

Irregular Rituals

Anthropological Notes on the Rituals of the Q– Household

Members of the household regularly consume small tablets, which have no nutritional value but are said to cure a variety of illnesses, from their closely guarded storage in a ????. (10)

They insert food into the ???, which heats the dish without being warmed itself. (9)

They repeatedly scrape a ??? over the front of their mouths; consequences for not obeying this ritual involve punishment from a professional, who fills tiny holes in their mouths with metal. (10)

In public, they display a ??? over the nose and mouth to block tiny invisible beasts from floating out of one person's throat and down another's. (8)

They perform ritual lacerations of their cheeks with the sharp edge of a ??? for cosmetic and hygienic purposes. (10)

Two members wear ??? hooked around their faces, bringing small clear shards dangerously close to the eye; these shards, when properly curved, sharpen vision. (7)

In a masochistic ritual said to increase mental acuity, cold water pours out of the ??? and onto their heads. (10)

The ???, when pressed against flat surfaces, deposits shiny material in prescribed patterns; the blunt side can be chewed to improve concentration. (6)

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Over time, these things may ____ (8). Our tools change over the years, shaped by new knowledge and beliefs, but even today they retain something in common with the way they began. Still, it's important to learn how they started.

Quotes from Interviews with the Q– Household

Members of the household were interviewed about their rituals, superstitions, and secret beliefs.

Every so often I'll switch my day, doing *the second half first (not counting midday)*, taking my shower in the morning and eating breakfast foods in the evening, to throw off any person trying to kill me.

(8; 1)

When I get two dishes from *the front of a restaurant*, I *switch the first two* before eating them. I've always had the fear in the back of my mind that someone is trying to poison me, and this should throw them off!

(8; 1)

If I have *two Liter bottles*, I *pour them both out, until they're empty like O's*. I feel like all that liquid will drown me otherwise.

I carry all my *nice* things I can find *to the front* of my house, to block the misfortune from getting to me on the inside. I just *make a big orderly wall of nice-ness*.

Metric is a system I love to hate. I fear that some day the cells are going to swallow me up, so I skip over anything small, *micro- to centi-meter*. No wonder I got fired from the lab.

When I'm on the bus and they *turn the bus around*, I get off. I don't trust U-turns.

I always cover my body with a blanket at night so the monster under my bed doesn't get me.

If I think it'll see my *body parts*, I'll *scream "eee" instead, for as long as it takes*, to ward it off.

A general rule: I always, always keep my hair trimmed to the same length as it was - even a hair longer or shorter than it used to be is bad luck.

(5; 1)

I keep my bed surrounded by mirrors so that if I have bad luck or a nightmare, they'll reflect it and *turn the bad around* into something good.

In order to increase my performance I buy *new active* clothes every month I go to the gym, in the hopes that the freshness will spark my muscles to work harder.

I keep everything perfectly folded and hide my trash where I can't see it. Disorder will make you sick, and I'm an *orderly gal*.

I stack the pillows neatly on the living-room couch every night, in the hopes that the orderly energy will help keep the room together in the day. It's a *regular hub* of activity in the mornings, and I need all the help I can get.

My sister believes that it will anger the dead to speak about them in the past, and uses the present tense instead. I always use the past tense in her presence, in the hopes that it will *straighten her out*.

(5; 1)

My friend eats a whole raw onion every day to stay sharp, and it works for her. She's so clever, she could *set the sages straight*. Probably even teach them a thing or two... make them smarter? *More witty?* Anyway, I'll take her word for it.

I play dumb and ignore my classmates when they *vie to be right*. The harder you try, the mushier your brain gets.

Kiwis make you sick just as easily as a *bee makes honey*. Don't ask me how I know, I can just feel it.

I keep my *razor sharp* and turn down the heat so that it gets cold. Shivering and sharp metal are good for the brain.

(4; 1)

I'm the *shortest person in the house*, so *at the beginning and the end of the day*, I *switch my pairs of shoes* and for an hour or two wear left on right foot and vice versa. Given my height, I think it'll help people notice me better.

(1)

I don't like to put identical socks next to each other, so I'll *shift the second in a pair one step to the right* - if socks stay next to each other, then they get lost faster, I swear it happens! It doesn't take a *bee to see* how sweet and easy that makes getting dressed, as formal and polite a gesture as offering *tea to you, etc.*

(1; 2)

I *stand on my head* for fifteen minutes every single morning - it helps me think better.

(8; 1)