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**Milica Mitrović**
*Archaeological collection*
*Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade*
*Belgrade, Serbia*
mmitrovi@f.bg.ac.rs

# SPECIAL FOOD ON THE FEASTING MENU: REMAINS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MEALS SERVED WITH ETHNOANTHROPOLOGICAL APERITIFS[1]

**Abstract:** Even though food is a fundamental physiological necessity, its meanings and roles vary among cultures. Food is an essential factor in all social spheres for preserving the integrity of culture, even in cases when its consumption is taboo. This paper takes the standpoint of structuralism to examine the conditions in which certain foods become specific and significant. Ethno-anthropological cases are used as examples to indicate possible meanings of food in archaeological contexts. The study focuses on pork consumption in the contemporary funeral ritual of the islands of Papua New Guinea and animal domestication at the Çayönü site, going back to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic, but also looks at ethnographic and archaeological cases of cannibalism as an exceptional meal. Preparation, service, and food consumption depend on the social context, which is best gleaned through social events of a public character, such as rituals, feasts, and ceremonies. Food acquires its special status when it reinterprets social relations by turning a group of people into a community and creating a collective individual identity. Thinking in opposing pairs determined by food reveals contemporary and former metaphors regarding social, cultural and religious realities.

**Keywords:** food, feasts, ritual, structuralism, cannibalism, neolithisation

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## Appetizer

Over the past few decades, food has been extensively studied not only as a universal physiological need, but also as a social activity that is both intimate and public. The systematic organization of eating habits within each society has produced terminology that is used to express many aspects of life. Foodways serve as a metaphor for family, religion, gender, social status, group and national identity (Harvey 2015; Gardella 2005; Hunnewell Leynse and Pérez 2003; Mintz and DuBois 2002). Food arouses and intensifies the sensory experiences in the events in which it is involved and as such plays a role in forgetting and evoking memories (Holtzman 2006) and is even closely related to conflict management (VanDerwarker and Wilson 2016).

Anything that is not toxic is potential food. Yet, what is edible in one culture is not in another, and is determined by special rules for storing, serving and consuming. The properties of the food itself may make it more desirable, e.g. high calorie value (like fatty foods in hunting-gathering communities, Hayden 1995), rarity and difficult procurement. However, it acquires a special status by participating in prominent social contexts such as rituals, feasts and ceremonies. In a structuralist approach, we explore the meanings and significance of foods within selected communities from the past and present: pork within the current funerary customs of the community in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and neolithisation[2] at the Çayönü site, as well as human meat in Brazilian Wari and its consumption among archaeological remains.[3] Altough critiques of Lévi-Strauss theory point out that numerous examples do not fit into binary oppositions (Ashley et al. 2004), we use ethno-anthropological cases as guidelines for interpretations of the food in archaeological contexts and question whether the structuralism aligns with past remains.

Food-related works indicate that 1˚ there are more cases of taboos, omissions of rather than consuming specific foods in certain circumstances, 2˚ rarely certain foods play a role solely on special occasions; instead, everyday foods gain new, metaphorical meanings (wine and nafora in communion), or even its daily consumption is ritualistic (tea drinking in Japan, see Anderson 1987).

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2 Neolithisation, sometimes refers to the process by which human societies transitioned from a lifestyle of hunting and gathering to one based on agriculture and settlement, approximately 10000–3000 BC. Local neolithisation processes of animal and plant domestication, along with other changes in social, economic, and technological aspects of life, happened in a few areas in the world, among others, the Fertile Crescent in the Near East (including Anatolia where Çayönü is). In other adjacent areas, neolithisation is studied in terms of spreading the Neolithic way of life from primary areas. See more in Thorpe 1999, Kennet and Winterhalder 2006, Zeder 2011.

3 Although the selection of the site may appear random, there are similarities between the Çayönü site and PNG in the early domestication of pigs, which still hold significance in PNG (see Larson, Cucchi and Dobney 2011) The Wari case represents cannibalistic ritual practices. All three cases are chosen as representatives of specific food and ritual/feast contexts.

## Structure of the Meal: Watch How You Eat to Stay Clean

Each culture is a series of structures that are interrelated, encompassing social forms, values, cosmology, knowledge, and through which all experience is transmitted (Douglas 2001). Food pervades all social spheres, and even its absence, in terms of taboos, is to preserve the integrity of culture. Lévi-Strauss (1969) suggested that cooking, like language, possesses an 'unconscious structure' that enables the expression of basic understandings of reality in opposing pairs. Natural species are chosen for totems not because they are edible (as functionalists argue), but because they stimulate thought and symbolically express cultural concepts. Myths and taboos determine rules for consuming cooked and raw foods, creating a distinction between nature and culture.

