

Interestingly enough, many animals are rather "picky" eaters and have rather restricted diets although this is obviously not seen as cultural.

Although not having to do with water, other cultures, like some in places like India, reject the killing of cattle and there is also a lively debate about why this should be. These arguments are often based around the idea that culture is "adaptive" and there seem to be many places where it seems maladaptive (until someone finds a way to show it is adaptive). So the arguments continue and so the battle continues on.

Some might argue that the shorter term prohibitions, like restriction of specific days of the week (meatless Fridays) or seasons (like lent) when certain foods should not be eaten might be good for preserving the animals population.

Similarly, there are many things in the ocean that are edible, but people do not want to eat.

Other problems with food deal with matters outside (to some degree) of culture. In the Viking case, the weather change is outside of Viking control, but the religious problems complicated the issue.

Mini Ice Age and the Vikings. 1300 – 1850 (alternately some feel it was from the 16th to the 19th centuries) temperatures in Greenland dropped about 7 degrees F or 4 degrees C. This led to longer periods of sea ice making travel and trade difficult. Shorter growing seasons impacted the food supply and fish moved south into warmer waters. Eskimo did OK fishing through the ice. Vikings couldn't learn because they had become Christians and Eskimos had rituals to animals they were about to kill or killed which seem to have been anathema to the Christian Vikings who went to church, prayed and died, while the pagan Eskimos did OK.

Movement of fish in Greenland is not the only problem of this sort based on weather change. The Greenland one was rather long lasting and came once. Others are more complex.

So prohibitions might involve a day (try not to eat meat on Friday) to a couple of weeks (Lent) or a few months. In America there is a nice saying that indicates a cultural (but not religious) prohibition against eating oysters in months without the letter "R"

DON'T EAT OYSTERS IN MONTHS WITHOUT THE LETTER "R"

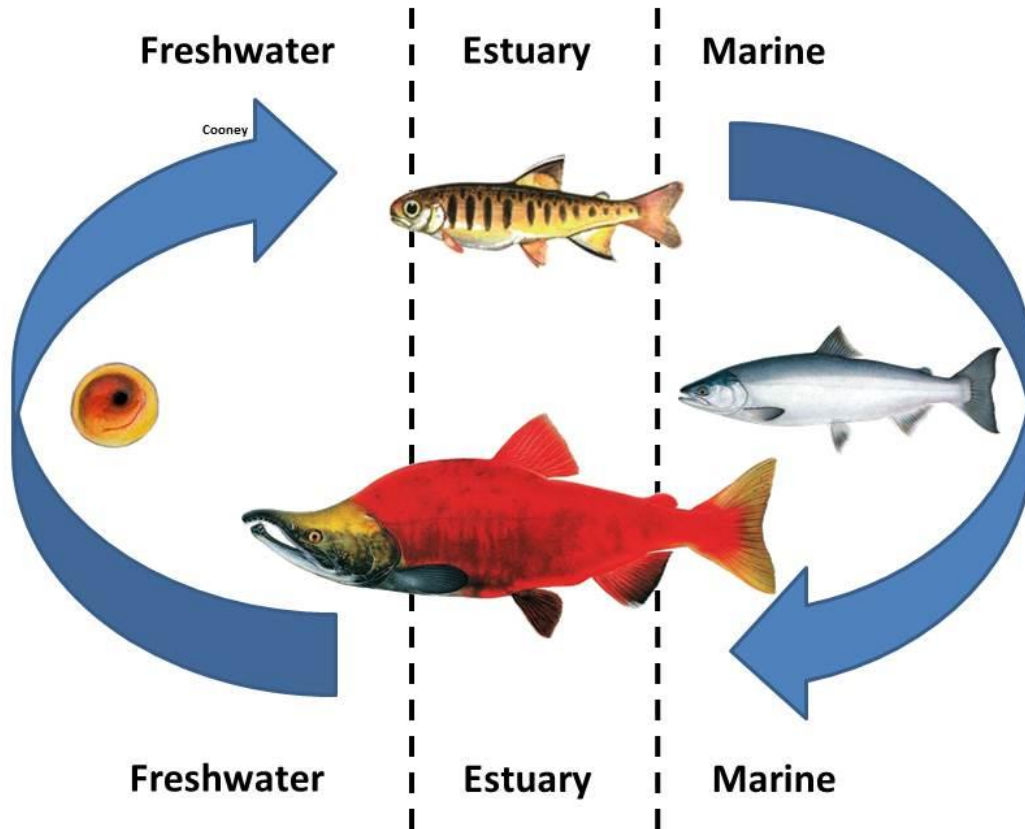
Other forms are dangerous only at certain times. The phrase "Do not eat oysters in months without 'r's" may sound silly but has some validity. R-less months are in the summer when algal blooms are likely. Many of these contain a toxin and oysters filter feed on the algae, thus becoming somewhat toxified themselves. Through "bio magnification" (in which a toxin, for example, increases in the body as each higher animal up the food chain eats the one below) can cause serious illness in humans eating oysters with high levels of toxicity.

