

## The Burial and Mourning Customs of Filipinos

Because Filipinos believed in life after death and in lasting relationships between the living and the dead, the ancient Filipinos took great care in burying their dead. The corpse was embalmed with the use of certain herbs and native perfumes and the placed in a burial jar or wooden coffin. Amidst deep lamentation, the corpse was buried right under the house, inside a cave, or on a cliff overlooking the sea. Clothes, food, weapons, gold, and sometimes even slaves were buried with the dead. Skeletons recently discovered in ancient Philippine burial sites such as those in Bolinao, Pangasinan, show that the eyes of our ancient dead were covered with beaten gold before burial. Their teeth were filled with gold too.

During the period of mourning, the family and immediate relatives of the dead wore white clothes and rattan bands around their necks, arms, and legs. They also refrained from eating meat or from drinking wine at this time. To show their deep sorrow over their loss, the relatives of the dead hired professional mourners, as the Chinese still do, to chant the good deeds and achievements of the dead.

Mourning for an ordinary dead man was called *maglahi*, and mourning for an ordinary woman was called *marotal*. Mourning for a dead chief, however, was called *laraw*. Bright lights around the corpse burned all day and all night. Fires were built under and around the bereaved home. Then, as now, the mourners played parlor games and sang all night till daybreak. Indeed, in some areas in the country today, the house where a death has just occurred is burned down and the family leaves and builds their home elsewhere. When a chieftain died, any war and petty quarrels were suspended or stopped altogether. All warriors carried their spears pointed to the ground and their daggers with hilts reversed. Singing in boats was prohibited and the wearing of bright colored clothes was forbidden. If the deceased died by violent means like murder, the relatives appeased their sorrow by killing the guilty party.

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