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Death in Baras*

MARIA CARIDAD ISIDRO, S.Sp.S.

One of the most important themes in any culture is death and burial. It is in the face of death that a people expresses some of its deepest concerns, values, aspirations, and yearnings. It is difficult, however, to study death in general in any culture. Individual detailed studies must first be made in various localities; only after such monographs of different places are available, is it possible to proceed to a creditable synthesis. This study will concern itself with what happens from the moment of death until forty days after in the rural town of Baras in the province of Rizal.

ACTIVITIES IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH

When death comes to the people of Baras, the house of the bereaved family immediately becomes the center of great activity. Close relatives, together with neighbors, join in the many preparations to be made. Someone goes to the church to have the news announced to the town by the ringing of the church bells in a particular way known as the *dubla*; others attend to the sponging and dressing of the corpse.¹ Some men start to make the coffin, others go to the cemetery to prepare the niche. In the meantime, members of the household put aside or dispose of the things used by the deceased, and ready the house for the relatives, neighbors, and friends who are expected to come to condole with the bereaved family.

*This article presents the basic chapters of a forthcoming publication entitled: *From Death to Burial and Forty Days After in a Philippine Rural Town*. It reports what knowledgeable and experienced persons of the town of Baras, Rizal, say is done, and avoided, and why, from the moment someone dies in that community. The author is from Marikina, a neighboring principality of Rizal province. The data for this study were gathered in Baras over a period of seven months in 1977-78.

1. *Dubla* is derived from the Spanish *doblar a muerto* means "tolling the passing-bell, funeral ringing."

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEATH

One of the very first things that the head of the family does, or an elder member, is to send someone to the parish *kombento* to request that the church bells be rung for the dubla to announce the death to the town. Usually two bells with different pitches are rung simultaneously three times at slow intervals, followed by the ringing of each bell alternately at the same slow pace to give it a sad tone. The sequence of the bells varies, however, depending on whether the dead person is a man or a woman. For a man, the bell with the low pitch (*bahaw*) is rung first, followed by the one with the higher pitch. For a woman, the bell with the high pitch (*matinis*) is rung first, followed by the one with the lower pitch. Normally, the bells are rung as soon as the *kampanero* has been notified; but when a person dies during the night, the dubla is rung early the following morning.

Upon hearing the dubla, the townspeople automatically ask who has died (Sino ba 'yang namatay?).² The older members of the community, especially those who are active in the parish, can usually make out from the way the bells are tolled whether the death being announced is that of a man or a woman. The ordinary person, however, simply infers that a grown-up member of the community has passed away.

On occasions, at the request of parents, the death of a young unmarried man or woman (*binata* or *dalaga*) is announced in a different way. Instead of the usual dubla, a single bell is rung continuously by turning it around its axle. In contrast to the somber tones of the dubla, this *repeke* or *iskilada*, as it is popularly known, gives off a joyful sound.³

This practice of announcing a death by means of the dubla is prevalent among Catholics, who constitute about 90 percent of the town population. When a non-Catholic dies, a Catholic relative or friend may request the church that the dubla be rung to announce his death. Otherwise, the news is passed on by word of mouth.

2. In general, the author's translations of statements and popular sayings are more free than literal.

3. The Spanish *repique* means "chime, peal," *repiquetar* means "to chime, to ring a merry peal," and, *esquila* means "small bell." When asked why the announcement is joyful, informants say: "Dahil dalaga," or "Dahil binata," meaning "Because she or he is young and unmarried."

Whichever way the dubla is rung, the people living around the church soon come to know the name of the deceased from the person who brought the notice to the *convento*. The news is passed on to others and before long the information spreads all over the town.⁴

To the more religious members of the community the dubla is not merely a death announcement; it is also a call for prayers for the departed soul. Dubla is therefore also sometimes referred to as *plegaria*, a Spanish word for prayer.

