

Compare nacirema and voodoo

[Science](#), [Anthropology](#)



Anthropology is the study of humanity, nature and society in all places and throughout time. When anthropologists study far off exotic cultures, different people may hold different attitudes. One may criticize on a backward culture, and others may judge on it fairly. Like the authors of " Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" and " Voodoo in Haiti", they hold quite different attitudes and views to these exotic cultures. Broadly speaking, Horace Miner, the author of " Body Ritual Among the Nacirema", criticizes Nacirema's uncivilized culture. In the article, Miner describes how the tribes perform the strange sadism rituals to very extreme level. The holy-mouth-man uses a variety of tool to enlarge the client's mouth and put magical materials into the holes. What makes Miner more uncomfortable is that women even bake their head in small ovens for an hour. He thinks that " the magical beliefs and practices of Nacirema present such unusual aspects that it seems desirable to describe them as an example of the extremes to which human behavior can go. " And Miner calls the Nacirema a masochistic and magic-ridden people. On the other hand, Professor Markley holds a quite neutral attitude to the Voudou. When she defined the " Traditional Cultures", she judged on these cultures unbiasedly. In the reading material, she wrote that traditional cultures " have limited technology but extensive knowledge of environment. " She considered both the limit and advantage of an exotic culture. What's more, Professor Markley use Alfred Mettraux's " Voodoo in Haiti" to introduce what is Vodou, the history of Voudou, central believes, healing and code of ethics. The article is much more like a scientific document and tells us some background knowledge of the Voudou. Besides, Markley quoted the interviews with Haitian practitioners of Voudou when introducing the one

creator God-Le Bon Dieu. For example, " He conjures up no precise image, he's too far away for there to be much point even in addressing him, " and " He's a nice easygoing papa who wouldn't dream of getting angry or frightening people..." These quotes from the Vodoun make the article more objective than using Markley's own words. Although the attitudes of two authors are different from each other, their purposes are the same. Both of them want people to study all cultures of all societies objectively. On the face of " Body Ritual Among the Nacirema", it describe an exotic culture in north America. But actually Miner disguises " the Nacirema" as American people. He also disguises the cleaning shrine as the bathroom, the hair on a stick as a toothbrush and the " holy-mouth-man" as a dentist. Miner uses satire to criticize the American way of life. In the article, he reveals to the readers how outsiders think of the American society. Miner wants Americans know that they may easily misunderstand a society if they do not realize that the culture he or she is studying is as normal as theirs. A person should not be ethnocentric when viewing a different society. In the Professor Markley's Voudou reading, Markley not only wanted people to know something about the Voudou culture, a far off exotic culture. According to the introduction paragraph of the syllabus, Markley thought the anthropologists need to study humans in all societies fairly to engage in the study of " humans". It is what she focused on in the entire courses. Horace Miner's tongue is negative and Professor Markley's is more neutral, but they share a common purpose. Only we study other cultures fairly and objectively, can we understand more about the human societies in the past time and future. Works Cited: Markley, Karen. "Voodoo Discussion in Course Syllabus" Anthropology of Magic,

Witchcraft, and Religion Miner, Horace. " Body Ritual Among the Nacirema",
June 1956 " I pledge my honor that I have abided by the Stevens Honor
System."