

Funeral Practices of the Ilocanos

Death

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I attended the funeral of one of my closest friends in high school just the other day. She had this sad news to deliver – her mother died of multiple sclerosis at the young age of 49.



photo credit: c_francis (SXC)

I did not know how grave **multiple sclerosis** is until I got to this funeral. I vividly remember her mom to be very healthy and vibrant. My friend's mom had just recently gone to work in Macau as a domestic helper. Macau has an entirely different weather than the tropical Philippines. My friend's mom had started to show symptoms of the disease.

She had to give up her Macau work and be back to the Philippines for **treatment**. But her conditions got worse. She eventually ended up being dependent on her daughter and sons for doing daily tasks like eating, taking a pee and dressing up. Caregivers are plenty in the Philippines though, but a typical **family** cannot afford to have one.

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The funeral was over the weekend. It was a Roman Catholic funeral laded with Ilocano superstitious beliefs. These guys had root way up in northern Philippines, along the Spanish-influenced Ilocandia. Here are some practices that can be easily noticed:

- opened **the coffin** and touched the hand of the dead
- put a white blanket over the dead to protect from cold
- get all those kid relatives of the dead person and carried them over the dead relative's coffin
- walk out of funeral parlor backwards
- after the funeral, the relatives of the dead person feeds the guests in the family house, but before entering, each guest has to wash hands first in water with boiled guava leaves

These are some practices that were notable to me. My own relatives had long abandoned their own superstitious beliefs when we bury the dead. Probably because we had "urbanized" in the city. These practices always gets me curious. My close friend understands me. She just want to get on these practices to satisfy their relatives – who had been very kind to them.

I provided comfort for my close friend. At least the death was not sudden, I told her.

Ref.: <http://www.thesingleparenttalks.com/2008/10/death.html>