction of infrastructure and the disruption of trade routes, exacerbated the food shortages and contributed to the desperation of the population<sup>lxiv</sup>.

Similarly, the Siege of Ta'if in 630 CE was a significant event during the early Islamic period, where the besieged population faced dire circumstances that may have led to instances of cannibalism. Ta'if, a city in the Arabian Peninsula, was besieged by the Muslim army led by Prophet Muhammad, as part of the campaign to unify the Arabian Peninsula under Islam. The siege which took place in a few weeks' time, created unbearable scarcities of food and other resources that ultimately had a horrible impact on the residents. The more the situation intensifies, the more some documented sources are seen in which the besieged population is assured of eating human flesh out of the extreme desperation for their survival. They had no other choice but to survive and it can be that they consumed flesh of dead bodies or even the living creatures that were around them only to keep up with the moral of dyeing. The war of 1098 CE and the battle of the city of Ta'if showed the other side of the xenophobia and chauvinism for whom the siege was not an exception. These events prove that people there were faced with the extremity of the conditions and had to survive in the best possible way<sup>lxv</sup>. The social-economic tribulations of the siege, which together with the ferocity of the warfare have produced the extreme situation, where extreme measures have become indispensable for survival.

The political implication of the siege is a factor responsible for heightening the humanitarian crises and shedding some light on cannibalistic events. In both cases, it was the sieges that formed the core of military campaigns that had political ambition at their core and were entirely driven by the competition between warring parties to gain power. The Battle of Baghdad illustrates the Mongol campaign of conquering the Islamic world and serves the goals of territorial expansion and gaining victory. Furthermore, the Siege of Ta'if was a preemptive strategic military operation targeted to reinforce the emerging Islamic state power over the most populated area from the Arabian Peninsula<sup>lxvi</sup>. Beyond waging a war and the significant strategic objectives of those who blockaded as a result of this, the making of certainty of the existence for those who were trapped was a dire reality that cannibalism had to deal with.

These historical events raise great issues of ethics and morality, including the brutal and thoughtless infliction of human suffering in the extreme, and the blatant disruption of societal norms in times of desperation<sup>lxvii</sup>. If the case of the siege of Baghdad, where the Mongols besieged the city, is taken into concern, the cannibalism among the population would indicate the unimaginable horrors faced by the residents in the period of siege. The extreme hunger and lack of release that people under siege had to go through led them to that point where they could consume human flesh, making it true that human desperation has no boundaries while rules are kicked out the window in the face of overwhelming adversity<sup>lxviii</sup>.

Likewise, the Situation of Ta'if, where, according to some sources, cannibalism amongst the besieged inhabitants possibly happened, testifies to the extreme circumstances of attrition which were experienced by the defenders. The idea that without reserves, an individual comes to

the extreme measure of eating the other to survive creates a difficult ethical question regarding how far the human instinct for survival can push one and what limits deviate from moral norms that are acceptable<sup>lxix</sup>. Such incidents prompt thought on the moral and ethical issues of leadership during scenarios when community security is threatened and on questions over the morality of warfare and methods of attacking cities that bring such immense suffering upon the civilian population.

Furthermore, these historical examples of cannibalism in times of siege underscore the profound importance of empathy, compassion, and solidarity in alleviating human suffering during crises. When faced with extreme circumstances such as siege or famine, individuals may resort to desperate measures like cannibalism in order to survive. However, these acts also bring to light broader ethical and moral considerations regarding the responsibilities of individuals and societies to uphold the dignity and well-being of all people, even amidst conflict and adversity<sup>lxx</sup>. Moreover, the ethical dilemma of cannibalism does not concern only the act, but also other implications, such as life enhancement. It involves basic moral problems regarding the salvation of life, preservation of dignity, and limitations of permissible behavior under gust situations. Survival instincts have a way of guiding people to even the most extreme situations, eating human flesh being one of them, nonetheless, there is a moral obligation for one to sustain compassion and empathy, even in dire times where the situations is boxed into a different angle. Such instances act as sad images of morality collapse in the times of a great trial, signaling the challenge of moral issues' compliance in the period of catastrophe.

In substance, these historical instances of cannibalism made during siege and other crises show that the ethical systems, which should be guided by human rights and empathy, are the ones that can get these awful things done away with forever. They highlight the role of creating empathy and solidarity in the society, especially when society is faced with crisis. Attributing responsibilities to ethical dilemmas posed by cannibalism among others, societies and individuals together can be more confident of building a kind and just world, as both the dignity and welfare of individuals are priceless regardless of the situation, they end up in.

