

Essay No.1 – Rituals

Rituals are repeated actions that serve as an essential part of the culture and practices within our community. Unlike habits, Rituals usually serve a meaningful purpose and are practiced by different families, ethnic groups and religions. As opposed to Myths, they are not simply stories retelling ideas with potential cultural history, they involve significant action due to a certain circumstance or its symbolism (Petrification).

The practice of rituals can be categorized by: Religious rituals, involving sacrifices, festivals, mysteries, and church events such as Easter & fasting; second, Status rituals which recognize time, birthdays, death, and milestones such as initiations. Many of these rituals are still practiced in our families today. Death is an inevitable part of our lives, death rituals are abundant and have been practiced throughout human history. Unfortunately, death has been a very common topic since my youth. I have been to many funerals in my lifetime and experienced variations of familiar practices involving distant and immediate relatives. The loss of life is considered a very important circumstance within families, and the complexity of death rituals vary by religious practices. Because many religions believe in an afterlife, funerals tend to serve as a place of reassurance for the loved ones of the deceased. People gather in unity to say goodbye, pray, remember and pay respect to the body while reassuring religious beliefs about continuance of life. Funerals and burials help people deal with internal emotions involving loss and help reflect on the impermanence of their own lives. The separation of body and soul is weighted differently according to cultural and religious beliefs. Some cultures such as the Egyptians, believed the physical was an important part of passing away, thus preserving the body by mummification and other methods. Burial grounds in Egypt contained jewels and wealth along with the dead body. Other cultures such as the Torajan people on the Indonesian island of

Sulawesi, believe in a balance between physical vs spiritual importance. While maintaining their belief in Christianity, life after death and God, they preserve the body and keep it for a period of time while praying and continuing to care for it by changing their clothing, etc. They do not fear the dead as they have a ritual that allows families to re visit dead bodies after burial to care for their clothing and burial sites. Most of my family is Christian, so during death rituals an emphasis is made about heavenly presence and the promise of afterlife, they involve a mass at a church, a funeral, and a burial.

Death rituals in particular stood out to me as a couple weeks ago three of my distant cousins died together in a car accident. I witnessed as my family, including my mother and uncle, reunite across the country to come together and honor their lives. Rituals are an important part of society as they serve to recognize and act upon a significant period whether it be religious or not.

Sources:

Types of RitualsU.pdf (Canvas Article file)

When Death Doesn't Mean Goodbye. Online video- Youtube, 16 June 2017
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=233&v=yd8yyUTH_oE)

