Animal Sacrifice in Scandinavian Folklore
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Introduction
Throughout history, animal sacrifice has been practiced for many different reasons and under many contexts. Some cultures moved away from sacrificing animals to less brutal practices, while others simply shifted types of animals. Although it was considered evil by Christianity, animal sacrifice and the Pagan culture that it was connected to remained important to magic in Scandinavian folklore and fairytales.

It was common for Norse cultures and ancient cultures like the Sami to practice animal sacrifice. As Christianity became the prominent religion, the practice faded to near extinction. Although, some isolated Sami continued the rituals. However, stories of animal sacrifice were passed down through oral history.

• How Some Wild Animals Became Tame Ones – Sami Fairytale
• Kyrkogrim and Church Lambs – Sweden and Denmark
• Thorgeir’s Bull – Iceland

There were a vast spectrum on how evil the animals were in the stories. How Some Wild Animals Became Tame Ones shows animals as victims of men’s greed as they are tricked into giving up their freedom after being invited to a wedding, this mainly showed the animals having negative traits as pride as a teaching method for children. Kyrkogrim and Church Lambs were slaughtered at churches to protect the church from evil and were seen has omens of calamity and death. Thorgeir’s Bull was a famous flayed bull ghost who hunted down and killed a woman who jilted his creator, the powerful wizard Thorgeir. In modern times, there are certain sects of Neo-Pagans that are attempting to bring ancient Scandinavian animal sacrifice back.

If this practice was revived, how do you think this will impact modern society?

Work Cited
Thorpe, B. (1851). Northern Mythology, Comprising the Principal Popular Traditions and Superstitions of Scandinavia, North Germany and the Netherlands: Compiled from Original and Other Sources (Vol. 2). London: Lumley.

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