Food becomes specific when tabooed and deprived of the edibility status. Certain foods are permanently forbidden within a group, while other taboos may only apply during specific ritual events or life stages. Taboos contribute to strengthening group cohesion and identity, but also serves in resource management (Quiroz and van Andel 2015).

Taboo is considered the precursor to religious life and even to be at the root of social life. It represents the rules of conduct, does not do proscribed, otherwise something bad, bodily harm or supernatural punishment will occur. This act of disobedience alone makes someone unclean and in danger (Fowles 2008, 16). Taboo is a negative ritual because it separates the sphere of the profane and the sacred, but also a confirmatory ritual because it affirms the frames of the sacred (Zuesse 1987). Setting boundaries and separating categories are considered to be the main role and feature of taboos. The most common food taboos are those related to the consumption of a particular animal[4], which come from the classification of the animal kingdom into 1) species that are eaten, 2) never eaten, and 3) which are edible or inedible in certain situations and to certain individuals (Fowles 2008). Food taboos symbolically classify culture, separating humans from animals, culture from nature, and appearing to demarcate in situations where there is a danger of categories being mixed: food must not be eaten if it is to disturb taxonomy. M. Douglas (2001) believes that animals that do not fit into clearly defined categories cause clutter, ruin landscaping, similar to dirt. Removing dirt is not a negative moment, but a positive attempt to organize the environment: exaggerating differences by making pairs of oppositions to create a sense of order. As taboo is usually about banning access

4 Taboos related to the consumption of plants are also well-known among cultures and societies (see Meyer-Rochow 2009, Quiroz and van Andel 2015). The study of plant remains, especially those that were consumed, in the archaeological record is limited and specific compared to animal remains, which are less perishable. Accordingly, this section deals with animal taboos because they are more visible in the archaeological material and more strongly indicate that they were consumed. The taboo on eating human substances is understood in modern society, so its occurrence related to specific circumstances is discussed later in the text (see also Ben-Nun 2014).

to or contact with *things*, this allows archaeologists to study it through material culture. On the other hand, this materialization of the prohibition is a kind of challenge because it is necessary to prove the meaning from the absence of remains, to discover the act that did not happen. Knowing about prohibitions can indicate parts of the ritual and belief systems. Archaeologically the most studied are taboos on food (Fowles 2008).

*Dressing: Codes and Salads*

Specific contexts of food use are rituals and ceremonies, of which feasts are an integral part. From a meal standpoint, it can be hard to distinguish them as they all entail eating food that is not commonly consumed, is usually shared in a public event or includes a larger group of people. These circumstances create and reaffirm social relationships as food becomes a powerful symbol that stimulates all the senses and satisfies physical, emotional and physiological needs.

Ritual is understood as symbolic human behavior as such, regardless of religious or social context, or as stylized, repetitive and explicitly religious behavior (Zuesse 1987; Alexander 1987). Its symbolism is largely about the simplest and most intense sensory experiences – eating, sexuality and pain. Ritual is a combination of mental activity and action, and includes emotions, experiences (knowledge), movements and communication (Insoll 2004). Ceremony is a purely social event that is formalized or custom-defined. It may have a religious note, but above all it has secular interests to maintain existing social norms. The study of rituals in small-scale societies concentrates on political action and leaders gaining prestige, while the accompanying competitive and ceremonial feasts with exchanges make up the political economy. Spielman (2002) emphasizes the direct influence of ritual events on an individual's life by creating and changing social relationships and imposing needs and desires for objects.

Since archaeological contexts and findings are often easily attributed to ritual significance[5], Verhoeven (2002) suggested criteria to determine them with more certainty. Archaeological remains should be special and distinguished from others on the site, based on spatial location, according to shape-texture-color, size, material of construction, presence of special parts, inventory, associations with other objects, number (unique or very rare) and functionality (cannot be interpreted in a domestic, everyday sense). In

5 Brück (2007, 317) notes that 'If sites or artefacts cannot be explained according to a contemporary functionalist rationale, then they become re1egated to a residual ritual category'. Likewise, as we learned during our studies, archaeologists specializing in the Metal ages commonly refer to an artifact as 'symbolic' or 'part of the horse equipment' when they are unable to ascertain its function.

archaeological research, ritual is an event in which people, their activities and things are separated from others and placed in a non-domestic field.[6] Swenson (2015) states that conceptual themes in the past, like cognition, personality, household, social memory, are mostly reconstructed by interpreting material remains through structuralist epistemologies and appropriate opposites: male-female, domestic-wild, nature-culture and similar.

