
Research Paper on Animal Welfare: Lychee and Dog Meat Festival

Introduction

Festivals Collins English Dictionary described festival as a period or a day of celebration which often has religious and cultural relation. Also, it is a day where people commemorate an event, such as weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, and other significant events (festival, n.d.). Moreover, festivals are ways to express glorious celebrations that mirror the culture and traditions. It is a way to pass to the next generation the legends, traditions and knowledge of one previous generation. Lastly, it is a way to build social contact with our background and family and a day to lay off from the daily duties of life (Festival, 2012). Cudny (2014) cited the works of Sofield et al. (1998), where they stated that festivals are part of humanity since hundreds of years ago, and according to Falassi (1987), festivals are reflection of the human culture which are being practiced by people through ages (Cudny, 2014, p. 640).

Types of Festivals

Seasonal Festivals

Seasonal festivals depend on the cyclical seasonal changes. These festivals are being marked by people because food supplies depend on the lunar and solar calendar (Blayne09, 2010). Seasonal festivals also dictate the manner how people should act towards the nature (Festival, 2012). Also, these festivals vary from the environment, climate and condition of the nature. Harvest, winter, autumn, bounty, and spring festivals are some of the included festivities in this category.

National Festivals

National festivals are celebrations in where a whole country participates. It is being celebrated to commemorate a particular event in a country that signifies historical changes. These festivals are commonly accompanied by a public holiday and were instituted to instill patriotism to its citizens. Foundation, independence as well as death of a national hero belong in this category. Religious Festivals. Religious festivals are festivities which have religious foundations. These festivals commemorate and glorify a certain religious persona or an event that has religious ties. Also, it is a time where people give thanks to their deities and patrons for the blessings they received and ask guidance from them. Festivals like these are celebrated only by

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a certain religious group and are commonly in a small scale. Festivals are celebrations, and a festival is not limited to one category. There are kinds of festivals which can have religious foundation and a national significance. Where others can be seasonal and can also have religious roots. Festivals are not bounded to only one interpretation, they are commonly overlapping and are not relative to every person.

Festivals that Uses Animals

There are many types of festivals around the world. Each festival has its unique characteristics and varies from its execution. Also, as our world evolves, festivals are also being reconstructed and invented. Some festivals require only participation from human beings, while others require the participation of sentient beings. Festivities that involve animals are common nowadays. People believe that we are responsible over these sentient beings, so it is just right to take care and nourish them. These festivals are believed to be for the benefit of the animals.

Some of the world famous animal festivals are: Golden Retriever Festival in Scotland, Surin Elephant Round-up in Thailand, Tihar Festival in Nepal, Monkey Buffet Festival in Thailand (Thakkar, 2016), Groundhog Day in North Carolina, and Birds of Chile Festival in Chile (Kunz, n.d.). These festivals center on animals and celebrate the bond between humans and animals. Although festivals that celebrate animals are common nowadays, festivals which harm animals also exist. This kind of festivity is part of certain people's tradition and culture. People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) released a list of festivals that cater to entertainment in expense of the welfare of the animals. This includes: Kots Kaal Pato in Mexico - where iguanas and opossums are stuffed in a pinata and are beaten by stick, Gadhimai Festival in Nepal - where goats, chickens, buffalo and other animals are massacred, Toro de la Vega in Spain - where bulls are being chased and stabbed to death and Yulin Dog Meat Festival in China. People who participate in this kind of festivities use animals as a sacrifice and also as a source of entertainment.

Yulin Dog Meat Festival

Through the use of animals in certain festivities, animal welfare became significant. One of the most controversial animal festivals during this time is the Lychee and Dog Meat Festival, or what people commonly know as Yulin Dog Meat Festival in China. Here, in this research study, the significance of the Yulin Festival will be tackled. Its background and history, its impact, the controversies behind this annual event - both the negative and positive aspects, and as well as the animal welfare concerns in this kind of event. This paper aims to lay down all the angles in this topic and to provide better understanding to this kind of practice, both considering the negative and positive positions.

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China has a rich culture and tradition that can be traced back as far as 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE. Due to its diverse culture, Chinese have different festivals that encompasses national, seasonal and religious festival. From Chinese New Year to animal related festivities such as Litang Horse Festival and Lychee and Dog Meat Festival. Lychee and Dog Meat Festival or Yulin Dog meat Festival, as the name suggests, is a festivity where participators eat dog meat and lychee. The act of eating dog meat in China started from the North and being practiced since 1700 B.C. (Koetse, 2015). Every year, there are about 10 million dog meat consumed in China (Brady, 2018).

General Concerns

Animal welfare American Veterinary Medical Foundation described animal welfare as the state of living and being of an animal. An animal is in a good welfare if it is free from suffering, such as diseases, pain, stress, and fear, and if it is able to express innate behavior, healthy, safe, well nourished, etc. The welfare of an animal lies in the human hands. It is when we consider their well-being, nutrition, give them proper housing, treat and prevent their diseases and proper management. Also, animal welfare can be described as the humane handling and treatment of animals. The issue for animal welfare in Yulin Festival arises when it gained popularity due to its positive as well as negative reactions globally. Animal welfare groups pointed out the five freedoms of animals by the Farm Animal Welfare Council in UK and considered as the gold standard for animal welfare. Five freedoms includes:

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst
2. Freedom from Discomfort
3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease
4. Freedom to Express Normal Behavior
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress

A more in-depth study on the animal welfare will be discussed in the latter part of the paper under the positive and negative reaction of Yulin Festival.

