

# A Probe into the Phenomenon of Human Sacrifice in the Neolithic Age in Chengdu Plain, China

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**How to cite this paper:** Ding, Y. N. (2023). A Probe into the Phenomenon of Human Sacrifice in the Neolithic Age in Chengdu Plain, China. *Archaeological Discovery*, 11, 171-187.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ad.2023.113008>

**Received:** May 10, 2023

**Accepted:** July 4, 2023

**Published:** July 7, 2023

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## Abstract

This article delves into the Neolithic Age phenomenon of human sacrifice in Chengdu Plain. The innovative aspects of the article include: first, we have summarized and categorized the phenomenon of human sacrifice in the Yingpanshan and Baodun cultures; second, we have identified that some relics previously deemed as ordinary tombs may actually be human sacrificial remains; third, we have classified the human sacrificial pits in the Yingpanshan and Baodun cultures based on their function; and fourth, we have synthesized the discussions of previous scholars on the phenomenon of human sacrifice in early China and analyzed the sacrificial purposes and spiritual connotations of human sacrifice relics found in the Yingpanshan and Baodun cultures. This article serves as a useful reference and provides inspiration for academic circles to explore the potential succession relationship between the Yingpanshan and Baodun cultures.

## Keywords

Ancient Shu, Yingpanshan Culture, Baodun Culture, Human Sacrifice

## 1. Introduction

Chengdu Plain, located in the southwest of China, has a long history and culture. At present, there are still some differences in the academic community regarding the cultural stages of ancient Shu civilization. However, most scholars believe that the ancient Shu civilization should be roughly divided into four stages: the Baodun culture around 4500 - 3700 years ago, the Sanxingdui culture around 3700 - 3200 years ago, the Shierqiao culture during the Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn periods, and the late Shu culture during the Warring States

period. When people talk about the prehistoric culture of Chengdu Plain, the most fascinating thing is the splendid Sanxingdui culture. However, few people pay attention to several Neolithic cultures in Chengdu Plain and its surrounding areas before Sanxingdui Culture.

Yingpanshan Site, located at the northwest edge of Chengdu Plain, and the various prehistoric sites of Baodun Culture that followed it in Chengdu Plain, are important archaeological cultures of Chengdu Plain before the rise of Sanxingdui Culture, and have a direct relationship with Sanxingdui Culture. Among them, tombs are more relics found in Chengdu Plain at this stage. By studying the tombs of Yingpanshan and Baodun cultures, it is possible to better understand the important situations of grassroots organizations, family organizations, wealth inequality, and whether there were coercive powers in society at that time. The author found that traces of prehistoric human sacrifices were found in the Yingpanshan Site and some city sites of Baodun culture. Some excavators are classified as relics of tombs, and they are also suspected to be relics of human sacrifice.

Human sacrifice is one of the key elements representing the emergence of mandatory public power in society. The study of the development and evolution of the phenomenon of prehistoric human sacrifice in the Chengdu Plain can provide an important reference for the study of the origin of the country and the evolution of social organizations in the ancient Shu area.

At present, some scholars have begun to study the phenomenon of human sacrifice in Chengdu Plain before the Sanxingdui Culture. Among them, Chen Jian and others conducted research on the sacrificial pits at the Yingpanshan Site, pointing out that the sacrificial system and headhunting customs were important components of the spiritual life of the ancestors of Yingpanshan (Chen et al., 2005). Jiang Cheng and others observed and analyzed the residual human bones in several human sacrifice pits, and pointed out that some of the pits were built for laying the foundation of houses, while others had incomplete skull tops and upper jaw parts of the deceased, which is related to the common practice of headhunting in social life (Jiang & Chen, 2002). Chen Jian also believed that several human sacrifice pits have been discovered under the hard soil surface of the square ruins in the densely populated area of the housing foundation, which may be related to major activities such as religious worship ceremonies (Chen, 2007). Li Chunyan explored the phenomenon of human sacrifice in the Gaoshan Ancient City and other city sites during the Baodun Culture period, and believed that the use of human sacrifices to hold sacrifices and build city walls at that time not only had religious significance, but also demonstrated that mandatory public power had begun to sprout in the Gaoshan Ancient City at that time (Li, 2019).

In general, the academic community has conducted some research on the phenomenon of human sacrifice in the prehistoric culture of the Chengdu Plain, but the research depth is not enough. In many cases, some human sacrifice situ-

ations are introduced in the overall discussion, and no special research has been conducted on this phenomenon. This paper briefly introduces the phenomenon of human sacrifice in Chengdu Plain before the Sanxingdui Culture, and summarizes its evolution and development law, hoping to provide a reference for the academic community to study the ancient Shu tombs.

