



Filipino Superstitions on Death

A short list of Filipino superstitious beliefs related to death...

Filipinos have a culture rich with superstitions. These beliefs have been successfully handed down from generation to generation. Though many of these superstitions were based on rural living, they are also being observed by urban dwellers and have evolved to suit changing times.

I have previously featured two articles about mythical creatures on Philippine folklore (see [Supernatural Creatures in Philippine Folklore Series I](#) and [Series II](#)), of which many have direct influence on their superstitious beliefs. All of these beliefs are anchored on different aspects of Filipino life, like love, good luck, misfortune, illness, and death. As a starter, here are Filipino superstitions related to death:

- If in a dream a person's tooth is being pulled out or uprooted, one of the members of his family will die.
- A family member will also die if a person cuts or trims his fingernails at night.
- At a funeral, all members of a family should not look on the face of the deceased. If they do so, the soul of the dead person will visit them and take all of them. The whole family would die.
- It is forbidden to eat "malunggay" (a common vegetable in the Philippines and is known as horseradish in English and scientifically as *Moringa oleifera*) when one of the family has just died. Otherwise, all members of the family will also die. The small interconnected leaves of the "malunggay" mean the interlocking of souls of the family. Hence, when one is taken away, others will follow.
- No one should go out before the utensils used in eating have been washed and put away; otherwise a member of the family will die.
- Two family members should not get married within the same year, or one will die. This belief is known as "sukob". Likewise, a marriage should not be held the same year that one of the family members has died.
- If a black butterfly hovers around a person, one of his relatives has just died. The black butterfly signifies the recent death of the relative.



- Likewise, when a person smells the odor of a burning candle when there is really no lighted candle around, one of his relatives will die.
- Eating sour fruits at night will cause the early death of one's parents.
- If the feet of a dead person is positioned pointing toward the rising sun, a relative will also die.
- If an owl lingers near the house of a sick person, that person will certainly die.
- Similarly, if a rooster crows near a sick person, he will die that very day. The rooster symbolizes the “manok ni San Pedro” (Saint Peter’s chicken) who announces the departure of the person’s soul from his body and his arrival to Saint Peter for judgment.



- Moreover, if a sick person on his way to the hospital meets a black cat, he will die.
- If a person’s shadow appears to be without a head, he will die.
- Pregnant women should not have their picture taken, or else, their babies will die.
- Likewise, pregnant women must not wear black dress; otherwise, the baby will die.
- If a mother gives birth at home, every hole in the house must be covered. An evil spirit might come and enter through the hole and kill the baby.
- One must not organize a group of 3 or 13; otherwise, one member will die. As in a picture shoot, you should not be in trio. The one in the middle will die.
- During a wedding the one whose candle goes out first will be the first of the couple to die.

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