

Body Ritual of the Nacirema - Miner

Culture

Nacirema culture is characterized by a highly developed market economy that has evolved in a rich natural habitat. While much of its people's time is devoted to economic pursuits a large part of the fruits of these labors and time during the day is spent on rituals.

- Underlying belief that the human body is ugly and that its natural tendency leans towards debility and disease.
- Each family has at least one shrine, but the families rituals are kept both private and secret

Shrines

- Focal point of the shrine is a box or chest that is built into the wall
- There are many charms and magical potions kept in these chests
- Medicine kept there and used by medicine men. Used packets not discarded → pileup of goods and fear of reuse grows

The mouth

The Nacirema have an almost pathological horror and fascination with the mouth

- They believe that the rituals prevent tooth/gum decay, their jaws from shrinking and their loved ones/friends rejected or leaving them
- **Mouth-rite:** Strikes any stranger as revolting, involves the placement of hog hairs and magical oils into ones mouth
- Nacirema men called holy-mouth-men will drill holes in decayed peoples teeth and fill them with some magical substance

The goal of studying the Nacirema is to get a careful inquiry on their personality

- Tons of sadistic and masochistic tendencies that are perceived as normal or ritualistic by the Nacirema people
- Medicine men perform *latipso* ceremonies for the most sick of patients and it must be done in a special temple

The Latipso

One of the most notorious and painful rituals of the Nacirema. Kids think "That is where you go to die" before they are fully indoctrinated

- The person is stripped of all their clothes and men and women are both raped in their own specific ways
- The idea that this ceremony and many others performed by the medicine men can harm or even kill a member of the Nacirema does not, **at all** decrease the peoples belief in the medicine men

The Listener

The witch doctor has the power to exorcise the devil. The person dumps everything causing discomfort or pain onto the listener.

Note

It should be noted that the people going to these session often display insanely high amounts of detail in their memories, sometimes going as far back as their own birth.

Concluding Thoughts

Mention must be made of certain practices that are basically only possible with indoctrination.

- Ritual fasts to make the fat people thin and ceremonial feasts to make thin people fat
 - Other rituals are used to make women with small breasts large and large breasts small
 - Women with large breasts sometimes make money by going to villages to permit natives to stare while making a profit
- Excretory functions are ritualized, routinized, and relegated to secrecy
- Natural reproductive functions are distorted, intercourse is taboo as a topic yet scheduled as an act.
 - Efforts are made to avoid pregnancy by limiting intercourse to certain phases of the moon or through the use of magical materials

Summary

Our review of the Nacirema people's ritual life has shown them to be magic-ridden people. Even though these customs have suprisingly lived on for so long, it is possible for them to tak eon real meaning when viewed with expert insight.

Below is a paraphrased excerpt from Malinowski's look on the Nacirema people

Without the power and guidance of magic in civilizations, we could not have mastered the practical difficulties of life nor could we have advanced to higher stages of civilization.