## 2. The Human Sacrifice Remains in the Yingpanshan Site

There are a large number and types of human sacrificial pits discovered at the Yingpanshan Site in Maoxian County, Sichuan, and the preservation of human bones is also relatively intact. During the excavation of the site in 2002, a total of 5 human sacrifice pits were discovered, numbered 02M23, 02M24, 02M25, 02M32, and 02M44. Among them, the plane of 02M23 is slightly circular, with a pit mouth diameter of 0.68 meters. The human bones are arranged in a disorderly manner, with the skull in the center, five ribs in the west, and tibia, phalanges, and other bones scattered around. The plane of 02M24 is slightly circular, with a pit mouth diameter of 0.8 meters. The human skeleton is intact, with upper limbs divided on both sides, and lower limbs bent up to the abdomen, seemingly bound and buried. The plane of 02M25 is slightly elliptical in shape, with a length of 1.4 meters and a short diameter of 1.1 meters. There are relics such as ground stone knives in the filling soil. A human skull can be seen at the bottom of the pit, with a slightly residual skull top and intact mandible. Four irregular large stones can be seen at the bottom of the pit. The plane of 02M32 is slightly circular, with a diameter of 0.64 - 0.66 meters. The human skeleton is severely twisted, and the skull is upright. The lower limbs are curled and placed in front of the chest. The plane of 02M44 is slightly rectangular and 1.8 meters long. The human skeleton is intact, 1.63 meters long, with straight legs and folded arms in front of the chest (Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: pp. 128-129).

During the excavation of the site in 2003, three more human sacrifice pits were discovered, numbered 03M32, 03M36, and 03M40. Among them, the 03M32 plane is circular, with a diameter of 100 - 110 centimeters and a depth of 20 - 30 centimeters. It is high in the south and low in the north, and is filled with a large stone, located on the west wall of the pit. The shape of the human skeleton is twisted, lying flat in a kneeling position, with the head tilted to the left side of the body, the legs folded and bent, the mouth opened wide, and the finger bones extended in a painful state. In addition, there are some ribs and phalangeal defects on the skeleton. The 03M36 plane is a rounded rectangular shape, with a length of 95, a width of 75, and a depth of 20 - 22 centimeters. The human bone is buried with bent limbs, and no skull part is visible. The plane of 03M40 is elliptical in shape, with a length of 105 and a short diameter of 70, and a depth of 30 - 40 centimeters. It has a lateral bending of human bones (Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: pp. 248-249). In addition, in 2004, a human sacrificial pit 04M29 was discovered, which was a

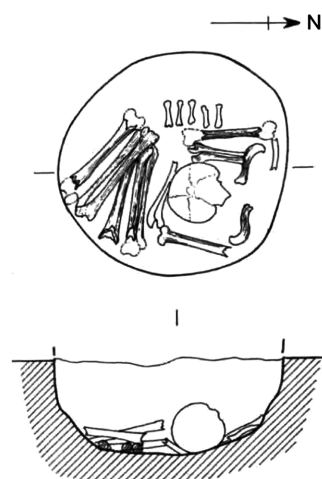
baby burial with a slender skeleton and buried under a pillar hole at the foundation of a large building. It should be the laying of the foundation for the worship of the large building, but the detailed information report was not disclosed. The specific situation of the human sacrifice pit at this site is shown in **Table 1** and **Figure 1** to **Figure 8** (Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 709).

### 3. Human Sacrificial Remains Observed at Baodun Culture

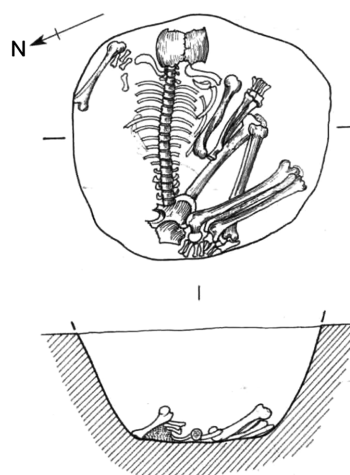
Baodun Culture is an archaeological culture located in Chengdu Plain 4500 - 3700 years ago. In the city sites of the first and second phases of Baodun Culture, several remains of human sacrifices were found. After the third phase of the Baodun culture, the cultural appearance has undergone great changes, and there are many vertical pit tombs buried on the back and straight limbs, and no human sacrifice remains. Among them, human sacrifice remains have been found in the Gaoshan Ancient City and Baodun Ancient City, which belong to the first and second phases of Baodun Culture.