After the initial dubla has been rung, the bells are sometimes tolled every hour or two thereafter. This practice is intended to remind hearers to offer prayers more often for the deceased. Some people, however, have looked upon this practice as a status symbol, for only the rich and well-to-do can afford it. As there are only a few affluent families in the town, the practice is rare. During the researcher's brief stay in the town, she had the experience of hearing this dubla every hour on the hour from 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. for three consecutive days until the burial. Others have the dubla rung every two hours or so for, say, half a day.

The reaction to the news of a death is invariably tinged with resignation. When a person dies under ordinary circumstances, such as sickness or old age, the announcement is received matter-of-factly with such expressions as:

Talagang guhit na ng palad 'yan. (That is his fate.)

Pagguhit na, kahit na anong gawin mo. (When your time comes, you cannot do anything about it.)

Nasapit na ang guhit ng palad. Ipinagkaloob ng Diyos na siya ay kunin. Tayo ay di makatatangi. (God has willed; it is time for him to go; we cannot refuse.)

Talagang oras na niya 'yan. Ganyan ang buhay ng tao. (His time has come. That is life.)

Tatawagin ka pagdating ng iyong araw. Walang matanda, walang bata. Pagtawag sa iyo'y humanda ka. Hindi natin maiiwasan. (God will call you when your day comes. Regardless of age, young or old, be prepared, for when He does, it's inevitable.)

4. The death of a child below seven years of age is not announced by a dubla, in the belief that the child is "still an angel" (*anghel pa*), "still innocent" (*inosente pa*) and "still without sin" (*wala pang kasalanan*). The news is merely passed around by word of mouth among friends, relatives, and neighbors. Sometimes the rest of the town comes to know of the child's death only on the burial day, when the bells are rung in joyous *repeke* or *iskilada* as the funeral procession approaches the church.

Hanggang doon na lamang ang buhay. (He has reached the end of his road.)

Talaga na ng Diyos. (It's God's will.)

Una-una lamang tayo. (Each in his own time.)

In case of a sudden death under extraordinary circumstances, as an accident, suicide or murder, people are apt to say:

Iyan ang tinanggap niyang signus planeta. Paglitaw natin sa maliwanag, mayroon na tayong signus na taglay. (That is what the stars foretold. He has carried that sign from the moment of his birth.)

Iyan ang tinanggap niyang kamatayan. Ayon sa nakikita sa lunario, pagpapanganak sa kanya, iyan na ang tinanggap niya. Guhit na ng kanyang kamatayan iyang. (That is his destiny. His horoscope says he was born with it; he will die with it.)

Ang doktor na lamang, samakatuwid alam niya ang gamot sa sarili, bakit namamatay din. Ako pang isang ganitong walang alam? Pero ang sakit ko'y umiigi pa kung minsan. Samakatuwid, binibigyan pa ng buhay ng Panginoon. Pag tayo'y talagang kukunin na ng Panginoon, buntunan ka man ng gamot diyan, mamamatay ka rin pagdating ng guhit mo. Talagang ang Panginoon ang makapangyarihan. Ang nagbigay sa atin ng buhay ay Panginoon. Kaya wala ding kukuha ng buhay natin kundi siya rin. (If even a doctor, who should know how to cure himself, dies, it would be even more so for an ordinary human being like myself who does not know any better. There are times when I get sick, but I get well, for God wills it so. But there will be a time when no amount of medicine will do you any good, for then your day has come, and you will die. Truly, God is omnipotent. For it is the Lord who gives us life, and only He can take it.)

PREPARING THE BODY

Before the people who will condole with the bereaved family start arriving, the corpse goes through a mortuary ritual.

A distant relative or neighbor carefully gives the corpse an ordinary sponge bath. Asked why the sponging is done, some informants shrugged off the question with a simple *siyempre* ("of course" or "always"), as if the practice were part of a set traditional procedure. Others explain that the deceased is given a sponge bath so that he will be clean when he faces God.

