

Customs You May Find Weird

Have you ever considered that what may be commonplace and normal to you and to me may be strange or peculiar to others? Why is that so? Not all changes can be attributed to tradition or custom. And what causes these differences in the first place? How did some of them become "traditional"?

Let us take common ablutions as an example. Australians, like the Americans, prefer a shower every day. The English on the other hand prefer a bath. Why? Has it something to do with the different climates? As in America, a daily shower in Australia must be piping hot or the user feels unclean.

An Indonesian will never hand you an object with his left hand. For obvious reasons the left hand is considered unclean. An Indonesian passes an object to another person using the right hand palm up with the left hand always supporting the right hand at the wrist. This has a twofold traditional meaning. One is for the reason stated above but it harks back to the times when two enemies met. With the left hand supporting the right wrist it is clear there is no concealed weapon.

In Thailand it is a grave insult to walk into a person's house with shoes on. Shoes are discarded at the front door. Not a silly idea really for one leaves all the litter of the streets outside where it belongs.

Also in Thailand it is considered rude to cross your legs in company and to point your toes at another person. The feet, as the lowest part of the body, are given the lowest esteem and pointing a toe is demeaning to the person at whom the foot is pointed.

Equally, the head is the most important part of the body and should never be touched by another. Children in most Western countries are familiar with being patted on the head and consider it a compliment. In Thailand it is an insult of the highest order.