**Table 1.** Summary of human sacrifice relics at Yingpanshan Site.

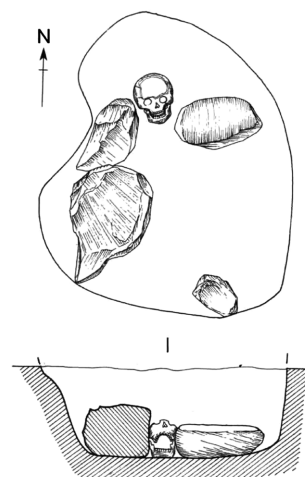
Number	Plane shape	Pit diameter (cm)	Burial form
02M23	Nearly circular	68	The skull is centered and the human bones are arranged in disorder
02M24	Nearly circular	80	Split the upper limbs on both sides, and bend the lower limbs up to the abdomen
02M25	Nearly elliptical	110 - 140	See a human skull, with slightly damaged skull top and intact jaw
02M32	Nearly circular	64 - 66	Twist in shape, with the skull standing upright and the lower limbs curled in front of the chest
02M44	Nearly rectangular	180 in length	Lie flat with arms crossed in front of the chest
03M32	Nearly circular	100 - 110	Skeleton twist, lying flat in a kneeling position, head tilt to the left side of the body, legs fold and bend, mouth wide open, finger bones straight
03M36	Round Rectangle	75 - 95	Bury with bent limbs and no skull
03M40	Nearly elliptical	70 - 105	Lying on the side, bending the limbs



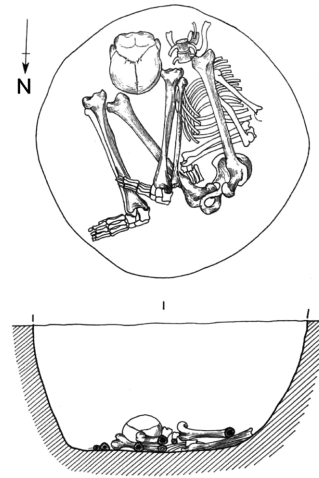
**Figure 1.** Yingpanshan Site Human Sacrifice Pit, No. 02M23. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 129)



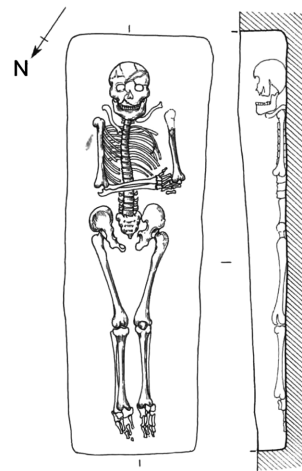
**Figure 2.** Yingpanshan Site Human Sacrifice Pit, No. 02M24. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 129)



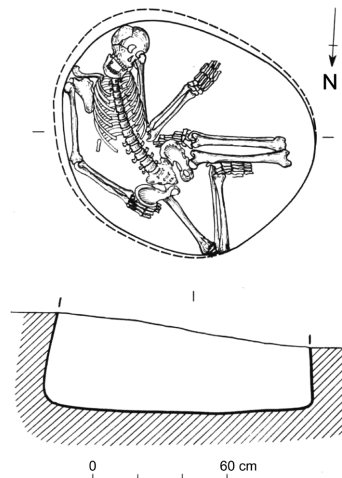
**Figure 3.** Yingpanshan Site Human Sacrifice Pit, No. 02M25. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 129)



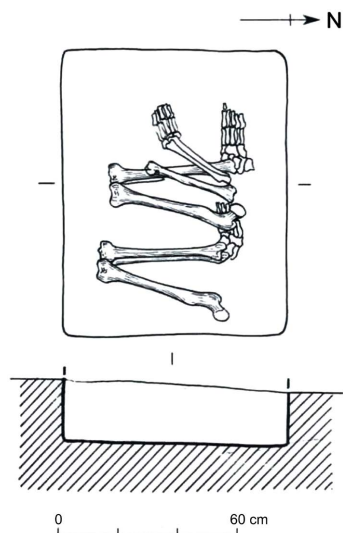
**Figure 4.** Yingpanshan Site Human Sacrifice Pit, No. 02M32. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 129)