#### **Case Study of Cannibalism in District Bhakkar**

The horrific incident of two brothers, Mohammad Arif Ali and Mohammad Farman Ali, who were arrested in Bhakkar District of Punjab, Pakistan in April 2011 and later in April 2014 for the act of cannibalism. Two years later, in 2011, both the brothers were accused of consuming human flesh through grave desecration they were charged and imprisoned for two years. As they were sentenced, they reoffended and started with their brutalities until 2014 when they found a child's skull in their house. The brothers were then given a jail term of 12 years each. This led to a hike in the public outrage and unveiled a massive lack of comprehensible psychiatric and legal systems in the country, Pakistan<sup>lxxi</sup>.

The analysis of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Bhakkar District showed that it was one of the poorest districts in the province with low literacy rates and restricted access to health facilities including psychiatrist. The Ali brothers were, therefore, junior farmers with reduced land ownership decided to stay in seclusion with their sister who had

mental disorder. Their poor mental health and shortage of psychiatry should take blame, together with their economic constraints that forced them to extremes. The nature and severity of mental illnesses get worsened by the prevailing socio-economic Status within the area, compounded by the general shortage of mental health facilities and information<sup>lxxii</sup>. Both the Ali brothers committed cannibalism, which shows that they had some form of irrational psychology. Even though the police stated that the men had no medical issues and their physical and mental health was good, the behaviour implies some untreated severe psychological disorders, possibly psychosis or severe personality disorders. In many developing countries, healthcare practitioners fail to offer mental health services, and specifically in areas like Bhakkar; people with major psychological dysfunction are not attended to, therefore leading to devastating consequences. Their conduct explains why there is a need to ensure that mental health services are available to all who need them and timely intervention in such cases.

Pakistani law does not have provisions against cannibalism; hence, making it challenging for law enforcement to prosecute people accused of the act. Despite registering their plea not guilty, the brothers were charged under the anti-terrorism act on the grounds of desecration of graves and spreading of fear among people. Clergymen have criticized them for the brutality they displayed as the religion they profess prohibits burial site vandalisms and cannibalism. The holy book of the Muslims, the Qur'an, and the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith) do not allow killing but confirm the sanctity of life. Religious teachings appear to be very influential in the molding of public sentiments and incumbent legal measures toward such a crime<sup>lxxiii</sup>. It was heart breaking to hear about the actions of the brothers, and the reactions of the community to the incident only demonstrated their disbelief and anger when they were released in 2013. This resulted in demands for additional laws to be implemented or existing ones to be enforced to the letter in order to prevent the reoccurrence of such incidences. The government's response entailed the deployment of security forces especially the police and carrying out public awareness on mental health. Nevertheless, these measures were rather more of a reactive type. More specifically, it should involve bettering the socio-economic environment, offering mental help, and introducing laws to best prevent such actions<sup>lxxiv</sup>. Thus, the context of cannibalism in Bhakkar District points to a number of problems in the socio-economic and mental health realities of rural Pakistan. These scorching issues need to be tackled and solved using different approaches like a solution of increasing deficit of the mental health services, the economic situation, and strong legal framework. The actions of the Ali brothers are somber reminders of the repercussions that stem from burying one's mental disorders and socio-economic inequalities. It is also for the government and community leaders to set up ways and means on how these events can be avoided and how the victims can be helped in order to graduate to a safer and healthier society.

#### **Case Study of Cannibalism in China**

Cannibalism in Chinese pre-modern culture is a subject that has several layers and is firmly related to the various historical, political, and societal forms in the country. In Cultural Revolution in China that lasted from 1966-1976 and especially in the Guangxi province cannibalism reared its ugly head yet again. Such cannibalistic incidents were apparently noted in 1968 involving people

eating each other in the town of Wuxuan, Guangxi. The remaining militias that arrived to reinforce some structures also found bones of human corpses that were still decaying in the central business district. However, the fact remained that no serious probe into the workings of the facility was carried out for many years after. Until 1980, after the top political leaders of China, the Gang of Four, was overthrown, an investigation brought out only a few criminals and nobody actually know the full extent of the cannibalistic activities because people feared that it would bring a shame to the international community<sup>lxxv</sup>.