The dressing of the corpse follows. The choice of clothes oftentimes is in accordance with the expressed wish of the deceased. In the absence of such explicit instructions, he is usually dressed in his best or favorite apparel.

During these preparatory procedures, members of the immediate family or household are not allowed to touch the corpse, in the belief that by this act another death may follow. This prohibition is not strictly observed today. Any friend or neighbor, related to the family or not, who offers to do the sponging and dressing of the deceased, is accepted by the family. If ever members of the immediate family are not allowed to do this service, it is more out of the desire to free them from whatever can be done by others than from fear of another death to follow. Where a mortician is engaged, he performs both these jobs as part of his task.

There are also a few other beliefs prevalent at this stage. For instance, some people believe that undertaking the dressing of the corpse drives away one's fear of the dead. Still others say that when a corpse does not become rigid, another death might follow.

In many cases, especially among the common folk, the corpse is not embalmed. People see little need for this, as generally burial takes place the following day. But even if the corpse is to lie in state only overnight or about twenty-four hours, some measures are taken to prevent it from smelling. These include pouring alcohol into the mouth of the deceased soon after he expires, putting lime in his navel or anus, spreading ground coffee all around the corpse under the lining of the coffin, using a pillow filled with *kamyas* leaves, or placing a basin of water, with or without creosol, under the bed where the corpse lies before it is transferred to the coffin. The last practice mentioned is observed especially for mothers who die in childbirth.

In the event that the bereaved family must wait for members who have to come from distant places, the corpse is embalmed to last two or three days. As there is no professional mortuary service available in Baras, this service is secured from the neighboring towns of Tanay or Morong. The few well-to-do families in the town contract for embalming not only to await kin from far but also to have their loved one a little longer with them.

THE COFFIN AND THE GRAVE

While the corpse is being sponged and dressed, the relatives tackle the problem of the coffin, and, subsequently, the grave.

Before the turn of the century, people in Baras hardly ever used

coffins. The corpse was simply wrapped in a blanket and mat, and was borne to the church, eventually to the cemetery, in an ordinary bier known as the *kalanda*, a rectangular box-like wooden stretcher with extended poles on its four corners for four men to carry on their shoulders. There were usually two types: one for adults, and another for children. It was customarily left in the church after each burial and was made available to anyone who needed it.

Today the *kalanda* is no longer in use. People either buy a coffin or have it made by local carpenters. The more common practice is to buy a ready-made coffin from funeral parlors in the neighboring towns of Tanay or Morong. Ordinarily the bereaved family purchases only the coffin, and takes care of the mortuary services themselves. On the other hand, those who can afford it have the funeral parlors take care of both the coffin and the other arrangements.

At other times, neighborhood carpenters volunteer their services in making a coffin for the deceased. The spirit of cooperation is strongly manifest in this situation: someone contributes a piece of plywood or board, another varnish or paint, still others one or other material that may be required.⁵ In the absence of any such donations, boards are bought from the lumber dealer.

The carpenters welcome the opportunity to render such a service. One informant illustrates this by telling of his carpenter son who once exclaimed to him: "Father, I am lucky, for when I came home, I was able to make a coffin for the son of Tibo, your *compadre*." (Amang, masuerte ako. Nang pag-uwi ko, naigawa ko ng ataol ang anak ng inyong kumpareng Tibo.) Another one said: "If it is for the dead, no one is paid, whether it be the one who makes the coffin or the one in the cemetery [who makes the niche]. That is simple fellowship." ('Pag po naman patay ay wala ng inuupahan. Gumawa man ng ataol, pati 'yung sa sementeryo. Pakikipagkapwa na po iyon.)

