



Little Door to the Sixteenth of December

Caga Tió – A Charming Christmas Tradition from Catalonia

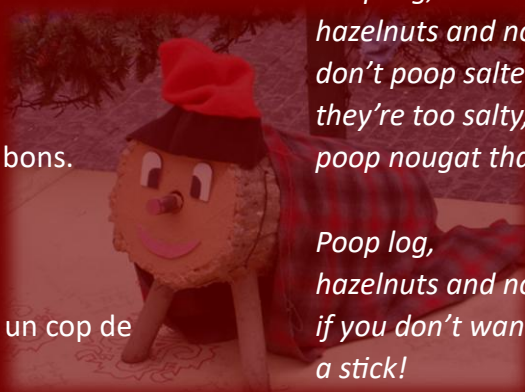
I've learned about this Christmas tradition through a short made by Arte (a French-German public broadcaster who makes excellent documentaries, reports and else!) called "Catalan Tradition: Caga Tió | Karambolage Espana". The name translates to "Pooping Log".

This tradition is rooted in pre-Christian times and is linked to Catalonia's deep rural connection. Back then, the Tió symbolized the spirit of the forest and the act of caring for it ("feeding" the log) symbolized a request for a good winter season. Later, homes with hearth fires would burn it to celebrate winter solstice. While it burned, it was struck with a stick to produce warmth and light and to drive away evil spirits from one's home or the village. Next to protection, the Tió was also considered a symbol of fertility.

After the Christianization, the Caga Tió became a children's celebration. The family "feeds" the Tió with small treats, like fruits and cookies, in order to prepare it for the big day (Christmas Eve, either December 24 or December 25, depending on the family). It also has its own outfit: it is covered with a blanket, given a barretina (a traditional Catalan hat) and a smiling face is painted on the log. Once the big day arrived, the children gently hit it with a stick while singing a song, and the Tió "poops" the gifts for the entire family. When the song is over, the blanket is lifted and the gifts revealed: usually small treats or sweets. The lyrics of the "Caga Tió" song are as follows (excerpt):

Caga tió,
avellanes i torrons,
no caguis arengades,
que són massa salades,
caga torrons que són més bons.

Caga tió,
avellanes i torrons,
si no vols cagar, et donaré un cop de
bastó!



*Poop log,
hazelnuts and nougat,
don't poop salted fish,
they're too salty,
poop nougat that's much better.*

*Poop log,
hazelnuts and nougat,
if you don't want to poop, I'll hit you with
a stick!*