WHY WAS EVERYDAY VIOLENCE SURPRISINGLY LOW IN ANCIENT PERU?



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A new study of human remains from northern Peru has produced a surprising result. People in the Lambayeque Valley practised human sacrifice, yet archaeologists found very little evidence of ordinary violence between individuals. Researchers examined the remains of 1,519 people who lived between about 1500 BC and AD 1800. Only a small number showed injuries that were probably caused by fighting. Human sacrifice took place in the region for many centuries. In some cases, large groups of people were killed and buried during periods of extreme weather, possibly as attempts to satisfy the gods during El Niño events. The researchers stress that the evidence does not prove sacrifice made society peaceful. They suggest that rituals may have helped powerful leaders control tensions or manage fear during disasters. Other explanations are also possible, so the question remains open.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

The story challenges the simple idea that a society which uses human sacrifice must be violent in every part of daily life. It shows that ancient communities could combine frightening religious rituals with rules and customs that limited fighting between ordinary people.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“How could a society practise sacrifice but still have little everyday violence?”

Source: Live Science

https://www.livescience.com/archaeology/americas/did-human-sacrifice-help-lower-violence-new-research-in-peru-leaves-intriguing-question