The *feast* entails a plentiful meal in which food is also served for display, and the act of consuming it is not ordinary, but over-emphasized, as a play. A feast can represent any meal of two or more people that differs from everyday and involves special foods in terms of quality, preparation or quantity, as well as public ritual activity including consumption of food and drink and performance (Dietler and Hayden 2001). Feasts create social identities and memories, political power, and develop prestigious technologies. The structural-functionalist approach emphasizes that the feasts maintain a current cultural system, manipulating food-related meanings in order to obscure the elements of conflict and promote social solidarity. Archaeologists widely accept this view and sometimes make distinctions between competitive feasts that emphasize individuals and clans and ceremonial and ritual feasts intended to strengthen social bonds (Hayden and Villeneuve 2011; Hayden 1995).

Twiss (2008) identified ethnographic characteristics of feasts of hunter-gatherers and farmers, which are also observable in the archaeological record: consumption of large quantities of various food and drink, including alcohol, foods that are rarely eaten or symbolically significant, consumption of large and domestic animals, use of special locations and structures. The feasts are public and include performance like singing, dancing, music; displaying wealth and destroying things or throwing away food, and circulating special commemorative items. The food served stands out in value, requiring a lot of effort to obtain. Neolithic feast embraced the symbolic and practical values of early domesticated plants and animalsn, they would be desirable and special food because rarity and difficult procurement. While animal slaughter could have been a public, sacrificial act, a performance the annual cultivation of cereals and their ability to be fermented into beer, a popular social beverage, allowed it to be enjoyed at seasonal feasts. Phenomena like rituals, feasts and sacrifices remain poorly defined and differentiated in arcaeological studies (Hayden and Villeneuve 2011).

6 Here, one should remember the limited possibilities of archaeological research that is based on the material remains of the past. For example, the future archaeologists would distinguish the present ritual church context from secular residential buildings. They may notice the symbolism of the regularity of placing icons/oil lamps on the eastern walls of the houses. However, they would not be able to claim the existence of everyday ritualized actions such as prayer at the table before a meal or by the bed before going to sleep, which do not leave or are associated with special objects. Moreover, even if a person was physically present in a ritual context, we cannot claim whether he/she actively participated or was mentally absent. Therefore, the archaeological indicators defining ritual are in focus.

## *Main Course: Pork Dish – Social and Soul Food*

In the community in the Tanga Islands belonging to Papua New Guinea, pork is specific food consumed exclusively at feasts as part of a funeral ritual (Foster 1990). At the Çayönü Tepesi archeological site in Turkey, which testifies to the development of the Neolithic, the special status of food – pork, as well as meat of sheep and beef, can be inferred based on the context of ritual and feast.

The funeral ritual in the Tanga Islands includes a series of customary feasts following the death of a community member. In the first phase, the matrilineal lineage of the deceased receives live pigs from members of the clan, and organizes smaller feasts when one or two pigs are cooked. After the funeral, only the male members of the deceased's lineage attend a feast where they have to eat everything and symbolically consume the 'body odor'. Subsequent feasts break the taboos of grief and announce the second phase, the construction of a men's house, which is common after the death of a prominent member and can last for ten years. It begins with the erection of smaller dwellings, imposing an obligation on the deceased's lineage to raise pigs for sharing at future feasts. When the pigs are fattened, after about four years, a feast is held to begin construction of the new house. A series of feasts accompany works for which no rules have been laid down as to the number and structure of attendees or the type of meal. After the house is erected, the grief of the deceased ceases and he is replaced by a younger member of the lineage. At ending feasts, the hosts distribute cooked meat of 20–30 pigs to the guests, and the pork is 'bought' by shells beforehand from the deceased's nephews (Foster 1990).

Çayönü Tepesi is well-known site located in southeastern Turkey. Its archaeological remains from Pre-Pottery Neolithic, c. 9–7th millenium cal BC, include complex architecture and secondary burials (Özdoğan 1999). The ritual in Çayönü is evidenced by cult buildings, burials (both in domestic contexts and in public buildings), decapitation of skeletons and finds of skulls, figurines of humans and animals and animal horns in public buildings. Feasts and a complex public ritual were held during the PPNB period (Table 1) in the eastern part of the settlement, where there were no buildings other than cult ones. The local domestication of a pig indicates that pork was a desirable food, certainly served at feasts. It may have been used in rituals, especially if they relate to the connection between humans and animals. Also, emmer has been cultivated. In the following period, sheep and goat, introduced domesticates, received the status of feast foods. Traces of sheep and bovine blood, along with human, have been discovered on the 'altar' in Skull building where a funeral ritual was performed. At the end of the PPNC period, the influence of ritual as a cohesive force declines, there is no collective burial or common ancestors. The Red square made of the *in situ* burned bricks had the role of attracting an audience and the ritual had to be spectacular. It took place in a Terrazzo building in which a stone recipient with traces of human blood was discovered, but the question remains whether the finding indicates human sacrifice