Some of these homemade coffins are simply varnished. Others are decorated by covering them with white cloth or crepe paper

5. Although it rarely happens today, a friend or neighbor may donate his old banca. It is dismantled and the wood smoothened to make the coffin. Sometimes these old bancas are simply cut at both ends to a length to fit the dead person, boarded at both ends, and then a lid is provided to complete the coffin. Because the finished casket somehow retains the shape of a banca, this has given rise to a local joke sometimes told to a sick person: "Take care lest they put you in a cut banca." (Mag-ingat ka't baka malagay ka sa bangkang putol.)

and cellophane, and finished with some fancy designs.

In cases of families who cannot afford to buy a coffin or the wood with which to make one, as the very poor, or those who come from other provinces and have no relatives in the locality, neighbors and friends of the deceased get together to solicit contributions or *abuloy*. Local government officials, especially the barrio captain, are approached and funds are raised by begging from house to house. In some barrios there is an organization that takes care of this, and the records of donors and the amounts contributed are kept.

Abuloy for the dead is generally easy to collect. People willingly contribute to enable a fellow member of the community to have a decent burial. As a popular saying goes: "It is easy to secure aid for the dead." (Madaling idilihensiya ang patay.) From such contributions the family is usually able "to buy [a coffin] without incurring debts." (Nakabibili ng hindi inutang.)

If, however, the coffin is homemade, then the contributions solicited are used to meet other urgent needs, such as the buying of bread and coffee (*pakape*) for the wake, the buying of cement for the niche, the payment for the church services, and so forth.

In any event, while some are busy making or securing the coffin, other people go to the cemetery to prepare the niche or grave. These volunteers, like the carpenters, freely offer their services as a gesture of their sympathy (*damay*) with the bereaved family.

THE THINGS OF THE DECEASED

The things used by the deceased during his illness, such as his bed, mat, pillow and blanket are put aside and kept in a corner of the house, at least up to the day of the burial. Some families keep them until the fourth day after the burial, to spare the deceased the trouble of gathering his possessions when he comes around to visit on the fourth day.⁶

If the deceased died of a contagious sickness, the things he used during his illness are usually burned for hygienic reasons. Yet there are families that dispose of such belongings by putting them in the coffin with the corpse, as nobody else will want to use them. If the final illness was not contagious, his things are normally given

6. This will be explained in the section "Postburial Activities and Observances."

away to relatives to use. Yet there are families that simply store them away for fear that, if they use them, the spirit of the deceased might come to visit them. It is for this same reason that sometimes personal items like eyeglasses, rosary, and at times jewelry, are buried with the corpse.

So, in due course, all preparations having been completed, the corpse is finally transferred to the coffin and moved to the receiving room or *sala*, where soon the relatives, friends, and neighbors, beckoned by the dubla, will come to pay their last respects.

PREBURIAL ACTIVITIES AND OBSERVANCES

It is the tradition in Baras that the vigil takes place in the home of the deceased. The house thus becomes the center of all the activities that characterize this period before the burial. In contrast to the sad and somber atmosphere prevailing from the moment of death, the vigil is marked with a certain festive air that rises to its climax during the evening wake or *lamayan*. Furthermore, during this interlude before the burial, which can last from overnight to a few days, there are a number of other interesting practices observed according to local traditions.

THE EVENING WAKE

To prepare for the *lamayan*, the family of the deceased mobilizes the neighborhood to get everything ready. The men quickly put up bamboo poles that support a kind of canvass (*tolda*) to form an extension of the roof of the house; this (*kubol*) is to accommodate the overflow of visitors from the usually small receiving room. It is a common sight on such occasions to see this *kubol* extend across the street. For their part, the womenfolk attend to the preparations in the kitchen. In the spirit of cooperation (*bayanihan* and *tulungan*), relatives and neighbors willingly lend chairs and benches, pots and pans, plates, cups, and other utensils that they know will surely be needed.

By nightfall people begin to trickle in, with the flow of visitors increasing as the night wears on. Many of those who work in the fields, as well as those who come from offices and factories in the neighboring towns or Manila, prefer to come at this time. On hand to welcome them are the immediate kin of the deceased.