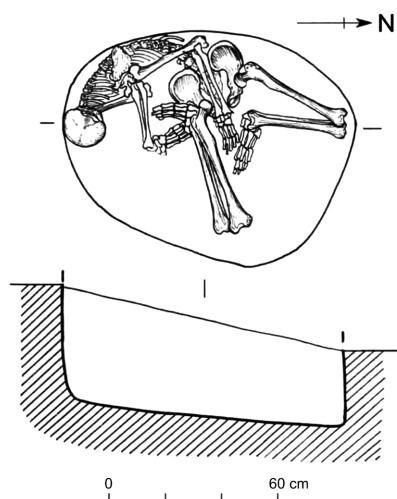
**Figure 5.** Yingpanshan Site Human Sacrifice Pit, No. 02M44. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 129)



**Figure 6.** Yingpanshan Site Human Sacrifice Pit, No. 03M32. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 249)



**Figure 7.** Yingpanshan Site Human Sacrifice Pit, No. 03M36. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 249)



**Figure 8.** Yingpanshan Site Human Sacrifice Pit, No. 03M40. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018: p. 249)

K1, a human sacrificial pit in the ancient city of Gaoshan, has a circular plan and straight walls, with a diameter of about 0.6 meters and a depth of about 0.4 meters. The human bones are curled up on their sides inside the pit, clearly indicating the remains of human sacrificial offerings. M6 is located in the east-north direction of the human sacrifice pit K1, approximately 2 meters away from K1. The plane is rounded and rectangular, with a length of about 2.15, a width of about 0.61, and a depth of about 0.53 meters. The human bone is upright and straight (Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2017). The excavators labeled the M6 as a tomb, but from the picture, it appears that the tomb owner's mouth is wide open and his expression is painful; placing the right hand on the pelvic bone and the left hand under the pelvic bone appear extremely unnatural, unlike a normal burial posture; lower

limbs tightly together. Therefore, the tomb owner is likely to have his hands and feet tied during the burial. M6 is very close to the confirmed human sacrifice pit K1, so the author believes that M6 is also a human sacrifice relic. In addition, in the second phase of the Gaoshan Ancient City, a foundation pit using children for human sacrifice activities was also found under the rammed layer of the outer wall at the southwest corner of the city wall (Zhou et al., 2015). You can see that the opening of the pit is relatively small, with the human bone lying on its side inside the pit, the upper limbs tightly pressing against the sides of the body, and the lower limbs flexing.

In addition to the discovery of human sacrifice remains in the first and second phases of Gaoshan Ancient City, tombs suspected to be human sacrifice remains have also been found in Baodun Ancient City. The M3 tomb excavated at the Baodun Site in 1996 is a rectangular vertical pit tomb with a length of 215, a width of 56 - 68, and a depth of 20 centimeters. The human skeleton is located in the middle of the tomb, with the body tilted up and legs straight, the left hand pressed against the femur, and the right hand pressed against the pelvic bone. The legs are together, and the head is tilted to the left. There are no burial objects in the pit (Sino Japanese Joint Archaeological Survey Team, 1998). The tomb M16 found at the Tianjiaolin Site of Baodun Ancient City is a rounded rectangular vertical pit tomb with a length of 2.3 meters and a width of 0.7 meters. There are no burial tools. The human bones are raised and the limbs are straight, with both hands placed on the abdomen, the right leg extended, and the left knee bent inward. The human bone is approximately 1.7 meters long and has been identified as an adult man around the age of 20 (Department of Archaeology, School of History and Culture, Sichuan University et al., 2018). Although the above relics were marked as tombs by the excavators, based on the posture and style of the tomb owner's bones, it is likely that they were buried after being killed in a posture where their hands and feet were tied.

In the Huacheng Village Site in the western suburbs of Chengdu, a sacrificial pit with only one human skull buried has been discovered. The site H14, with an opening below the fifth floor, belongs to the Baodun Culture period. The opening of the pit is circular, with a diameter of 90 and a depth of 65 centimeters. There is an irregular ripe soil table near the bottom of the pit. In the filling of the pit, a human skull was found 30 centimeters away from the opening, and there are red burnt earth blocks around it (Liu & Rong, 1999). The author categorizes the human sacrifice relics seen in Baodun culture in **Table 2** and **Figures 9-14**.