This cannibalism in Guangxi cannot be attributed to a mere loss of control by the society's members, but rather it was forced by the intensity of political and Social Revolution. The violence in Wuxuan was just one of the scenes of disorder where local clans struggled for control and did not hesitate to use brute force to establish it. These event were recorded by Zheng Yi, a writer who visited Wuxuan in 1986 and described them in his book *Scarlet Memorial the Chinese Speaks Not of Peace and Freedom*. The scene of cannibalism, the writer claimed that communists did revive such ancient practices and brought more aggressiveness. Zheng's work exposed that Party continued to protect its officials for the violent behaviors shown by them and underlined that there were deeper organizational pathologies in the Chinese government during those years of the reform. It is wrong to assume that the conflict in China during the Cultural Revolution is the only case that saw the act of cannibalism<sup>lxxvi</sup>. One can use historical examples that prove that such people as those who experienced severe hunger when searching for food and those who lived in social confictions turned to cannibalism.

For instance, in the course of different dynasties, people used to practice cannibalism owing to the lack of food. The phrase is outrageous saying "so hungry that they ate each other" which is commonly found in Chinese local histories. Though mere metaphoric, there are documented episodes in regards to survival cannibalism, which occurred when people resorted to eating human flesh during famines. Crises in previous histories set a record of how a society could be forced to resort to cannibalism when in a hopeless situation. However, there were cases of cannibalism in China which also had social significance, that is, they were of a symbolic and ritualistic nature. They used to commit suicide as a way of avenging or making a political stand if need be. There is literature evidence indicating that one enemy was consumed to terminate the conflict or used as a type of offering. For instance, the text of the Warring States period records that the defeated enemy is often prepared for consumption either pickled or stewed. These were not merely wicked deeds but also iconized with cultural values that deals with power and authority, blood, and the range of rites of passage. Cannibalism in these cases highlighted the sociopolitical relations supporting recommendable acts like cannibalism<sup>lxxvii</sup>.

### **Impacts of Modernity and Globalization**

The scope of modernization and globalization on views towards cannibalism in Muslim-dominated societies have been multifaceted manifesting different social, cultural, and economic changes. With the increased integration of the Muslim societies into the globalized people all together, traditional thoughts concerning cannibalism very often are also changed in some way<sup>lxxviii</sup>. Modernisation which is associated with urbanization, technology advancement and

huge impact on cultural diversity, has resulted into rejection of some traditional practices including those concerning cannibalism among predominantly Muslim countries<sup>lxxxix</sup>.

Globalization is considered as the main catalyst of the process of changing the ideas about human cannibalism by stimulating the exchange of information, values and cultural norms from different countries. The increased impetus toward Western cultural influences, mostly reaching through media has brought to the erosion of the most sacred customs of the most believers and faddiest and the substitution of the cosmopolitan ones in the Muslim communities<sup>lxxx</sup>. Yet another effect, facilitated mass communication and linkage worldwide, contributing to the notion in Muslims lands of individuals to be up-to-date on ideas of morality, ethics even human rights, which might go against or redefine what they know about the cannibalism issue<sup>lxxxi</sup>.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the impact of modernity and globalization on the attitudes of Muslims toward cannibalism is not homogenous and may be influenced by the factors such as social status and education as well as by where one lives. On the one hand, people who have the higher level of education and urban way of life are more familiar with the notion of cannibalism as something inappropriate or backward and, therefore, they are less willing to consider practice of cannibalism. On the other hand, people belonging to the remote village areas or population with lesser education can still prefer traditional methods and may still adhere to older concepts, albeit at a lesser extent<sup>lxxxii</sup>. Also, certain Muslim societies may decline the Western culture hegemony and their self-pride and cultural identity being the primary factor will bring back the old traditional values as well as the practice of cannibalism<sup>lxxxiii</sup>.

Fundamentally, the effect of modernism and globalization on attitudes towards cannibalism for Muslim communities, becomes a complicated subject, guided by a series of social, cultural, and economical factors. These phenomena have not only reduced traditional customs but also have caused numerous contradictions, controversies, and discussions about identity, ethics, and individual rights within the Muslim communities<sup>lxxxiv</sup>. The attitude of Muslim societies towards cannibalism is unlikely to remain constant in face of further globalization and modernization and the changes that this entails, with some traditions disappearing and new ideas emerging.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Dynamics of Cannibalism, Islam and the Ethical Dilemma**

The act of cannibalism is perceived differently through the Islamic perspective, for it presents a very complex and thorny ethical problem. While Islam unequivocally prohibits cannibalism, there are historical and cultural contexts where exceptions may arise, leading to a nuanced understanding of the practice. The dynamics of cannibalism within the framework of Islam intersect with various ethical considerations, including the sanctity of human life, the preservation of dignity, and the principles of necessity and survival<sup>lxxxv</sup>. For instance, in situations of extreme hunger or desperation, Islamic jurisprudence recognizes the principle of necessity, allowing for exceptions to dietary restrictions, including the consumption of normally forbidden foods such as human flesh<sup>lxxxvi</sup>. However, these exceptions are tightly regulated and limited to cases where there is a genuine risk to life and no alternative food sources are available<sup>lxxxvii</sup>.

