

## Wakes and Funerals Filipino Style

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One of my son's school projects last month was to write a reaction paper on the independent film called *Ded na si Lolo* (**Grandfather's Dead**). The movie was about Filipino traditions and beliefs carried out when someone dies in the family.

I am familiar with some of the rituals shown and was glad that the scriptwriter injected humor in the story. I grew up in a small town in Laguna where people take traditions seriously. However, I used to, and still, shake my head at some of those beliefs because I found many of them nonsensical. I can't say I believe in all these traditions although I know enough to **respect my elders** and what they deem important to follow. However, I'm pretty sure I won't be asking my children to adhere to those beliefs when I die.

The first up-close experience with death that I could remember vaguely was when my grandfather died. It was half a month before my **high school graduation**. I recall my father putting socks on my Lolo's feet. Tatay also did that when my Lola died 11 years later. To this day, I don't exactly know the significance of that act. When our father died in May 2000, my siblings and I were thankful that nobody insisted we put socks on Tatay's feet.

Another tradition I couldn't understand was the prohibition (*bawal*) to wear colorful clothes -- red, in particular -- during a wake (*burol*) or funeral (*libing*). Old people say it is disrespectful and that it might even show you are glad that the person died. If you're a family member of the dead, you are also expected to wear mourning (*luksa*) clothes for a year. It was hard for me when Tatay died because almost all my clothes were in happy colors! I think I just lasted a couple of weeks wearing whites and beiges, seldom black, after the funeral. My mother, however, literally set aside all her colorful clothes for a year.

Our house in the province is about 30 minutes' (one hour or more, if you're part of a funeral procession) walk to the cemetery. Every time we bring a loved one to his/her final resting place, passing vehicles would usually slow down so people can throw coins (*barya*) on the road. Many believe that it prevents death from following them to their homes. People in the **procession**, who get to pick up those coins, usually keep the money for luck. Some hand over what they picked to the dead person's remaining family members. I can't remember anymore if I kept the coins given to me from Tatay's funeral.

At the cemetery, before the coffin is finally lowered to that rectangular hole in the ground or slipped into a tomb (*nitso*), a last viewing is granted. This is also the time when the littlest children of the family are passed over (*itinatawid*) the coffin so that they won't get a visit (*mumultuhin*) from the dead. All my four kids experienced being passed from one relative to another over Tatay's coffin. My mom said I was two years old when an uncle of mine died and I was passed over his coffin too.

There are many other traditions involving death that I have heard about or observed in other peoples' wakes and funerals. Reminders such as, "*Bawal magwalis*" (Don't sweep the floor), "*Takipan ang mga salamin*" (Cover all the mirrors), "*Huwag mag-uwi ng pagkain galing sa lamay*" (Don't bring home food from a wake), and more, are those I still have difficulty finding rational explanations for.

When I bring any of my kids with me during such times, I remind them not to make inappropriate comments and to just ask me their questions later when we get back home. To date, my **probinsyana** (province-bred) heart continues to tell me that, when it comes to

age-old traditions, we should always honor what other people believe in and want to do in their own homes or with their families no matter how bizarre they seem. The bottom line is, whatever I think does not, and should not, matter.

### Glossary

*magluksa* – to mourn; *pagluluksa* mourning ; *nagluluksa* the act of mourning; *nagluksa* mourned; *ipinagluksa* mourned over

*Burol* – wake; *Lamay* wake; *nakaburol* in a coffin and not yet buried; *pinaglalamayan* mourned over by people who are in the wake; *naglalamay* spending long time visiting in a wake (usually overnight)

*Libing* – funeral; *ilibing* to bury; *ililibing* due for burial; *inilibing* buried; *nalibing* buried;

*tumawid* - to cross; *tumatawid* crossing; *tatawid* will cross; *tumawid* crossed; *itinawid* helped to cross; *itinatawid* being helped to cross; *itatawid* will be helped to cross; *magtawid* to facilitate/do the crossing; *magtatawid* will do/facilitate the crossing; *nagtawid* facilitated/did the crossing

Ref.: <http://www.english-to-tagalog.com/wakes-and-funerals-Filipino.html>