Table 1. Insight into diet, ritual and competition at the Çayönü site, according to data from Özdoğan 1999, Verhoeven 2002 and Kuijt 2000. Older settlement phases before the appearance of ritual buildings, cultivation and competition were not considered.

| Phases and dating | | | | | Food resources | evidence on ritual | possible rituals | competittion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| II | Early PPNB | 9100-9000 | Channeled building | ch 1-4 | wild boar kept in the settlement, wild emer was intensively harvested | The Flagstone and Skull buildings, primary and secondary burials in ritual building: decapitation, horns and auroch skulls with human bones, secondary burials in the domestic context, female figures from earlier, with animals occurring, burial of houses | public: rites of passage, skull cult, rituals about human-animal bonding, calendrical, political; individual and home&domestic: rites of passage and cult of the skull, magic rituals: of exchange and communion, affliction | competition begins, prominent residents are buried in Skull building |
| III | Middle PPNB | 9000-8600 (?) | Cobble paved building | cp 1-3 | domestic? sheep and goats are increasingly used in the diet, wild emer - cultured | Pebbled Plaza with stelaes, the Bench building, the Skull building: 1) sacrificial altar with traces of human blood, sheep, auroch, 2) burials: secondary, decapitation, skulls, 3) aurochs skull on the wall towards the yard; secondary burials in open areas, mainly children, burial of houses, figurines | public: includes blood - rituals of exchange and sacrifice, rites of passage, calendrical, recovery, political, feasts, festivals; individual and home: magic rituals, exchanges and sacrifices, healing | the competition continues, but with the semblance of equality, as all the deceased except the infanate receive the same treatment |
| | Late PPNB | 8600-8300 | Cell plan building | c 1-3a | domestic sheep and goats, cereals become more important | Red clayey plaza 60x20 m, renewed three times and cleaned; Terrazo building - pool and recipient with traces of human blood; funerals - primary, in houses, in one: dead in crouched position in clay chest, figurines, burial of buildings | public: includes liquids and blood, rituals of recovery, exchange and sacrifice; individual and home: rites of passage, magic rituals: exchanges and sacrifices, healing | more compartments in houses, the competition continues; social stress due to population growth, reduced information flow and the ability to participate in public rituals, reduced ritual effect |
| IV | | | | c 3b | fully domesticated sheep and goats | no burial of houses, eastern space becomes inhabited, necropolis outside settlement ?, three buildings of unspecified functions stand out, sudden appearance of sheep and goat figurines | the decline of rituals, the cessation of taboos, individual and household rituals: magic, exchanges | |
| | PPNC | 8200-8000 (?) | Large room building | lr 1-6 | | | | |

(Kornienko 2015). The ritual was not for many participants as the building could accommodate 43 people and was closed towards a square that could seat at least 600 people (Verhoeven 2002, 247[7]). The diet is dominated by sheep and goats with a higher representation of cereals. The ritual during the PPNB is also the practice of 'burying' houses and cult buildings. They were at some point cleansed with the removal of personal items, while stationary inventory and animal bones were left behind, doors were blocked and sterile soil was poured onto the building (Özdoğan 1999). Moreover, the Stone Building and the Skull Building were 'killed' at the end of Phase II, with the act of breaking the stone stelae inside them. The very end of the PPNB period testifies to the great changes and the cessation of public ritual, which continue during the PPNC: there are no cult buildings, the spatial 'border' in the settlement has disappeared, and no funerals have been discovered. The houses are being used continuously without their 'burial', while figurines[8] have been found in the residential area.

In the Tanga islands, pork and shellfish discs materialize the opposition between consumption and non-consumption. Jewelry is collectively used in various exchanges, and each lineage has a number of large discs that do not circulate but remain in the hands of the heads of the family. Value gives them the property of permanence, because they are not consumable, as opposed to pork and foods that are 'edible' – transient. The discs do not change for live pigs that can be physically reproduced. In this way, consumption symbolizes temporality while abstaining from eating indicates permanence. By receiving disks and refraining from eating at the feast, the host line is constituted as a collective, permanent individual, (Foster 1990).

The two stages of the ritual mark the lineage of the deceased in two ways. Initially, only the family receives pork, and at the feast after the funeral, only male relatives 'eat the body odor' of the deceased through the pig's meat. The lineage receives ephemeral and consumer / consumed status as the deceased feeds on himself. Opposite the lineage of the deceased are those who mourn, who, under various taboos, abstain from food and represent non-consumers. After the funeral, the lineage of the deceased hosts a series of feasts, reversing the signs of status and becoming a giver, non-consumer. By feasting and building a new house, the lineage is constituted as a permanent individual on the basis of the ability to transform temporary (pigs and food) into long-term values (shells) (Foster 1990).