The visitor usually goes near the coffin and pauses a little to view the deceased. One or other offers a silent prayer. As relatives meet, there is much kissing of hands (*amen* or *mano*). Every now and then one of these meetings with a close relative (or even an old friend) evokes tears, with hardly a word spoken. But such touching scenes are brief and fleeting, for soon attention turns to others who have come in.

For the bereaved family, as well as for their visitors, the lamayan becomes an occasion for a reunion. Relatives or friends from out of town, who would not have come to Baras under other circumstances, feel obligated to make the trip to condole with the family of the deceased. In fact, a death in the family is a more compelling reason for a homecoming than a fiesta or other festive gatherings, such as a baptism or marriage. It is an event where they are expected, where they will be missed if they do not come.

The lamayan, therefore, provides an opportunity for many to renew old ties. The visitors spend the time sharing personal experiences, exchanging news or simply conversing on any topic (*kwentuhan*, *bidahan* or *huntahan*). Naturally, their talk centers on the recollection of the deceased person's happier days, and in turn the bereaved family recounts all the details of his final moments.

Some of the visitors stay only for a short time; others tarry a little longer, oftentimes depending on whom they meet. Many, however, remain for a long time, and it is customary to group them for some kind of games or other activities which will help them while away the time. The old people often choose to sit in a card game called *tres siete*, while the teen-agers engage in group singing or in playing a group game called *pik-pak-bung*. An exchange of riddles (*bugtungan*) is a popular game for all during these occasions, as are the *huwego de prenda* and the *sukluban*.⁷

7. *Huwego de prenda* is a game of forfeits or pledges whereby each participant is given a name, say, of a flower or a town, and the leader starts by reciting set phrases as *Ang paru-paro ng hari lumipad, lumibot, dumapo, kay . . .* ("The butterfly of the king flew, roved around and then alighted on . . .") The one named is expected to answer as follows: *Wala po dito: nasa kay . . .* ("It is not here; it is with . . .") and he calls another. This goes on until a participant fails to answer correctly or forgets his assigned name, in which case he is penalized by being asked to sing, dance, recite a poem or do anything else the group wishes. This game provides an occasion for the individual to prove his talent as a singer, a dancer or perhaps an impersonator.

Sukluban, which literally means "to cover," is a game in which a pair, each wearing a hat, dances to the music of a guitar or the singing of the group. After some time they

This last game is especially popular among the young men and women.

The aforementioned activities were very popular some years ago, but they seem to have less appeal now for the younger generation. Even in the lamayan for a deceased dalaga or binata, which used to be especially merry because of the presence of many young friends of the deceased, fewer young adults show interest in group singing and in playing group games for mere enjoyment. In their place, some forms of gambling, like mahjong and *tirimbe*, or the card game called "lucky nine," have become the standard fare.

Why all these activities? Why all these games? The main reason for providing these activities and games, be they the old games of *huwego de prenda*, *tres siete* or *sukluban*, or the more recent mahjong, *tirimbe* or "lucky nine," is to help people keep awake during the vigil. There is a common saying that "the dead person must never be left alone while [people] sleep." (Hindi tinutulugan ang patay.) The old folks even add a threat: "If people do sleep, the aswang will carry away the corpse." (*Pagtinulugan ang patay, kukunin ng aswang*.)⁸

A second reason for the lamayan activities is to divert the attention of the bereaved family from their recent loss. This is one of the rural people's ways of giving solace to the relatives of the deceased "so that they would not be [so] sad and would not be crying all the time" (*para huwag malungkot o huwag mag-iiyak ang namatayan*). Speaking on this subject, one informant said: "It [the death] should not bring [so much] grief. He is dead. So let the living be merry. If we have to mourn all the time, Good Lord!" (*Huwag ikalulungkot. Iyon ay namatay na. Ay di magsaya ang buhay. Kung parati na lang ang lungkot, ay Panginoong Diyos!*)

There is still another reason, a secondary one, which takes on a special importance for poorer families. It does not concern all the games, but only mahjong and other gambling games. What actually happens is that a certain percentage of a player's winnings,

pass on their hats to another pair, the girl giving hers to a boy and the boy giving his to a girl. The new pair then continues the dance to the enjoyment of the group. Frequently the group takes this occasion to tease some blushing couple about their budding romance. This dancing and singing can last for one or two hours.