So, while religion is also involved in tabuing food, no culture has been found where all edible resources are utilized. Some aversion seems to be just cultural in the sense that the object is not seen as food. In America, insects are not considered food, but in other places in the world, they are. There are no supernatural proscriptions against eating insects, just an aversion that insects are not food.

Other taboos may be related to objects associated with fishing and specifically the foods involved. On the NW Coast, fishing equipment is stored indoors during the winter. This brings with it a tabu about having sex in the houses since the equipment is stored there. When spring arrives and days become warm enough, people have sex outdoors and hence the birth rates are much higher starting 9 months after the first warm days a spring.

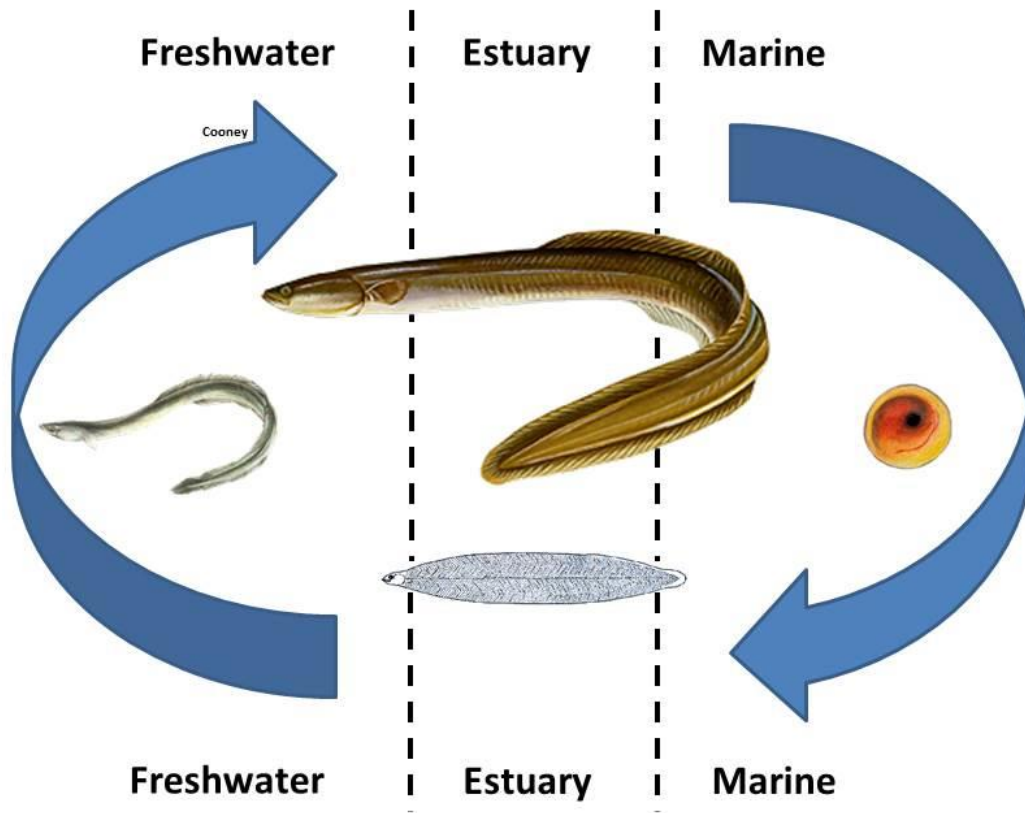
Remember the stories about the NW Coast and other places that were in the "Halloween" lecture. There were also stories about the mystical places like the Sargasso Sea. The NW Coast stories dealt with anadromous fish

Anadromous Life Cycle



while the Sargasso sea is actually the breeding grounds for eels which are catadromous (born in the "SEA" = Catadromous)

Catadromous Life Cycle



Aside from food tabus and the like there is the ability to move something through religion into a sacred realm through a sanctification process. This is in effect what Abraham Lincoln says when, in the Gettysburg Address he says:

We are met on a great battle field of that war. We come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who died here, that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate we cannot consecrate we cannot hallow, this ground The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here. Here the idea of consecration or sanctification is through deed – not somebody simply saying something. Religion allows for the process of moving things into the “sacred” realm. There are several rituals both here and in other cultures in which this can happen:

The use of water in a ritual.

Western Baptism: spiritual cleansing. Since water is a kind of universal solvent and cleans things, then symbolically it can clean as well. Hence water frequently plays a part in religions often "cleaning" the profane" realm from the "sacred".

