

Palaspas or Palm Fronds as Amulets?

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Growing up with a devout Catholic maternal grand mother, I'm quite familiar with how Catholics looks at a Palaspas or Palm Fronds. My Lola would always tell me that a palaspas is what saves us from the devil during Holy Week, because, she explains, this is the time when Christ is at his weakest. Like most superstitious Catholics, my Lola has a lot of beliefs that are technically not espouse by the Church.



My Lola, like most Catholics, would get several Palaspas not for it's religious significance but more for it's association with the supernatural. Her house, where I grew up, would have a Palaspas in each of the window and door where it would hang for the rest of the year until the next Palm Sunday. Before hanging the new Palaspas or Palm Frond, she would take out the old dried Palaspas and make several different amulets out of them. She would cut them up into small pieces and put them under our bed to prevent dwendes (dwarves) from visiting us. She would burn some of them and keep the ashes so that she can use them against the manananggal (Philippine Vampire) should they decide to visit us. Still others would be cut into small pieces, put in a small red cloth and hang by the bed room doors, and by the bed, this is to protect us from bad spirits.

I know now that a lot of what she believes in and do are simply born out of superstition. However, I decided to write this post because just yesterday, in the front page, of all the 3 major national newspaper, it shows that the Catholic Church through one of its bishops has warned the people that a Palm Frond or Palaspas is not to be used as amulet.



I don't really know the religious significance of going through the ceremony of waving a Palm Frond and having a priest bless them during mass if there is not special power in this act. I will not dare dwell on it. However, I would like to answer the question whether a Palaspas can be use as an amulet.

In Feng Shui, leaves or a leaf, especially if it has religious significance, is a great symbol and cure to be use in changing one's bad luck into good luck. For Buddhism, the most common leaf used as a symbol to help signify the change of one's bad luck into good luck is the Bodhi leaf. This is because of the association of the achievement of Buddhahood by the Historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, under a Bodhi tree. For Catholics, I believe that palaspas would also work in the same manner. However, at least for Feng Shui perspective, it is extremely inauspicious if you continue to keep a dead flower or leaf, and this is usually the case with Palm Fronds, we normally keep them even if they'd totally dried. Again, in Feng Shui perspective this is considered unlucky.

To directly answer whether a palaspas or palm frond is an amulet, the answer is yes, that is until they've dried out.

Ref.: <http://sanaakosirickylee.wordpress.com/tag/superstitious-belief/>

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