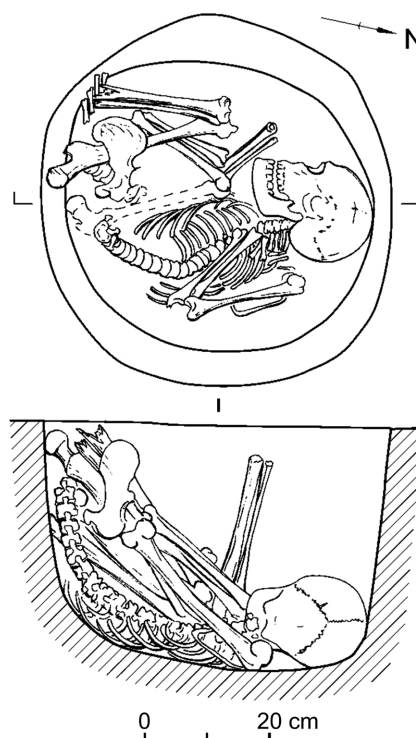
#### **4. Classification and Comparison of Human Sacrifice Remains in Yingpanshan Culture and Baodun Culture**

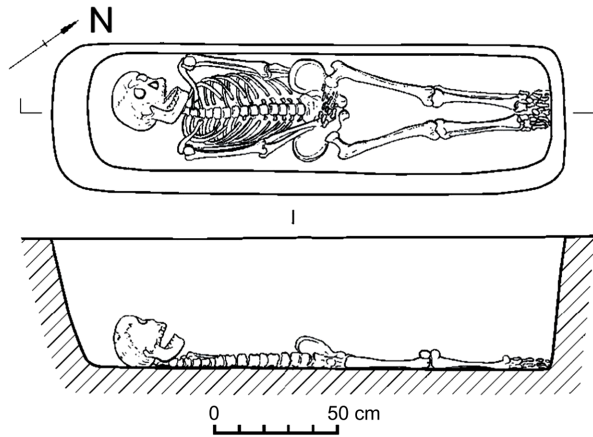
From the previous text, it can be seen that relics of human sacrifices have been found in some of the city sites of Yingpanshan Site and Baodun Culture. From the shape and burial style of human sacrificial pits, it can be seen that these two cultural stages have similar characteristics.



**Table 2.** Summary of human sacrifice relics at Baodunculture.

Number	Plane shape	Pit diameter (cm)	Burial form
Gaoshan Ancient City, K1	Nearly circular	60	Curl up on one's side
Gaoshan Ancient City, M6	Round Rectangle	61 - 215	Leaned up, his mouth wide open, his hands placed above and below his pelvis, and his lower limbs together
Gaoshan Ancient City Children's Sacrifice Pit	Nearly elliptical	undisclosed	Curl up on one's side
Baodun Ancient City, M3	Nearly rectangular	56 - 215	Lie flat, arms close to body and lower limbs close together
Tianjiaolin Site of Baodun Ancient City, M16	Round Rectangle	70 - 230	Lie flat, hands place on abdomen, left leg flexed
Huacheng Village Site, H14	circular	90	Only one human skull is found

**Figure 9.** Gaoshan Ancient City, K1. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, 2017, No. 4: p. 366)



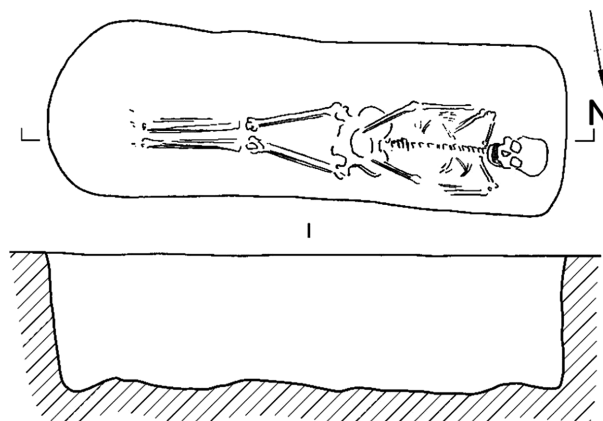
**Figure 10.** Gaoshan Ancient City, M6. (Image cited from Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, 2017: p. 366)



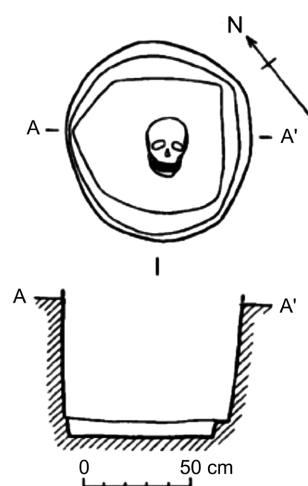
**Figure 11.** Gaoshan Ancient City Children's Sacrifice Pit. (Image cited from Zhou et al., 2015: p. 37)



**Figure 12.** Baodun Ancient City, M3. (Image cited from Sino Japanese Joint Archaeological Survey Team, 1998: p. 34)



**Figure 13.** Tianjiaolin Site of Baodun Ancient City, M16. (Image cited from Department of Archaeology, School of History and Culture, Sichuan University et al., 2018: p. 248)



**Figure 14.** Huacheng Village Site, H14. (Image cited from Liu & Rong 1999: p. 132)

The excavators of the Yingpanshan Site divided the nine human sacrificial pits discovered in the site into five categories: lower limb twisted and buried alive type, post slaughter burial type, only burying human heads type, lying flat burial type, and infant burial. These five types of tombs, except for the “post slaughter burial type” that has not been found in the Baodun culture, the other four types of human sacrifice pits can be found to be similar in the Baodun culture.

Firstly, in the ancient city K1 of Gaoshan, the pit mouth is circular, with human bones curled up on the side, but the skeleton is relatively well preserved, which is similar to the burial style of 02M24, 03M32, and 03M40 in Yingpanshan Site, and can correspond to the “lower limb twisted and buried alive type” in the classification of Yingpanshan people’s sacrificial pits. These types of sacrificial pits are all circular in shape, and the tomb owner’s skeleton is severely twisted and deformed, with painful expressions, indicating that they have been buried alive.

Secondly, the tomb owners of Gaoshan Ancient City M6, Baodun Ancient City M3, and Baodun Ancient City Tianjiaolin Site M16 are all lying flat on their

backs, with a tied body and a relatively complete skeleton, similar to Yingpanshan 02M44, which can correspond to the “lying flat burial type” in the classification of Yingpanshan people’s sacrificial pits. Although the tomb owner of this type of sacrificial pit was buried in a bound posture, their bones lay flat without any obvious signs of struggle.

Thirdly, M16, Huacheng Village in the western suburbs of Chengdu, only buries one skull, which is similar to 02M25 at the Yingpanshan Site and can be classified as the “only burying human heads type”. And Huacheng Village H14 has a mature soil platform under the human head, and in Yingpanshan Site 02M25, there are also four irregular large stones placed under the human head, which seems to form a stone platform. Placing a human head on a stone or earthen platform is similar to offering sacrifices to gods.

Fourthly, human sacrifice pits targeting children can also be seen in ancient cities on high mountains, which is very similar to Yingpanshan Site 04M29 and can be classified as “infant burial”. Moreover, the purpose of both sacrificing children is to lay the foundation for the building. Yingpanshan Site 04M29 sacrificed a baby and buried it near the pillar hole of a large building, which is obviously related to the construction of the large building; The Children’s Sacrifice Pit in Gaoshan Ancient City is located at the southwest corner of the city wall, obviously for the purpose of sacrificial offerings during the construction of the city wall.

Fifthly, in the Yingpanshan Site, the excavators also summarized a type of “post slaughter burial” human sacrifice pits with scattered and incomplete skeletons, taking 02M23, 02M32, and 03M36 as examples. The author believes that among these three human sacrifice pits, the skeleton of 02M32 is relatively intact and not much incomplete, which can be classified as the “lower limb twisted and buried alive type”. The skeleton in 03M36 is arranged in a “W” shape, which seems to have a certain pattern. And there is no skull on the skeleton, so the head should be cut off and buried separately from the body. The skull may have been buried in a “only burying human heads type” sacrificial pit, while the body parts were dismembered and arranged according to a certain pattern in another human sacrificial pit. In 02M23, both the skull and torso are placed in a special pattern, such as placing several longer human bones in the southeast corner of the tomb; In the central and western position of the tomb are neatly arranged 5 shorter human bones. It can be seen that after the victim is dismembered, the remains are arranged in a certain order before being buried. This type of human sacrificial pit has not yet been discovered in the Baodun culture.

## **5. Analysis of the Purpose and Function of Different Types of Human Sacrifices**

Through the above induction, organization, and classification of the human sacrificial remains of the Yingpanshan and Baodun cultures, we have briefly identified at least four to five different types of human sacrificial pits at the Ying-

panshan Site. In the Baodun culture, human sacrificial pits also have the same classification. It can be seen that in the Chengdu Plain and its adjacent areas during the Yingpanshan culture and Baodun culture period, the cultural connotation of the human sacrifice pit should come down in one continuous line. The emergence of various types of human sacrifice pits also means that different types of human sacrifice pits have different main characteristics and functions.