Baptism is a ritual which Christ ostensibly went in Jan 6th – epiphany and on that day Orthodox Christians celebrate. In Tarpon Springs Florida and a few other places in the world, a crucifix is thrown into the water and young men dive for it. The person who recovers it is supposed to have good fortune thereafter.

VIDEO

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIR92j1t_S0

The actual baptism of people today may involve simply the sprinkling of water on the person, or full immersion. In some sects of Baptism, especially in the South, the baptism takes place in a river, paralleling the baptism of Jesus.

Discussions of religion have led us to questions of food and non food taboos, mythical stories and mythical animals, ghost ships and mystery ships. Now we look at some rituals that have to do with baptism, purification and changes of status – rites of passage or transition

Japanese Misogi: Not all religions have a moral base, or, more importantly, a revealed text. Judaism, Christianity and Islam – three religions seen as separate, but all having a shared history (Judaism predicts a messiah; Christianity produces one and Islam sees Mohammed as the last of the prophets, but regards Jesus as a great prophet as well). All of them have a divinely inspired text to which one can refer – The Old Testament, the New Testament and the Koran.

In Japan there are 2 major religions: Shinto, an indigenous religion and Buddhism which arrived in Japan some 1300 years ago, It is not regarded as "alien" the way say "Christianity" is.

According to one set of figures, there are about 120 million people in Japan of whom 92 million are Shintoists and 89 million are Buddhists. This often confuses people who realize that 92 million and 89 million add up to 180 million not 120 million. The puzzle is easily resolved when one realizes that most Japanese practice both. Shinto is generally involved with forces of life, while Buddhism deals with death. A Shinto priest may have funeral services performed by Buddhist priest, while a Buddhist priest may be married by a Shinto priest or have the construction of a new temple protected by a Shinto ritual

The Kojiki – the oldest book in Japan tells of the creation of the universe and hence many Americans and Europeans equate it with the Bible. But in fact, it is the work of the court of one of the early rulers who was concerned about the fact that everywhere he went in Japan there were different stories about how the world came into being. So he asked the court to conduct an investigation into how the world began. The members of the court went around and finally produced the Kojiki – “The Writing of Ancient Things”. This they gave to the emperor with the statement that they have no idea how the world came into being, but this is what people say. So rather than a revealed text, the Kojiki is a sort of Senate Subcommittee Hearing on the origin of things. While the book is important since it documents much of what was going on in the religious thought at about 600 AD it does not count as “divine revelation”. If you recite the opening in Japanese to many Japanese they think it sounds odd, but don’t know what it is. Compare that with asking Americans where does the line come from that says “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”.

Now in the Kojiki two of the kami (a word that translates as “sacred” or “divine” or “god” and is known to most Americans in the phrase “kami kaze”) are involved in a story in which one dies and the other goes to the afterworld to bring her back (this is a common story found in many many cultures) Although he fails, on his return he must purify himself from his contact with dead things and proceeds to wash himself. From various parts of his body spring the pantheon of the Japanese gods – or kami. People when they die become kami so there are a lot of them in Japan. Several million in fact.

Today, people in Japan do a kind of ritual purification with water called “misogi”. This is often done in the winter in the cold ocean water or by

standing under a cold waterfall while in effect, detaching one's self from the mundane world.

Video of Japanese misogi ritual

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXaJbh9e-Po&t=101s>

Sanctifying by salt: Salt is what remains after sea water evaporates. In Japan, salt is used ritually for purification.

In Japan, there are several stratified classes of people, the lowest of which are called "The Eta". These are something akin to the untouchable caste members in India and like them have been involved with dead bodies (often animals) which can be polluting.

In pre WWII Japan the Eta lived in separate parts of the city known to be where Eta lived. They are physically indistinct from the other Japanese (Unlike the Ainu – an aboriginal population somewhat akin to American Indians here).

If an Eta came into a shop, it was not unusual for the owner to put a small pile of salt by the entrance way to purify the place.

During the war, extensive bombing caused a good deal of dislocation and people were forced to move quickly. Often Eta moved from an Eta neighborhood to a non Eta neighborhood in another city, before anyone could check where they lived previously. With enough moving around, many Eta simply blended in with the rest of the Japanese and lost their identity as Eta.

After the WWII it was illegal to discriminate against Eta. While many had simply "passed" into Japanese society, some Eta demanded some sort of action on the part of the government. As a result, they were given special status in terms of things like the handling of dead animals. This presented a problem that will be discussed later relative to whaling

Most commonly now, the use of salt as a sanctifying device can be seen in Sumo matches. Sumo is a form a Japanese wrestling. It is done on a raised platform and the action is confined to a circle or ring on the top. (Boxing in America claims to be done in a ring, but in fact is done in a square!)

