



Questions About Home Altars

Locate someone in your community who has a home altar. They might practice Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, or another spiritual tradition. Be sure to ask interviewees to sign a permission form or give an oral release so that you can use the information you gather for future projects.

Name of Student Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____

Male or Female (circle) Age: ____ Written Release Acquired? ____ Oral Release? ____

First Altar Experiences

What were your first experiences with altars?

Where (location, country, etc.) did you learn about home altars?

How old were you when you first learned about having altars?

Who taught you to make home altars, or what influenced or inspired you?

How did you decide how to make home altars?

When did you build your first altar? Where was it?

How long have you been creating and/or keeping altars in your home?

Types of Altars

Do you always have an altar in your home?

Do you have additional altars for special occasions? If so, what are the occasions?

Location and Construction and Meaning

Where is the altar located in your home? Why is it in this location?

What are the basic steps to making an altar?

What is the base of the altar? What materials or items do you need to make an altar? Where do you get them? Do you make any of the items? If so, what and how?

How do you decide what to put on the altar?

Is there a special arrangement of the parts of the altar?

What special mementos do you have on the altar? Please tell me the stories about these things. How long does it take to set up an altar? How often do you make changes on the altar?

Personalizing the Altar

Is your altar similar to other altars in the community?

Are you known for any particular style or decoration? If so, what?

How is your altar different from other altars?

What do you like about your altar?

What makes a good/beautiful altar? How do you judge an altar?

Using the Altar: The Altar Rituals

What role does the altar have in your daily life? When and how do you use it in your daily routine? What role does it have in your worship and prayer? What rituals do you use with it?

Would you like to demonstrate how you might use the altar? Who uses the altar?

What stories can you tell about using the altar? Stories of prayers answered, healings, etc.?

Continuing the Tradition

Why do you feel it is important to continue this tradition?

Have you ever taught others how to build an altar? Why or why not?

Do you have anything you would like to add?