For the purpose of human sacrifice at the Yingpanshan Site, the excavators cited Mr. Huang Zhanyue's three major classifications of human sacrifice and animal sacrifice in early Chinese history: "Blood Sacrifice Earth", "Headhunter Valley", and "Sacrifice before building". They proposed that the "post slaughter burial type" human sacrifice pit may be related to blood sacrifice Earth Mother; the "only burying human heads type" human sacrificial pit may be related to the prehistoric custom of "hunting heads and sacrificing valleys". The "infant burial" sacrificial pit is clearly a type of "laying the foundation" for human sacrifice (Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018). The author agrees with the above inference of the excavators. However, the excavators have not been able to classify the functions of the remaining "lower limb twisted and buried alive type" and "lying flat burial type" human sacrificial pits, and their sacrificial purposes and ideological connotations still need to be analyzed. The author intends to share some personal insights here.

Regarding the "twisted lower limb buried alive" human sacrifice pit, the victims in this type of human sacrifice pit are buried alive and die, as can be seen from their twisted limbs and painful expressions. Since it was still alive when buried, it indicates that there was not a large amount of blood seen during the previous sacrificial process. According to Mr. Huang Zhanyue, the purpose of the "blood sacrifice pit" is often to "use human blood to sacrifice the land, restore the vitality of the land restoration, and make the crops harvest well" (Huang, 1987). Obviously, choosing to bury people alive in such sacrificial pits cannot achieve the original intention of "Blood Sacrifice Earth". In addition, although the skeletons of the sacrificial victims in this type of human sacrifice pit are relatively twisted and mostly curled up, the skeletons are relatively complete and there is no lack of skull, nor is it a relic left by the "headhunting custom". Throughout the sites of Yingpanshan and Gaoshan Ancient City, there are no human sacrificial pits found nearby, such as city walls, gates, or other large buildings, which should not be used for laying the foundation for large-scale buildings. This type of human sacrifice pit should be another type of human sacrifice pit beyond the three major categories of "Blood sacrifice Earth", "Headhunter valley", and "Sacrifice before building" mentioned above.

The author believes that "lower limb twisted and buried alive type" human sacrifice pit may be used to execute prisoners of war captured in military conflicts with other tribes. There are two reasons: firstly, based on the detection of human bones in two human sacrifice pits, 03M32 and 03M40, by excavators at the Yingpanshan Site, it is determined that the sacrificial victims in 03M32 are

male, aged approximately 30 - 35 years old, and standing approximately 170.53 centimeters tall; The sacrificed person in 03M40 is a male, aged approximately 35 - 40 years old, with a height of approximately 166.13 centimeters (Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018). Both 522 and 524 belong to middle-aged men of suitable height, which conform to the age and gender characteristics of military personnel. Secondly, in terms of the socio-economic and productivity development at that time, the level of productivity in agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts, and other industries was relatively low, and the ancestors were striving to fight against nature. This type of middle-aged male between the ages of 30 and 40, who can provide sufficient labor for various tribal production, should not be selected as objects of human sacrifice or sacrifice. Unless it is physically disabled or subordinate to hostile forces, it cannot be used by its own side. The former can be ruled out through pathological analysis of bones, and the sacrificial subjects of 03M32 are very healthy and have no disabilities; The victim of 03M40 also only had dysplasia around the surgical neck of the left humerus. The appraiser believed that “normal life was not significantly affected”, that is, both of them had abundant labor force (Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology et al., 2018). Therefore, the author believes that the person being sacrificed is likely to be subordinate to hostile forces and cannot be used by their own side, thus being brutally killed by human sacrifice.

Regarding the “lying flat burial type” human sacrificial pits, the main burial forms during the Baodun Culture period were also vertical pit tombs and upright limb burials, with no burial equipment or accompanying items. Therefore, it may be difficult to distinguish them from ordinary tombs and can only be judged by phenomena such as whether the limbs of the bones are naturally placed and whether there are traces of the bones being tied before. The author believes that the biggest difference between this type of human sacrifice pit and the “lower limb twisted and buried alive type” is that the “lower limb twisted and buried alive type” buries people alive, rather than killing them and then burying them; The human bones in the “lying flat burial type” human sacrificial pit are upright with no signs of struggle, indicating that they were directly buried in the pit after being killed in a bound state. Therefore, this type of human sacrifice pit is actually a type of “post slaughter burial type” human sacrifice pit. Before burial, the sacrificial person is killed. Although it is unknown in what form they were killed, if there is a significant amount of bleeding during the killing process, a large amount of blood can be used to irrigate the land and achieve a good harvest. From this perspective, the “lying flat burial type” human sacrifice pit may also be related to the human sacrifice custom of “Blood sacrifice Earth”.