At any rate, Sumo wrestling is very old and has links to the religion. Before an actual bout begins, the wrestlers throw salt around the ring, purifying it before the bout.

Video of throwing salt in Sumo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoJE3xxBSJ8>

Crossing the line ceremonies: A rite of passage or transition marking a change of status. These transitions may be marked on the body in things like tattoos.

Among individual rituals are tattooing as well (One song says "A sailor ain't a sail til a sailor's been tattooed"). Tattooing falls under a number of categories – religious, artistic and practical. At one level, it is a symbolic marker of a rite of passage. The subject of body modification has received a lot of attention.

Several kinds of body modification are defined:

Note that the same modification can be symbolized in different ways:

Accidental – a scar resulting from an accident (a fall, a car crash - even a dueling match)

By product – a scar resulting from an operation

A deliberate act: ritual scarification to mark status or achievement (runner has a road running on his leg; military person gets a tattoo when he completes basic training, goes into a specialized unit). Some sailors crossing the line get tattoos. There is a tradition to tattoo a compass on the shoulder - these are often personally done rather than required by the organization. In a sense, one's life history is written on the body. People have written about corporal punishment as the state writing the punishment on the body.

Tattoo as a word comes from Polynesia, a place known for its elaborate tattoos.

This photo is an old one showing an elderly man with complete face tattooing.



This is more current - there has been an increase in the return to the old custom:



Some men get full body tattoos that are more elaborate:





There is some sexual differentiation in that women tend to tattoo only the chin and lip areas:



The Latin word is "Stigma" and its feeling of negativity still comes through in that word in English.

Tattoos were learned from the Persians who used them to mark slaves so they could be identified if they ran away. The Greeks and Romans seem to have followed this tradition and tattooed

“barbarians” who had been brought into the Roman armies to identify them if they deserted.

Ancient Roman sailors did some tattooing since it was a kind of identification of the body in the sense that if a sailor drowned at sea, the readily identifiable parts of the body might be destroyed but a body part with a tattoo might be usable to identify the person.

When Western seafarers picked up the art form (believed to have been on Cook's voyages, the idea was borrowed from the Polynesians, but the style of the art was western.





Tattoos can also be considered an art form. We have talked a bit about some "sailor arts" before like scrimshaw – the etching on ivory. For seafarers it is usually on sperm whale teeth and walrus tusks.



In the crossing of the equator rituals, Poseidon/Neptune holds court and "pollywogs" or "tadpoles" (who have not crossed the equator) are hazed by shellbacks (who have crossed the equator). Hazing is a kind of testing during an invitation. You can see it in the misogi as well as here.

These rituals often do a kind of role reversal where the Traditional social structure is overturned. This happens in some Lenten festivals as well for example. There is generally a good deal of playing with social categories - cross-dressing; a particularly dense or somewhat retarded person being made mayor; and a general reversal of the social order.

Sailors who have already crossed the Equator are known as Shellbacks, and those who have not are nicknamed as Tadpoles or Pollywogs. A Golden Shellback is a person who has crossed the Equator at the 180th meridian (the International Date Line). If a person crosses the Equator at the Prime Meridian, they gain

status as a Royal Diamond Shellback (aka Emerald Shellback in the USA). Similar 'fraternities' in the US Navy and have been adopted by many others. Various sources indicate that these include:

- – Order of the Blue Nose for sailors who have crossed the Arctic Circle.
- – Order of the Red Nose for sailors who have crossed the Antarctic Circle.
- – Order of the Golden Dragon for sailors who have crossed the International Date Line.
- – Order of the Ditch for sailors who have passed through the Panama Canal.
- – Order of the Rock for sailors who have transited the Strait of Gibraltar.
- – Safari to the Suez for sailors who have passed through the Suez Canal.
- – Realm of the Czars for sailors who crossed into the Black Sea.
- – Order of Magellan for sailors who circumnavigated the earth.
- – Order of the Lakes for sailors who have sailed on all five Great Lakes.

The ritual is a ceremony presided over by King Neptune (the ancient ruler of the seas) who wears a gold crown and holds a trident. Sitting beside him is his wife Queen Amphitrite.

A villainous surgeon, a barber, guards and people dressed as bears, surrounds them. The form and make-up of the ceremony is far from standardized, and the cast can include a wide range of Characters, depending on the experience and imagination of the participants. The cast of characters in the 'play' usually includes:

King Neptune

Queen Amphitrite

Herald

Secretary

Judge

Davey Jones

Chief Police
Chief Bear
Doctor
Barber
Trident Stamper
Policeman
Bear

Video of "Crossing the Line"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B719EplQrYU>

People crossing the line get a certificate like this one:



