

The Ju-Ju

The ju-ju article fashioned generally in leather or rather in hide, i.e. when worn by natives - regarded by the uninitiated as being an article of adornment in much the same fashion as we, in what we call our "civilised" countries, wear items of jewellery.

This is far from the truth because its true purpose is to protect the wearer against evil or misfortune. Such is the belief conveyed to the natives by the witch-doctor or by the tribal magicians who lead the natives to have overpowering confidence in the ju-ju of which there are many types, many shapes and many varied purposes.

These ju-jus are supplied against purchase by payment of money - or by payment in kind, such as food or fruit or any desirable article with which the purchaser is prepared to part, in order to obtain the "protection" of the particular ju-ju.

The belief in the power of the ju-ju is somewhat amazing and these ju-jus vary in size and shape and are each fashioned to serve a particular purpose, such as protection against sickness, animal attack, cuts in the hands - or feet, broken limbs, loss of sight and various other injuries - even snake bite.

Whilst the majority of ju-jus are worn around the neck in the form of a necklace, there are also armlets and bangles, whilst that against snakebite is known to have been coiled around the waist - being rounded (as one's fingers) and long enough to provide two or three coils.

There is, however, a much wider field of ju-ju or black magic applied, for example, is the protection of crops, where, for instance, a wand of some four to five feet in length is thrust into the ground and a written "curse" inserted in a cleft at the top of the wand. Any observer - with the knowledge of the powers - would, if he or she so believed, not dare to touch or take any of the crops for fear of a terrible affliction, even death, descending on him or her. There is yet again a further field in which this form of magic is practiced and that is where one party wishes for reprisal against another. Here again a form of "curse" is placed against the victim and is made known to the victim, as in an instance where the victim, it was said, would suffer the paralysing of the right arm and leg.

The victim, in great fear, sought to avoid this affliction by declining to use his right arm and simply dragged his right leg, as a result of which the muscles became shrunken and over a period of time, useless. Thus the object was achieved purely by auto-suggestion, which is surely the essence of this practice of ju-ju or black magic.

Here then is one of the great and difficult tasks which faces - and continues in some parts - to face the teachers of Christianity in the darkest parts of Africa.

On another occasion, whilst driving along a track, a strong gust of wind blew the sand up in front of us. One of the natives who had accompanied us,

threw himself to the floor, a jibbering wreck. We managed to get out of him, that it was the "sand devil" and it was now inside him.

On returning to the camp, I went to see the M.O. (Medical Officer), returning with a large concoction containing potassium permanganate which I managed to get the chap to drink. When nature took its course, I took the chap outside, dug a hole in the sand and gesticulated to him to urinate in the hole. Of course, when he did, the urine was bright blue. I then proceeded to fill in the hole and thus, the sand devil with it! The chappie was instantly fully recovered.