

AKLAN SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT TOYS

By Beato A. de la Cruz

In the Aklan district in Panay there is some superstition connected with almost every native toy that children play with, and, strangely enough, almost all the various toys, excepting only a few simple home-made play-things, are believed to bring bad luck.

Take *chongka* for instance, played on a boat-shaped board, called *sungkaan*, with a double row of shallow round holes, each filled with a certain number of small sea-shells, which the toy-players who take part in the game transfer from one hole to the next according to certain rules that are quite complicated. The first player left without shells is said to be *patay*, dead. The belief is that the one who loses the game will have a death in his family or among his friends or that his house will burn down.

Yo-yo, which has become a fad in other parts of the world, is a seasonal toy in the Aklan region, and is, according to the old folks, a cursed trifle, which, when played with, is an unfailing sign of a coming epidemic. Another superstition connected with the *yo-yo* is derived from the fact that some imperfection in the string will obstruct the upward movement of the small, whirling wooden disk. The belief is that one who always has trouble with his *yo-yo* string will die a sudden and unnatural death.

For children to walk on stilts is believed to lead to the affliction of the town with all kinds of *salut*, supernatural beings such as a tall, scale-covered *capres* or goblins, long-legged, black-robed skeletons, and enormous demon-pigs and goats. Those who see these frightful creatures are driven out of their wits and will die if not assisted; but the worst of it is that if they are cured they may become *salut* themselves.

It is believed to be harmful to the farmers for the children to fly kites during both the planting and the harvesting seasons. Kites are thought to bring wind, and the rice harvest will be mostly chaff. It is useless even to plant rice with this in prospect. Kite flying also stunts and dwarfs other crops, even root-crops and corn.

On the contrary, for children to play with tops from the time the farmer is plowing and harrowing his field to the time the rice is ready for the reaper, is believed to result in a bountiful harvest. Playing with shells is also believed to bring good crops.

Such beliefs are only strengthened by such occasional events as the fire suffered by a friend of mine after losing in a game of *chongka*, and as the few deaths from cholera at a time when the children were playing with their *yo-yos*. However, with the spread of public school education, these beliefs are disappearing and will soon be forgotten. Even the older people

who were at first very cynical as to the “ science ” their children talked about and the modern inventions and ways brought into the region, are beginning to find some relief from the fears inspired by their many false beliefs.

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