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7 The author states that 'It has been estimated that a person would occupy 2 square metres of floor area. This is a relatively large amount of space, which has been chosen in order to account for 'the loss of floorspace' caused by the presence of interior features.' (Verhoeven 2002, 255, footnote 21)

8 Figurines have traditionally been interpreted in archeology as an indicator of ritual, although in recent decades many have been found to be the product of children's hands, ie. probably toys (see Kamp 2001; Balj 2012). However, no such analysis was made for the Çayönü findings

Ritual feasts involving pork are also present at Maring, also in Papua New Guinea. They accompany the wars and take place about every 12 years. An ecological and economic explanation points out that pigs are a competitors to humans and their numbers must be controlled by multi-day feasting (Harris 1974). The slaughter of pigs at the height of each cycle reduces and replaces the killing of humans or the ancestral victim. Food is important and symbolizes the various oppositions (Table 2, Rappaport 1999).

Table 2. Opposites in Marings', according to Rappaport 1999

| | |
|---|---|
| warfare | planting |
| upper parts of the body | lower parts of the body |
| male | female |
| hot | cold |
| hard | soft |
| dry | wet |
| cultural | natural |
| spiritual | fertile |
| immortal | mortal |
| Red Spirits | Spirits of the Low Ground |

Let me discuss the oppositions of food in Çayönü. In the early PPNB period, pigs kept in the settlement would be 'domestic' as opposed to wild animals. They would change that status in the next phase when the sheep and the goat are 'domestic' and the pig returns to 'wild'. The eastern part of the settlement was a ritual area, possibly understood as wild, that needs to be cultivated, as opposed to a western residential and domestic one. If we follow the opposition that the woman is related to domestic, then the eastern part would be male, where they hold rituals in 'men's houses'. There is evidence of a calendar-regulated ritual likely to be associated with the harvest of a cultivated emmer in the middle PPNB period. The skulls testify to the longer storage in the ritual building, the question is what time intervals took place. In Papua New Guinea, the ritual period is determined not by the astronomical calendar, but by estimates when enough pigs have been bred to be served on the feast (Rappaport 1999). The temporal dimension of the ritual is lost at the end of the PPNB. It is noticeable that the residents of Çayönü were somehow obsessed with cleanliness, as evidenced by secondary funerals – the 'cleaning' of bones from organic tissue, as well as the cleaning of houses before 'burial' and the cleaning of the Square before each renovation. So the question arises what was dirty, taboo, forbidden and what boundaries should not have been crossed, or categories mixed. The Eastern, ritual part would be sacred, but at the same time unclean, in the true physical sense. If sacrifices and preparations were made for secondary funerals, the space would be dirty – with the blood, with many unpleasant, from our point of view, the smells of body decay and rot, which

would contribute to a marginal position in the settlement (Croucher 2005). The chronology of the building shows that it has been used for about 400 years, and the remains of at least 450 individuals have been discovered in it (Verhoeven 2002). Relationship with wildlife was important to the ritual and opposition was highlighted (Table 3, Verhoeven 2002).

Table 3. Opposites in Çayönü, as suggested Verhoeven 2002

| | |
|---|---|
| wild | domestic |
| male | female |
| nature | culture |
| death | life |
| stone | clay |

Connecting with wild animals would be an act contrary to the domestication of society, plants and animals, in which the man managed to maintain a dominant role. In this case, the pig 'walked' from the male category into the female and domestic sphere, to return to the male and death sphere again[9], as evidenced by the wild boar mandible placed over two graves, from the late PPNB period (Özdoğan 1999). Interestingly, domesticated sheep and goats are first used in the diet and later their figurines appear. Initially, they were important as food and thus became part of private rituals and symbolism, which does not correspond to the postulate of Lévi-Strauss that the animal is first essential for thought and then for nutrition.

## The Treat: A Cannibalistic Specialty

Ethnographic records indicate that served human flesh was a specific meal whose consumption was not exclusively related to ritual events. Although some scholars have doubted the credibility of the ethnographic descriptions of 16th-century missionaries about such behavior in newly discovered communities, today the question of past cannibalism as a reality is not raised, but the causes of its occurrence and duration are studied (Lindenbaum 2004). Cannibalism types are classified by function (Fernández-Jalvo et al. 1999) as 1) nutritional, which can be incidental triggered by starvation, or gastronomic when human meat is part of the diet[10] but usually related to magic, 2) ritual, magic, funerary – related to beliefs, e.g. consuming the deceased to inherit his traits 3) pathological – indicating a mental disease of a consumer. Social criteria recognize *exocannibalism* – consumption of aliens, and *endocannibalism* – consumption of individuals within a group.

