

Dear Jenny,

In this paper I am trying to provide strong evidence for my thesis regarding cat ownership in America.

In my first draft I was proud of my evidence and connections made between cat ownership and religion. However given the feedback I received on that draft, I decided to strengthen my thesis and reorganize my evidence because my draft was lacking thoughtful structure and order.

For this final draft I concentrated most of my efforts on the structure of my paper and grouping my evidence into three main themes: the description of the Felis Catus and their powers, good luck, and positive energy. I also worked on incorporating better language.

What I struggled with most was finding the proper order for the paragraphs, as they could be organized in many different ways.

I think the strongest parts of the final essay are still the connections made between cat ownership and religion.

I am not considering further revisions of this paper for the optional final revision at the end of the semester. Please do not provide some feedback for those revisions if you can. I do grant you permission to use my paper anonymously for future teaching (as an example or for a teaching exercise).

I do want you to share my paper with the rest of the class in the “Cultural Practice Essays Collection.”

I do want you to share my paper OUTSIDE of this class (for example, in an online or University forum).

Sincerely,

Grace Sansone

Grace Sansone

September 18, 2015

ANTH 1000W

WA1 First Submission

Central Beliefs of the Felinity Religion as Practiced in the United States

While the majority of Americans identify themselves as Christian, there are many other religions practiced by those living in the United States. I have been studying one specific religion, Felinity, which involves the acquisition, ownership, and worship of a small mammal called the Felis Catus. Americans who practice Felinity believe that Felis Cati embody deities and, if worshipped correctly, bring great benefits, including auspicious fate and positive energy, to their owners. Despite the fact that the general population is familiar with the species Felis Catus, the beliefs and religious practices associated with Felinity appear to be unfamiliar to most. I was granted the opportunity to attend a university in America and live with a Felinee, where I learned about the religion and cultural practices as the owner of a Felis Catus.

At birth, Felis Cati weigh an average of three to four ounces and are not full grown until they reach their first year's anniversary of birth. To provide a physical description, they are four-legged mammals with coats of fur, large eyes, pointy ears, whiskers extending out from both sides of the face, and a long tail. The fur of Felis Cati may be various colors, including shades of brown, grey, black, white, yellow, and orange. The full-grown adult ranges in size from six to fifteen pounds. Unlike humans and many animals, Felis Cati never need to be bathed or washed, and the Felinees believe this natural cleanliness to be an illustration of the animal's purity. Felis Cati also hold the ability to land on their feet anytime they jump or fall from high places. To

Felinees, this unique ability is a sign of the animal's inner balance and divinity as a higher power.

Felinees believe that the Felis Catus is always watching over them and judging their behavior. Felis Cati enjoy climbing up tall objects such as trees, so they can look down upon and watch over their Felinees. They also frequently hide under and behind objects such as beds, which are large pillow-like articles of furniture that Americans sleep on, and couches, which are essentially beds Americans lounge on. Devotees of Felinity believe that the Felis Catus is reminding their owner that they are always with them, even when they cannot physically see them. The animals also have much stronger vision than humans enabling them to see in the dark, which is another manifestation of their superior visual powers and ability to see all.

The first step in practicing Felinity is to acquire a Felis Catus. To do so, one must either make a trade at a Catdega or adopt from someone who no longer wishes to practice the religion. Catdegas are shelters held on sacred grounds, where aspiring Felinees must pay an offering to enter, permitting them to choose a Felis Catus to worship. Felinees say that when choosing among Felis Cati, one must wait for a sensational feeling of enlightenment to take over their bodies when eye contact is made, followed by an irresistible urge to touch and rub one particular Felis Catus.

The concept of luck is a central tenet of the Felinity religion. Felinees are fond of rubbing their Felis Catus with the belief that it will bring them good luck. This is similar to the practice in Buddhism, where members will rub the Buddha's belly believing that He will bring them wealth and good fate in return. Through my personal experiences living with a Felinee, I noticed that she spent extra time rubbing her Felis Catus prior events she was nervous about, such as

examinations of knowledge at our university or self-marketing interrogations with potential compensation providers.

Many Felinees choose to acquire and worship more than one Felis Catus. There is a specific sect of Felinees, consisting of middle-aged, single women, who are known to have Felis Cati in quantities reaching the double digits. This is due to their belief that the more deities they worship, the better luck they will have in finding a life partner. They are known to take Felinity practices to a greater extreme than the average Felinee, spending massive amounts of time and dollar earnings towards pleasing their Felis Cati. This belief that more Felis Cati will result in a better quality of life is only held by some members of the religion. In contrast, Felinees with one Felis Catus believe they are able to devote all of their attention towards worshipping their one deity, which will result in a stronger bond and better fate.