Ethical concerns

Ethics is a branch of Philosophy that deals with the underlying principles of morality. It is related to the rightness or wrongness of an act. Yulin Festival made a continuous debate about its ethical concerns. People who stand for Yulin Festival say that morality is not relative. That you can not judge one's tradition based on your tradition since it can be viewed as being ethnocentric -having a cultural biased opinion. And morality is only based on society's own making, thus, varies. While others, who are against the Yulin Festival stand, that since we humans have the capacity to comprehend, we are the one who should protect the animals and

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treat them humanely as possible.

Global reactions, claims, facts and reports Lychee and Dog Meat Festival sparked a controversy and a debate between two standpoints. In this part of the paper, a more in-depth discussion about the festival's concerns will be given. Angles, both from the negative and positive aspects or the pros and cons of this tradition. For Yulin Dog Meat Festival and its positive aspectsThe most noticeable side of the Yulin Festival in the global debate is its cons and its negative aspects, but here we will view and discuss the reasons behind those people who are pro to this kind of tradition.

Natives of Yulin, Gaungxi, China

The natives of Yulin, or formally romanized as Watlam started the tradition of this ten days event during summer solstice; where they will eat lychee, dog meat and cat meat. Although many opposes this, they still have reasons behind their annual tradition. In an article entitled, "Dog meat eating: Check your own cultural bias before protesting too much", Innocent Mutanga (2016) lay down why we should not judge and forced the residents of Yulin, who practice dog meat eating to conform to what we think is moral. Mutanga (2016) stated that it is a matter of cultural upbringing. There are some people who grew where dogs are part of their lives, while there are some in which dogs are part of their diet and only to guard their houses. In the case of Yulin natives, they still value the bond between a human and a dog, and they still have a concept of animal companionship. But also, in their defense, there are dogs who are meant for slaughtering in this kind of traditions. These dogs are those who were raised in a farm, but not those dogs who are being kept as a pet. For them, dogs who don't have a master and were raised in a farm are livestock. It is the same as how we slaughter and eat chickens, pigs, cows and other livestock animals and yet some of us choose to make these livestock as an animal companion.

Another stand raised by Mutanga is safety. In the province of Guangxi, dogs who were raised in a farm are rampant. They slaughter these dogs because of the uncontrollable increase in their population that might possess future dangers, such as rabies and other diseases. It might be for the residents of Yulin that they are just protecting their health and interests; as what all humans would do. An example given by him is the negative reaction of the people around the world when a lion dies, but for him, as a native of Zimbabwe, lions are meant to be killed because they devour cows and endanger their livelihood. At the end, cultural upbringing as well as priorities affect the decision on why for them dogs are meant to be killed and eaten. In the article by Mutanga, he also relates eating dog meat to the identity of Yulin residents. Dog meat eating embodies them, and we should not strip them with their identity. It is their freedom to practice their civil rights as long as they don't put harm on other people. After all, they are not forcing anyone to eat dog meat.

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According to Mutanga, we should just let social identities evolve naturally, where someday they will view all dogs as human companions and not a source of diet, instead of forcing them, which is being one-sided on our part. As the title suggests, we have cultural biases. We judge what is moral based on our own cultures and traditions, thus ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism means thinking that all should conform to the structure of your own culture. Some pro-Yulin also pointed out that there are many unfavorable practices that other people practice, especially on religion, yet Yulin natives know that they should respect other traditions and beliefs. What they are trying to point out is that we live in a globally diverse community, and harmony can only be achieved through respect.

Cultural and traditional relativism

Another factor that affects dog meat eating is the tradition. Although it is a misconception that all Chinese eat dogs (Hobbs, 2018) we cannot deny the fact that eating dog meat is part of the traditions of some Chinese since then. Eating dog meat can be traced back as far as 1700 B.C. which originated from the North of China (Koetse, 2015). Back then, dogs have different functions, it is only through identity evolution was when dogs were viewed as an animal companion. Dogs also served as a sacrifice to their gods and offerings to their ancestors in China. Some also consider dog meat has a medicinal effect and is a good source of heat during winter. They also believe that this kind of meat increases libido, or sex drive. During also the Great Famine in China, peasants would eat dog meat. These practices were carried and became traditions. While these traditions were inherited and carried until now. It is the same as cultural and superstitious beliefs that were carried and still being practiced nowadays. Because it has deep cultural and traditional roots, eating dog meat for them is morally right and became the norms and notion of life.c)

Tourism

The city of Yulin in Guangxi, China boasts a rich national and cultural heritage. It offers tourists array of different attractions. Tourists can visit Zhenbeitai Observation Deck, Lingxiao Tower of Yulin, Yulin Drum Tower, Zhenbeitai Sites, Yulin Ancient City, Yulin Manor of Jiang Yaozu, and many more. So it is not a surprised that people in Yulin do Dog Meat Festival to attract [image: Image result for yulin dog meat festival]more tourists. In an article in Chinadialogue entitled “Dog meat festival: is it all about tourists?”, local people of Yulin were insulted because of the campaigns regarding the anti-Yulin Festival, so they took their frustrations on the streets, and they drank and eat more lychee and dog meat. Their action attracted more tourists that Chinadialogue noted that the streets of Yulin during this festivity is as busy as the Chinese New Year. The more tourists that visit Yulin, the more profit their government and the people will get.

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Due to their festivity more people gets attracted -due to their curiosity, to visit Yulin. In a YouTube video by Gweilo60, he said that because of the increasing tourism in Yulin more investors and businessmen are pouring their money and building hotels in the city. Guo Peng of Shandong University also noted that dog meat market is very profitable, so banning the annual festival would affect the livelihood of the Yulin natives. A commentator in Phoenix TV named Liang Wendao also added that this festival is not born out of tradition, but an attempt by the local government to increase the tourists and establish a local brand.

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