9 For more on female vs. male and domestic v.s. wild dichotomies see Hodder 1987

10 The existence of this type is frequently rejected since evidence shows that communities that regularly consume human flesh have deeply held beliefs connected to it.

The discourse on cannibals, savages practicing anthropophagy, was constructed in the context of colonialism (Lindenbaum 2004, Obeyesekere 2005). For two months in the 1960s, South American natives Guayaki hid from anthropologists P. Clastres that they were cannibals, accusing other tribes and making fun of them. When he discovered the practice, they confirmed and enthusiastically detailed customs (Clastres 1998).

According to the Lévi-Strauss classification, the way a person is cooked would reflect their social position and indicate whether 'food' is a relative or an enemy. If boiling is associated with home preparation and roasting with guests, the relative should be boiled and the enemy baked, but this has not been demonstrated by an cross-cultural analysis of cannibalism types and processing methods (Shankman 1969, 58). Even so, the structuralist approach reveals metaphors about numerous social realities. The practice of cannibalism in Wari, a resident of western Brazil, expressed sorrow for the deceased members of the community, while exo-cannibalism also existed, with the flesh of the enemy consumed with carelessness, like the flesh of an animal[11]. Their social universe, expressed in funerary customs, was structured around opposites and reciprocities between hunters and prey on multiple levels: humans vs. animals, relatives (those who mix body fluids) vs. relatives acquired by marriage, living vs. dead. The most dramatic moment of the ritual was the taking of the dead body of the deceased for cutting from the cousins who embrace it, while consumption was a natural following that is peacefully embraced. The closest relatives of the deceased did not participate in the meal as this would be autocannibalism. The taboo on incest and the prohibition on consumption coincided: the deceased might be 'tried' by the relatives of the spouse, and if he had not been married, then he was eaten by the relatives' spouses. Cannibalism was an obligation and rejection is an insult. The act itself began with an expression of aversion and only after persuading the relative to access the meal. Participants ate slowly and cried during the meal to commemorate the dead. It was ideal to eat all the meat, but the amount eaten depended on the state of decay of the body: a greater reputation imposed a longer delay for roasting, for all friends to gather and express their sorrow. After cremation, the bones were crushed, mixed with honey and eaten, or crushed and buried (Conklin 1995).

The goal of the ritual was to help the community cope with the loss and to make it easier to adjust to life without the deceased; therefore, everything related to the deceased was removed – the house and belongings were destroyed, and the deceased was transitioned from the living world to the world of the dead (Conklin 1995). Similarly, the Aché of Paraguay consumed their dead so that the spirits would not return to the world of the living, lest they be bound by the body to this world (Clastres 1998). According to Wari's beliefs, those who ate were at

11 Upon the arrival of missionaries who attributed the spread of the disease, inexplicable to the Wari, to the practice of anthropophagy, they began to bury the deceased and abandoned cannibalism in 1962/63

the same time those who were eaten: they were hunters of the Aquatic spirits embodied in animals, but also hunted in relation to the Aquatic spirits of death. The cosmological conception of reciprocal circulation reflected the alliance of people with the Aquatic Spirits: the spirit of the deceased first moved into the water, entered the body of the fish and sendt food to the living. The spirits of the dead entered the bodies of the animals that supplied the community, and cannibalism was the offering of themselves first as food (Conklin 1995).

### *Archaeological Evidence on Cannibalistic Meals*

Cannibalism cannot be easily claimed on archaeological remains: even with numerous indicators, such conclusions are subject to very sharp criticism. If even with great certainty the existence of anthropophagy is attributed to a particular context, it is not easy to determine its motivation. Nutritional cannibalism is suggested by comparing human and animal remains from the same archaeological context (Fernández-Jalvo 1999, 593). If human and animal remains come from different contexts, with distinct patterns of use and distribution, we should consider the possibility of ritualistic or other forms of cannibalism.

Cannibalism was confirmed in early hominins in the Atapuerca, Spain, ca 780 000 years BP (Fernández-Jalvo 1999) and in Neanderthals, in the Moula-Guersi cave in France, ca 100 000 years ago (Defleur et al. 1999), as well as in Krapina, Croatia, ca 130 000 years ago (White, 2001), which is recognized as surviving cannibalism. In the Klasies River Mouth site, ca 100 000 years ago, osteological finds of early modern *Homo sapiens* in context with food remains incisions indicate episodic dietary cannibalism (Deacon and Wurz 2005, 138).

Postmortem ritual cannibalism with modifications of human skulls into vessels was discovered in Gou Cave, UK, aged 15000 years BC (Bello et al. 2015), while somewhat later, on the transition from the Epipaleolithic to the Mesolithic, food shortages, accompanied by developed complexity of rituals and social relationships, may have provoked anthropophagy in the area of Spain (Morales-Pérez et al. 2017). Numerous indicators of the practice of cannibalism on the sites of Hopi culture in American Southwestern dated to 12/13. century AD are thought to be due to climatic conditions, that is, food shortages caused by drought (Billman, Lambert and Leonard 2000), but some researchers reject the existence of cannibalism by attributing modifications of human bones to the remains of magical rituals (Darling 1998; Dongoske, Martin and Ferguson 2000).