In addition, it is also a crucial issue to clarify the identity of the person being sacrificed in human sacrifice activities. Due to the excavation report at the Yingpanshan Site, apart from the two human sacrifice pits of 03M32 and 03M40, the bones in other human sacrifice pits were not tested to obtain the approx-

imate age, gender, and other information of the victims; In the excavation of various city sites and ruins of Baodun Culture, no specialized testing and analysis reports have been found for unearthed human bones. So currently, we only know that using children for human and animal activities is for the purpose of laying the foundation for large-scale buildings; there is also a type of burial pit for sacrificing prisoners of war. However, in other types of human sacrifice pits, it is not yet clear what kind of people are sacrificed. If human bones in human sacrificial pits can be detected, or information such as the gender and age of the victims can be analyzed from the perspective of human physique, it can better explore what type of human sacrificial pit generally worships people of what age, gender, and identity. We are looking forward to seeing research or testing results in this area in the future.

## 6. Conclusion

The excavators of the Yingpanshan Site compared the Yingpanshan Site with the human sacrifice pits of the Xiaguanzi Site and the Gaoshan Ancient City Site in their reports, pointing out that the Yingpanshan Site and the Xiaguanzi Site have a clear inheritance relationship, and using this as evidence that the academic community generally agrees that Yingpanshan culture is one of the sources of Baodun culture. However, in fact, Baodun culture originated from Yingpanshan culture and has not yet reached the level of “basic academic approval”. At present, there are two main views in the archaeological community of ancient Shu on the origin of Baodun culture. The first is represented by scholars such as He Kunyu, Huang Haode, and Zhao Binfu, who argue that Baodun culture mainly originated from the Yingpanshan Site in the Hengduan Mountains, and the ultimate source of the Yingpanshan Site is the Majiayao culture in the Gansu and Shaanxi region (He, 2016; Huang & Zhao, 2004). The second type, represented by Zhao Dianzeng and Liu Junnan, demonstrates that the Baodun culture mainly originated from the middle reaches of the Yangtze River from the perspectives of the architectural style of the Baodun culture city site, rice cultivation culture, and pottery typology (Zhao, 2021; Liu, 2021).

Overall, the focus of the academic debate is on which culture in the Gansu Shaanxi region or the middle reaches of the Yangtze River is the main source of Baodun culture. However, no one denies that another culture also played a certain role in the formation of Baodun culture. From the analysis of the human sacrifice remains of the Yingpanshan Site and Baodun culture in this article, it can also be seen that although the human sacrifice during the Baodun culture period is generally similar to the Yingpanshan Site, some changes have also occurred. For example, in the sacrificial pits at the Yingpanshan Site, the most brutal and bloody type of sacrificial pits that dismember victims was no longer seen during the Baodun Culture period. Although there are also many remains of human sacrifice found in the Baodun culture, they are mainly concentrated in the first and second phases of the Baodun culture; 3 representative city sites after

the fourth phase, such as Yufu Village Ancient City, Pixian Ancient City, Sanxingdui Site Phase I, have only found ordinary tombs and no further relics related to human sacrifices. To some extent, this also reflects the continuous progress of ancient Shu prehistoric culture from barbarism to civilization.

To summarize, in this article, we have organized and summarized the human sacrificial remains found in the Yingpanshan Site and Baodun Cultural Site. We have also highlighted several human sacrificial remains that may be mistaken for ordinary tombs by excavators, and identified their similarities and differences in classification. We have discussed the functions of each type of human sacrificial pit to a certain extent. Furthermore, we have conducted a comparative study of the human sacrifice practices in the neighboring cultural stages of Yingpanshan and Baodun, which can serve as a reference for future academic discussions regarding the origins of the Baodun culture.

### Acknowledgements

This work is financially supported by the China National Social Science Foundation Project “A Study on the Origin and Early Evolution of Civilization in the Ancient Shu Area under Marginal Regions” (No. 21BZS017) and Chongqing Graduate Research Innovation Project “Research on the Evolution of Urban Form in the Ancient Shu Region” (No. CYS23380).

This paper was originally written in Chinese. Due to the author’s insufficient English proficiency, this article was translated into English with the help of Liu Yu, a master’s student at the School of Literature at West China Normal University. The responsible editors and anonymous peer reviewers of the journal also put forward enlightening opinions on this article. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to those who have provided help for this paper.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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