8. *Aswang* is a folkloric evil creature, capable of assuming diverse forms, but especially human form, with horsefeet and horsetail (see Jose Villa Panganiban, *Diksyunaryo-Tesaurus Pilipino-Ingles* [Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Co., 1975], s.v. "*Aswang*").

called the *tong*, goes to the bereaved family. This *tong* thus provides the family with additional funds for the funeral expenses. Moreover, these gambling games have such drawing power that they assure the family of the companionship of a sizeable crowd up to the early hours of the following morning.

With regard to prayer for the deceased, the *hermanas* have a practice of coming together once (sometimes during the day, sometimes during the *lamayan*) to recite the rosary. Once in a while there are also songs in between, and members of the family and some visitors join in the praying and singing. The *hermanas* call this prayer-offering *pabaon*, which literally means provision and is meant to accompany the deceased on his journey.

During the Lenten season, the nature of the *lamayan* changes. In lieu of the various games described above, the *pasyon* is read aloud or chanted, in accord with the penitential spirit of this season.⁹

In any event, whatever activities are held, be it games or the *pasyon*, some refreshments are always served to the visitors during the *lamayan*. Among the poor families this normally consists of coffee and bread. Among the more affluent, some kind of soup or cold drink and native delicacies, as *puto* and *bibingka*, are offered in addition.

THE CONTRIBUTION

Aside from the funds derived from the *tong* generously given by the mahjong players, the bereaved family receives other forms of contribution (*ambag* or *abuloy*) from almost all those who condole with them.

The most common form of *ambag* is cash. It is given in all simplicity to the immediate family, oftentimes without saying a word. The donor simply presses the money into the hand of the receiver.

9. The *pasyon* is a narration of the history of salvation. Written in the vernacular, it dwells at length on the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Although it contains several apocryphal elements, it is extremely didactic.

The reading or chanting of the *pasyon* during the Lenten season is a popular religious practice in the Philippines. It is held in various homes for an entire day or for several hours every day. Friends and neighbors drop in, sing a portion of the *pasyon* before the altar, and sit afterwards for the *pagkain*, a meal with religious overtone (see Anscar J. Chupungco, O.S.B., *Toward a Filipino Liturgy* [Manila: Benedictine Abbey, 1976], p. 86).

One or other would say as he gives his contribution:

Ire ang aking ambag, maski na kakaunti. (This is my contribution, no matter how modest.)

Ilagay mo ari diyan. (Please put this there [pointing to the box or can where the money is kept].)

Pasyensya ka na. Gaganito ang maibibigay ko. (Please accept this. This is all that I can afford.)

The more educated sometimes say: Ako'y nakikiramay. (I condole with you.)

On receiving the ambag a member of the immediate family, usually seated near the bier, carefully records in a notebook specially kept for the purpose the name of the donor and the amount contributed. This list is afterwards consulted whenever someone in the donor's family dies. The aid received is then reciprocated in one way or other. Some of the people of the town look on the giving of the ambag as a form of mutual aid contributions (*paluwagan*) in time of need, or mutual loan (*pautangan*). One informant beautifully explains the reason for this record, "It helps the family to remember those to be given reciprocal help when their time comes. Life is like that — helping in whatever way one can." (Para matandaan kung sino ang nakatulong para makaganti rin pagdating ng araw. Ganoon lang ang buhay ng tao. Kahit papaano ay makatulong din.) It should be noted, however, that some donors expressly say that they are giving without expecting anything in return, and therefore do not mind whether their contribution is listed or not.