## *After-Party* Discussion and Conclusion

The study of food in the past mainly focuses on outstanding events – feasts, as they are more visible in the archaeological record (Hayden and Villeneuve 2011); however, some authors emphasize the importance of everyday commensality

and foodways, which ensure social reproduction while maintaining the identity of the community (Pollock 2015). This view is especially important for the study of colonial contacts, in this sense neolithisation can be seen as a period of contacts.[12] Food, through *commensality* – social rules who with whom and when to eat plays a strong role in creating and defining social relationships, which are established by the ways in which food is prepared, served and consumed (Jaffe, Wei and Zhao 2018). Food has a particularly symbolic meaning in communities that do not have a monetary economy because it provides what is necessary to survive and fulfill social obligations (Rappaport 1999). Food makes a group of people a *consubstantial community* (Obeyesekere 2005) by creating the identity of a collective individual through the consumption of a consecrated substance. Consuming the same food, usually from joint vessels, draws boundaries around the group, making it sacred and family-like. Food is central to many myths and plays a central role in rituals, as its symbols connect the realities of current life with the sacred, in a touching way. Without any pretense of drawing general conclusions about the use of specific foods, the comparison of consuming extraordinary food in Wari and the Tang Islands highlights similarities: both follow a funeral ritual, in both communities those who eat are at the same time eaten, relatives do not participate in the meal, and 'body odor' plays a significant role by imposing an obligation to eat rather than to enjoy. In Papua New Guinea, it is possible that pork in ritual is a substitute for formerly human flesh, as in Madagascar where human meat has been replaced by beef. In doing so, although the type of food was changed, the new food retained, or received, the symbolism of the former (see Bloch 1985). Likely, Strathern (1982) argued that cannibalism in the eastern highlands is linked to the lack of pigs needed to fulfil social obligations, but later works disagreed (see more in Whitfield, Pako and Alpers 2024[13]). In some cases, the ritual consumption of human flesh actually marks and empowers taboo on cannibalism. In the Yoruba community, the king should eat the heart of his predecessor, while in Gonja, the older chiefs eat food containing the human liver. Such a practice of so-called controlled cannibalism is widespread in West Africa and actually represents rejection rather than acceptance of cannibalism (Goody 1982).

Archeological remains cannot be directly explained by contemporary forms of community behavior, but thinking about them through food reveals a former world that was worldly and spiritually possibly structured into pairs of opposites.

12 This analogy should be used careful consideration and appropriate contextualization; colonial contacts often involve conflict situations, of which we have only a few evidence from the Neolithic period. The interplay of culinary and consumer habits among cultures and communities is undoubtedly an exciting and important question that remains beyond the scope of this paper.

13 The authors show through a detailed analysis that the South Fore people from PNG ate the bodies of their loved ones out of love and respect. They conclude that anthropophagy served as a means to conquer death and transform the deceased into an ancestor, thus affirming the enduring nature of the individual and society (Whitfield, Pako and Alpers 2024), similar to Foster's (1990) remarks on consuming pigs in mortuary customs.

The evidence from Çayönü can be compared to the conclusions of Twiss (2008), who tested feast indicators on remains originating from Levantine Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN). During the early PPNB period, competition occurs, while in the middle PPNB, a more public ritual is developed that, with the feasts, aims to unite individual households in functional settlements. Late PPNB testifies to the rise in differentiation but also to investment in community integration through collaborative work on public architecture. At that time, Çayönü was invested in cleaning and maintaining the Red Square, but the power of public ritual was declining. In PPNC, there is a disaggregation of the population and material simplification, which in Çayönü is seen as the strengthening of individual rituals. An analysis of Levantine PPN remains indicates that feasts played a dual role, on the one hand supporting differentiation through private household competition, while buffering stress by enhancing connectivity through the participation of all members of the community (Twiss 2008), as evidenced in Çayönü. Although domesticated animals are considered prestigious, specific foods at feasts, it should be borne in mind that domestication is an on-going process that involves numerous interrelationships and complex relationships and not just two categories of animals: wildlife and domesticated (Simon 2015). Changing categories and types of animals used in rituals and feasts in Çayönü support such a view. Moreover, skeletal evidence from Cell-building subphase at Çayönü indicate differencies in male and female food consumptions meaning that some social rules related to sex /gender differencies were related to the distribution of resources among groups (Pearson et al. 2013).