Moreover, the ethical implications of cannibalism within Islamic societies extend beyond the act itself to encompass broader social and cultural norms. Cannibalism challenges fundamental Islamic principles of compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity, as it involves the desecration of the deceased and violates the sanctity of the human body<sup>lxxxviii</sup>. In addition, cannibalism can disrupt social cohesion and trust within communities, as it may lead to stigmatization, fear, and moral outrage among the population. The ethical considerations surrounding cannibalism in Islamic societies are further complicated by the potential misuse of religious teachings to justify or rationalize such acts, highlighting the importance of proper interpretation and application of Islamic law in addressing moral dilemmas<sup>lxxxix</sup>.

Furthermore, the dynamics of cannibalism within Islamic societies reflect broader issues of globalization, modernity, and cultural change. As Muslim communities navigate the challenges of globalization, including increased interconnectedness and exposure to diverse cultural norms, attitudes towards cannibalism may evolve and adapt<sup>xc</sup>. Modernity brings with it new ethical challenges and dilemmas, as technological advancements and shifting social structures reshape traditional values and practices. In this context, the role of Islamic scholars and religious authorities becomes crucial in providing guidance and moral leadership, ensuring that Islamic teachings remain relevant and applicable in contemporary society while upholding ethical standards<sup>xc1</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Accordingly, this study had indispensable findings about the complex relation between cannibalism and the Islamic rule of protection of lives and properties. Comparative analysis of different positions of body consumption in different cultural and religious contexts was made through an analysis of the Encyclopedia of Religion edited by Lindsay Jones. The central findings of the study point out the variety of opinions on cannibalism from one tribe to another and gives much attention to the role of different societal, religious, cultural and ethical meanings of cannibalism seen among different folk. Thus, the way that cannibalism is critiqued and treated in the Islamic society is so multifaceted and is interestingly being compared to the changing perceptions of other religions over the years. From the Islamic perspective protecting life and property, partaking in cannibalism is in conflict with Islamic teachings which sanctifies life and embraces dignity and rights for all human being. The ban on cannibalism in Islamic law is wholly based on these fundamental grounds of human dignity and it signifies the Islamic religion's massiveness entruntime to human life. Moreover, Islamic emphasis on compassion, justice and mutual respect can be perceived as the most influential factor in that type of behavior which is a counter-narrative to those practices that contradict the described fundamental principles, including cannibalism. Given that Islamic teachings support the concepts of justice, mercy, equality, and respect for human life, this conceptual framework disapproves the habit of cannibalism and killings.

### **Way Forward**

Moving forward, the need for more research is critical to understand further about cannibalism during the Islamic age and the larger consequences. The historical occurrence in regions where

Islam is the dominating religion is a topic which should be explored as another means. Through analyzing archived documents and archeological specimens and the pieces of cultural inheritance, the researchers can manage to get an idea of how widespread, regular, and culturally-embedded the cannibalistic activities had been in the past decades in the Muslim-majority regions. Besides, background and culture the community has on the concept of cannibalism is the element which should be clearly and comprehensively defined. Researchers may involve ethnographic studies to find how beliefs, rituals and social beliefs precondition people in order they normally look at cannibalism and mitigate their conduct.

Such a study would be helpful in discovering the real intentions, power relations and religious-cultural meanings of being cannibals in a given Muslim community. On the other hand, comparative schemas which considers the meaning of cannibalism in the context of its ethical, moral, and legal traditions in different religions, can help in understanding the universality of ethical principles and the human experiences across cultures. Through analyzing the system of moral beliefs incorporated by different religious denominations tackling the ethical problems of human consumption, scientists may spot some common moral reasoning and ethical justifications. The collection and comparison of such examples can only lead to a deeper understanding of ethical, legal and religious aspects of cannibalism and, respectively, for broad social norms and moral values.

Scholars are able to make progress in the field of cannibalism studies by means of on-going research and public dialogue, which in turn can contribute to increased knowledge of this phenomenon and its diverse ethical issues. Through archeological exploration, investigation of aspects of culture as well as religiosity, researchers will be able to clarify the complexity of cannibalistic practices and how they affected individuals and communities. The further exploration would eventually lead to gaining insights that might help to apply more appropriate strategies to solve the conflicting issues within the setting of cannibalism and the promotion of ethical and humanistic beliefs from one culture to another.

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