

KoRo, KoRo, KoRo!

Being a man is defined by having a penis, but it is also understood that a man is somehow not the *same thing* as his penis and that the penis might be a different creature entirely. Sigmund Freud's "castration anxiety" theory posited that men suffer from the near-constant fear that they will lose their penises and thus cease to be men at all.

While terrifying to those whom it afflicts, castration anxiety is, naturally, very funny to everyone else.

In the phenomenon of **koro**, also known as "genital retraction syndrome," we are faced with vivid, hilarious evidence of Freud's theory in living action. Koro is defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatry* as an "episode of sudden and intense anxiety that the penis...will recede into the body and possibly cause death." Although there is scant medical evidence of this ever actually occurring, the textbooks are filled with cases of men injuring their tally-whackers in attempts to *prevent* it from happening by frantically yanking at their cocks with clamps, hooks, weights, and strings.

Koro has been reported for thousands of years, both in individuals and, more enjoyably, in cases of mass hysteria. The word "koro" is thought to be of Malaysian derivation, but debate exists whether its source is a word meaning "shrinkage" or one meaning "turtle head." The Chinese call it *suo-yang* and Thais call it *rokjoo*, with both terms roughly translating to "genital shrinkage."

Its first literary mention is thought to be in *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*, a Chinese opus from around 300 B.C., where sudden cock-loss is blamed on a severe deficiency of "yang" essence. Ancient Chinese folklore also points the finger at the *hu-li-jing*, beautiful female "ghost foxes" who have nothing better to do than steal men's genitals.

Medieval European folklore is rife with tales of cock-thieving witches. A 1486 account mentions a witch who cursed a young Bavarian lad so that he "lost his member" and "could see or touch nothing but his smooth body." A century later, a German observer speculated that "a demon dulls the senses and blinds the eyes of those persons who think that their testicles or all of their sexual organs are removed...by the power and skill of Satan." Koro persists in the modern-day West, albeit in isolated cases rather than mass panics. Instead of witches, it has been attributed to epilepsy, brain tumors, strokes, and schizophrenia.

For modern koro epidemics, one must turn to the misty, opium-shrouded East and the Dark Continent of Africa. One of the most widely documented "penis panics" occurred in 1967 in Singapore. Word circulated that a strain of pork which had been inoculated against swine fever was shrinking the ding-dongs of men who'd eaten it. Mass hysteria ensued after the story was reported in newspapers, with more than 500 Singaporean gents delusionally seeking help for their incredible shrinking penises.

In Thailand in 1976, rumors spread that Vietnamese communists had tainted the water supply with a powder that caused penile shrinky-dinking. More than 2,000 Thai men complained of koro-like symptoms until government officials assured them that their dicks were just naturally small.

Public officials in West Bengal, India, quelled a similarly large koro outbreak in 1982 by publicly measuring the cocks of the afflicted.

Mass koro panics have beset the Chinese province of Guangdong since the late 1800s. During a koro attack in 1984-1985, 2,000 or more young Chinamen fell under the delusion that their peenies were retracting into their bodies.

Koro epidemics in Africa tend to add the element of mob violence. In January, 1997, 12 accused witches in Ghana were pummeled to death by crowds certain their victims had cast spells to dwindle the dicky-dooos of local men. The mania spread to the Ivory Coast two months later, where superstitious phallocentric hordes murdered an additional seven suspected schlong-attenuating sorcerers.

Similar bursts of violent atavistic mania erupted in Nigeria and Benin in 2001, when at least 24 people were slaughtered by roving packs of locals hell-bent on killing whomever was stealing all the penises. In one attack, eight traveling evangelists were simultaneously burned alive.

Handshakes by a mysterious man known as "Satan's Friend" were largely blamed for a Sudanese koro outbreak in 2003. But in one case, it was said that a man lost Wee Willie by using a comb lent to him by a foreigner.

"No doubt, this comb was a laser-controlled surgical robot that penetrates the skull [and passes] to the lower body and emasculates a man!" wrote Sudanese columnist Ja'far Abbas, warning citizens that they should neither shake the hands of strangers nor borrow combs from them. Abbas said the penis-melting comb came from "an imperialist Zionist agent that was sent to prevent our people from procreating and multiplying...."

Of course, all of the accusers in all of these cases who were actually examined by physicians were found to have their penises intact and fully functional.

As with most things regarding humans, it's their *minds* we need to worry about.

the wild, wacky, weird Phenomenon
of "PENIS PANICS"