Pig feasts played a major role in PNG societies. Their significance and complexity are attested regarding of social cohesion, gender constitution, economic redistribution, status and prestige as well as rituals and ceremonies in works of A. Strathern 1971, M. Strathern 1988, Brown 1978, Rappaport 1984, Lindenbaum 2013 and many more. Foster's (1990) structuralist perspective adds another dimension, just as this paper seeks to present discussing prehistoric feasts. The structuralist viewpoint reveals the symbolic nature of the feast while still acknowledging the existence of other aspects, providing a more extensive array of possible meanings. Just as Broderick (2016b) advocates that the purpose of analogy is not to suggest a like-for-like behaviour but a possibility.

Consumption is a social event and serves to mark social time and establish a social identity, which is especially emphasized in rituals that are reproduction, renewal of the whole lineage, collective individual. Pigs are bred in Taiwan to be sacrificed to ancestors in bridal or rituals to thank for their hunting success, they bring people together and make them a community (Simon 2015). Incorporating ritualistic habits, like repeating gestures, can increase the pleasure of consuming food, making it more delicious and desirable (Vohs et al. 2013). On the other hand, the food involved in the ritual enhances its emotional aspects because the ritual is a somatic, sensory and material practice (Swenson 2015; Insoll 2004). While the ritual context of serving and

consumption strengthens solidarity, feasting can emphasize competition, supporting stratified social systems based on differences in gender, age. Food at feasts along with all senses, space, spoken language and body movements create concepts of inequality, status is a sensory experience (Keating 2000), while at the same time uniting participants as they have a coordinated taste perception (Joyce and Henderson 2007).

Archaeologists cannot reveal the sensory experiences of the meal with certainty[14], but they can consider the religious factors that shape the diet, in terms of conception, ingredients and consumption, and their impact on material remains, since the structure of animal consumption does not always fit the economic 'logic' (Insoll 2004). Harvey (2015) calls for religion to be seen as foodways because its beginnings also lie in delimiting the environment to what is eaten and what is not eaten. People's relationships with the surrounding are reflected by taboos on food[15] being transmitted, taught, adopted, adapted, or rejected, and make religion seem more like a system of purity rather than belief. This approach to consumption in past societies may indicate certain religious, cognitive aspects of the community that archaeologists have traditionally studied solely through symbolic, special objects. The authors highlight the relationship between food and other aspects of life, emphasizing its relevance in the analysis of cultural and social factors such as political,, emotional, expressive, linguistic, material spheres, gender identification and confirmation, ethnic and racial difference (Sutton 2010).

Binary categorizations have notable limitations, particularly in their application to social categories, which are fluid and context-dependent. Western dichotomies such as humans versus animals and nature versus culture are not universally accurate.[16] Ingold (2000) highlights this by describing hunter-gatherer practices where animals present themselves to hunters, making the act of killing non-violent. Among the Wari, animals with ancestral spirits are seen as food gifts. These examples illustrate the need to recognize the variability and situational nature of social categories, challenging rigid binary classifications.

Marshall (2006) points out that while the structuralist approach may seem too limiting, the postmodernist approaches prioritize lived experience, actors, practices and context but underestimate the importance of routines and habits in our eating (in terms of meal structure, daily meals as ritual and routine with foreseen and known actions, place, participants, time frame). Indeed, cooking can be thought of as a language that expresses thoughts and ideas,

14 However, in the last few decades, intensively developing fields and defining methodologies for cognitive archaeology, sensory archaeology, archaeology of emotions (see Tarlow 2000; Day 2013; Pellini, Zarankin and Salerno 2015; Coolidge and Wynn 2016; Skeates and Day 2020; Mitrović 2022, 2023)

15 Taboos are approachable from different perspectives too, see, e.g., the functionalist approach in Meyer-Rochow 2009.

16 See more on shared existence and coconstitutions of human– and non-human animals (Haraway 2003), on multiple relations between humans and animals (Broderick 2016a), on diverse ways in which societies conceptualize and interact with the natural world (Descola 2013)

manifested in food taboos and structured in binary oppositions (Insoll 2004; Lévi-Strauss 1969). Mullins (2011) sees consumption as an ongoing process of self-definition and collective identity and agrees that structural processes profoundly impact consumption, shaping consumer behavior and symbolism. In reviewing the archaeological studies of consumption, he emphasizes the tension between structural influences and consumer agency, favouring the archaeology's methodological rigor in examining material objects as crucial for understanding consumption. An interdisciplinary archaeology of consumption can document consumer patterns, embed them in structural and cultural contexts, and highlight how consumers navigate dominant influences in unique ways (Mullins 2011). The structuralist approach to consumption reveals contemporary and former metaphors about social, cultural and religious realities expressed through specific foods.

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