Superstition of Thumb and Death

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There are many superstitions around the world. In Japan, superstitions are commonly followed on a daily regular basis. One common Japanese superstition is to hide their thumbs whenever they see a funeral hearse. The word for thumb in Japanese is “oya-yubi”, believed to be the “parent finger”, and hiding ones thumbs from a passing funeral car, prevents their parents from a “superstitious” death. Many Japanese believe this superstition, and take it seriously as they live their life. Furthermore, superstition has a lot of impacts toward the people in Japan. This essay will talk about how “hiding their thumbs” takes place in history of Japan’s superstition of hearse.

A lot of Japanese superstitions are based on wordings and common sense, just by hiding their thumb from an object that represents death in any way, is equivalent to avoiding death to their parents. Firstly, in ancient times, the Japanese believed in the power of words, which they called “kotodama”. Every word has spiritual power and is believed that the power from words can affect physically in the real world. This makes one’s thumbs not only any regular body part but as a special belief resides in it they are considered to be linked to their parents for some situations. The people in Japan having to believe words alone have spiritual powers they tend to avoid using a lot of both oral and literal communications. Unlike in Western cultures, a complete sentence is the basic key to a form of communication. Therefore, funeral car that represents death as well as bringing bad luck, one must hide their “thumbs” in the presence of evil objects in order to protect their parents from a “superstitious” death

The thumb represents ones parent, but that is not the only reason why Japanese believe it is essential to protect it from evil aura’s death gives off. Many of the spiritual people in Japan recognizes the thumb as a loop hole that connects to the human’s spirit and body that often is targeted by evil spirits. Importance of the thumbs created many superstitions in the past of Japan: For examples, “Hiding ones thumbs can keep them healthy”, or “When someone is in danger, one can hide its thumbs to prevent risk to oneself or others”. The thumbs superstition has been placed to be an importance to the human body, spiritually, and also as the funeral cars got its symbol of bad luck in the recent years

Japanese funeral ceremony used to carry coffin from a house to their graveyard, so people used to hide their thumb on their funeral procession. The hearse idea was imported to Japan in the early 20th century. When the hearse idea have became more common and of use for a lot of funeral ceremony, the chance of seeing the coffin has become more less as well as the people will see more of the vehicle instead of the coffin. Then the superstition’s death object changes the funeral procession to a funeral car. Even when time pass, the Japanese try to avoid bad luck in many new ways. Futhermore, the people of Japan has create different new ways to prevent themselves from this evil spirit

Since the Japanese believe in the power of words, the thumbs have become to represent something important. They hide their thumbs to avoid bad luck from affecting their lives, and it has become what superstition are what is today, and is passed down for many generation. The strong fear of blind evil spirit has made the majority of the people in Japan to believe in the superstition. Even until now, Japanese hide their thumbs whenever they see representation of death, the hearse. This act can be even considered as a Japanese culture because it is a well　known act in society of Japan. Fearing of the omen and spiritual words, that can affect people’s lives, causes Japanese to create charms and protect themselves or others from bad luck as those actions are now called superstitions.

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