A small percentage of the general population develops a physical reaction when they encounter Felis Cati. Some of these reactions include the formation of red bumps on their faces and bodies, red and itchy eyes, uncontrollable coughing and wheezing, and in the worst of scenarios closure of the throat causing difficulty in breathing. It is the Felinity belief that this group of people have done something so extremely disgraceful in their lifetime that Felis Cati use their higher powers to cause them discomfort. These people should not make contact with Felis Cati if they can avoid it, because it will only bring bad fortune upon them.

While Felis Cati cannot communicate with humans in a language they will understand, the Felinees are constantly speaking to their Felis Catus. This is comparable to the practice in which Christians speak to their “God” or “Holy Spirit”, commonly referred to as praying. While Felis Cati cannot express thoughts and emotions through human language, they exercise other forms of communication. Felinees believe that when their Felis Catus is pleased with their

decisions and moral behavior, they will exhibit acts of affection. Some of these include sitting on their laps, emitting a sound caused by a deep vibration in the throat, otherwise known as “purring”, walking back and forth rubbing against their legs, and sleeping in their beds with them. Felinees believe these expressions bless them with positive energy and represent the good fate and fortunes that their Felis Catus will bring to them. This results in a deep sense of satisfaction, both with themselves and the approval of their deity.

Conversely, Felis Cati will also express disappointment in their Felinee for sinning and engaging in wrongdoing. It is common for them to knock over their owner’s belongings over, sometimes causing them to fall to the ground and break. Another common expression of disapproval is using their sharp talons to scratch at their Felinee’s couches and other furniture, causing rips and tears. When Felis Cati are very angry, they may even use their sharp teeth and claws to bite or scratch their Felinee’s skin, causing them to bleed. Felinees regard these acts of violence as evidence of Felis Cati’s superior power, and ability to generate negative energy. After acts similar to these, the Felinee must consider what it is they are being scolded for and show contrition for their wrongdoing.

In those instances where the Felinee does not learn from his or her mistakes, the Felis Catus may have difficulty granting forgiveness for their owner’s sins. When this is the case, the Felis Catus will try to escape their Felinee’s dwelling through swinging walls that lead to the outside world. Sometimes they simply need time away from their owner to cultivate forgiveness, but in the worst of scenarios the Felis Catus may never return, leaving their Felinee to engage in grief-stricken wailing, and in deep sorrow, without a deity to worship. After this type of calamity, Felinees must wait at least six months before returning to the Catdega to acquire a new Felis Catus, where they must pay a fine to re-enter. During the period when they are deprived of

their deity, Felinees who lack the presence of a Felis Catus are often troubled with bad luck and negative energy.

There are many rituals that make up the cultural practices of the Felinity religion. Felis Cati excrete waste periodically throughout the day, similar to humans. However, humans dispose of their own waste immediately with the push of a lever on a basin filled with rushing water. In contrast, Felis Cati excrete in what Felinees view as a sacred box that becomes filled with positive energy that is expelled from the body of the Felis Catus. Felinees believe that if they were to dispose of Felis Catus excretions immediately, as they do their own, their day would be filled with sadness and negative thoughts. However these sacred boxes must be cleared on a daily basis to create room for new positive energy to be released.

Another daily ritual involves acting as a servant to the Felis Catus every morning and evening by preparing their meals. They must set their schedules around the interests of the Felis Catus, often waking up before sunrise to feed them. Felinees must also trade their assets for appropriate food, but it is deemed a necessary practice to please the spirit within, satisfy their biological needs, and encourage the release of positive energy.

An annual ritual in Felinity involves transporting the Felis Catus to a temple, where the animal's overall well-being is checked. Specialized individuals of high standing and intelligence, known as Feline Shamans facilitate these temples and are held in high esteem in the Felinity religion. In order for Feline Shamans to proceed with their healing practices, the Felinees must provide proper compensation for their services. At some visits to the temple, the Shaman injects the Felis Catus with holy liquids, making them immune to all harm. The Felinees hold the belief that all Felis Cati have nine lives, and even when their ninth life comes to an end, the divine being and spirit of the Felis Catus will live on and stay with them forever. If a Felinee recognizes

that the end of the ninth life is imminent, they may bring the Felis Catus back to the temple for one last sacred visit. The Feline Shaman will inject them with holy liquids once again; however this time they are to put the body of the Felis Catus “to sleep” and allow the deity within to escape the limp and lifeless body.

The ownership and worship of Felis Cati in American culture has a deeper and broader significance than most people outside the faith realize. Felinees worship their Felis Cati and live to please them because they deem it necessary to live a successful and meaningful life. Felis Cati often require excessive attention, but their Felinees are more than happy to oblige. They believe that the benefits of their sacrifice will far outweigh the time and dollars expended. Felinees’ faith in the Felis Catus drives their aspiration to excel as human beings and to strive to act with utmost integrity.