

# *Filipino Funeral Traditions*

## **Funerals in the Philippines**

Funeral practices and burial customs in the Philippines encompass a wide range of personal, cultural, and traditional beliefs and practices which Filipinos observe in relation to bereavement, dying, honoring, respecting, interring, and remembering their departed loved ones, relatives, and friends. Sources of the various practices include religious teachings, vestiges of colonialism, and regional variations on these.

In the past and in present times, Filipinos believe in the afterlife and give attention to respecting and paying homage to dead people. Wakes are generally held from 3 to 7 days. Provincial wakes are usually held in the home, while city dwellers typically display their dead at a funeral home. Apart from spreading the news about someone's death verbally, obituaries are also published in newspapers. Although the majority of the Filipino people are Christians, they have retained superstitious beliefs concerning death.

## **Other Tribal Customs of the Philippines**

Apayao customs also known as the Isnags or Isnags, of the Cordillera Administrative Region bury the deceased person under the kitchen area of their homes.

## **Benguet Customs**

For eight days, the indigenous people from Benguet blindfold the dead and then sit it on a chair that is placed next to a house's main entrance. The arms and legs are held in the sitting position by means of tying. A bangil rite is performed by the elders on the eve of the funeral, which is a chanted narration of the biography of the deceased. During interment, the departed is directed towards heaven by hitting bamboo sticks together.

## **Caviteño Customs**

Some rural area residents in Cavite use of trees as burial places. The dying person chooses the tree beforehand, then when it becomes evident that person is going to die soon, either through sickness or old age, a hut is constructed close to the chosen tree. When that person dies, they are entombed vertically inside the hollowed-out tree trunk.

## **Ilocano Customs**

### **Wake**

Filipinos in the Ilocos regions of the Philippines also have their own funeral and burial traditions, known as the pompon or "burial rites". An example would be how a dead husband is prepared by the wife for the wake, known in Ilocano as the bagongon. Typically, only the wife will cloth the corpse, believing that the spirit of the spouse can convey messages through her. Placement of the coffin is also important, which is to be at the center of the home and must be corresponding to the planks of the floorboards. Lighting a wooden log in front of the house is also customary because the smoke assists the spirit of the dead towards heaven. This log is kept in flames during the wake to repel wicked spirits. The ceremonial attire of the female family members for the vigil is clothing with black coloration. Their heads and shoulder area are shrouded with a black handkerchief known as the manta.

## **Funeral**

Burial superstitions of the Ilocano people include closing all windows first before taking the casket out of the home, preventing any part of the coffin to hit any part of the dwelling (to prevent the spirit of the dead from loitering to bring forth dilemmas to the household; to some Filipinos, a coffin hitting any object during a funeral means that another person will soon die, and washing the hairs of family members with a shampoo known as gogo (to remove the influence of the spirit of the departed). rice cakes and basi to attendees after each prayer offering session. On the ninth night, a feast is held after the praying or novena. They will again recite prayers and a feast after one year.

## **Ilongot Customs**

The Ilongot is buried in a sitting position, and if a woman, has her hands tied to her feet, to prevent her "ghost" from roaming.

## **Itneg Customs**

The Itnegs of Abra have a customary habit of burying their dead under their houses.

## **Palaweño Customs**

One of the ancient customs for burying the dead in the Philippines is through the use of burial jars known as Manunggul jars. These ancient potteries were found in the Manunggul Cave at the island of Palawan. A characteristic of the jars for the dead is the presence of anthropomorphic human figures on the pot covers. These figures embody souls riding a boat for the dead while seafaring towards their sanctuary in the afterlife. These containers have been dated to be from 710 BC to 890 BC. There are also figures of boating people steering paddles, wearing headbands, jaw-bands, and persons with hands folded across the chest area. The latter is a method of arranging the remains of the dead

## **Mindanao Region**

### **Bilaan Customs**

The Bilaan people of Mindanao wrap their dead inside tree barks. Being enveloped as such, the dead person's body is then suspended from treetops.

### **Davao Customs**

Superstitions in Davao City include cutting rosaries that are placed within the hands of the departed (to sever the possibility of having a series of deaths), placement of a chick on the coffin during wakes, preventing teardrops from reaching coffins (in case of brutal deaths), breaking plates prior to taking the coffin out of any edifice, making children walk under a hoisted coffin before loading the latter into the hearse, and smoking feet with smoke coming from burning dried leaves or paper when leaving the burial ground.

### **Other Superstitions**

Elements of other Filipino superstitious beliefs entail the involvement of the sudden appearances of certain animals, particularly those that are black in color. Examples are the following: the appearance of a lingering black-colored butterfly around an individual is taken to indicate that a next of kin of that person died; the sighting of a black-hued cat by an ill individual heading toward a hospital would mean that he or she may not survive his or her disease; the detection of an owl near the home of a sick individual signifies imminent death for that person.

**Christian Filipinos** customarily remember, honor, and pay respect to the dead on All Saints Day (November 1) and All Souls Day (November 2). The grave sites are cleaned, visited, and adorned by family members, relatives and friends on the eve of November 1, to stay at the cemetery, to light candles, to pray, to lay flowers, and bring food for the consumption of the attendees. Others, like the Ilocano's, offer food for the dead. Some children habitually gather candle wax during this time for the purpose of play or reselling to candle makers.

Ref.: <http://thefuneralsource.org/trad140208.html>

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