Ambag in kind or in the form of service is practised too. When the family of the deceased is poor, relatives and friends usually give rice, coffee, sugar, bread or anything that would be needed for the refreshments during the lamayan or for the meals of volunteer helpers. On the other hand, poor relatives and friends give their ambag in the form of service (*ambag-tulong*) to the bereaved family. They help in whatever way they can in the kitchen, in the cemetery or by running errands for the family. All these favors, as well as attendance at the lamayan, the prayers for the dead, the funeral, and the postburial celebrations, are highly appreciated and remembered by the bereaved family.

In addition to the contribution given to the family in cash, in kind or in service, there is also the practice of collective contribution, called *ambagan*, among the members of certain parish

organizations. In at least three of such organizations a fixed amount is agreed upon as the contribution each one is to give when a fellowmember dies. For example, among the members of the Apostleship of Prayer, the *ambagan* is fifty centavos per member; among the members of the *Cofradia*, one peso; among the *kursilyistas*, also one peso. At times the family of the deceased, if he has been a member of more than one organization, receives monetary help from all the groups to which he belonged.

SOME THINGS AVOIDED DURING THE VIGIL

For as long as the corpse remains in the house, immediate relatives of the deceased are to see to it that they avoid doing certain things. Among these are the following: nobody is allowed to sweep the floors of the house; bathing is prohibited among members of the immediate family or household; all mirrors within the room where the deceased lies in state are to be covered.

Sweeping the floor has been interpreted at times by the rural folk as an offensive act of driving the deceased away. Since the belief is that his spirit still roams around the house, and cannot be seen, they may unknowingly hurt it. The spirit is especially afraid of stick brooms (*walis tingting*). Therefore, they at times tidy up the place by simply picking up the dirt and leaving it in a corner of the room. Likewise they dare not throw rubbish in the blaze of burning garbage (*sigá*), lest the spirit of the deceased, which can take the form of a stick (*patpat*) or rubbish (*yagit*), be burnt with the garbage. Many keep this practice, but only a few know the reason behind it.

Although previously, sweeping was not allowed until the ninth day after the burial, today the floors are swept when a general housecleaning takes place as soon as the corpse leaves the premises. Again, while this cleaning may be done simply to put the house in order, some people believe that its purpose is to drive away sickness and death.

Aside from not being allowed to sweep, immediate relatives of the deceased may not take a bath until after the burial, lest they feel pains in their bodies (*sasakit o sasama ang katawan*), or develop dandruff (*babalakubakin*). There are those who hold that relatives should not bathe until the ninth day after the burial. They look at this observance as an act of sympathy (*pakikiramay*)

with the deceased, for it is during this period that his remains start to decompose. Therefore, to be one with him, relatives should willingly suffer the discomfort of not being able to take a bath.

Although most of the older people keep this "no bathing" rule, at least until the day of the burial, many of the younger ones pay no attention to it. They take a bath as they please. Pointing to this and other similar practices, some of them say: "Away with these superstitions. They belong to the time of Mohammed. Times have changed. We have already sent a man to the moon." (Ngayon ay wala ng pamahiin. Panahon pa ni Mahoma yan. Iba na ngayon. May naka-akyat na sa buwan.)

Another thing avoided is this: no mirror facing the coffin may be left uncovered. In the typical household, pieces of furniture, as the dressing table (*tokador*) or clothes cabinet (*aparador*), both of which have mirrors, are usually located in the same room where the coffin is placed. These mirrors are therefore covered, often with a white cloth, because it is said that people are afraid to look at them, lest they see, or at least imagine they see, the reflected face of the deceased. Once again this is a practice formerly observed but scarcely ever followed now.

During all this time the bereaved family gradually feels the physical strain of the lamayan, as well as the emotional impact of the loss of a loved one. But they carry on and continue to cherish these moments, for they know that soon he will be gone forever as this sorrow-filled experience slowly comes to its climax — the burial.

BURIAL DAY ACTIVITIES

As mentioned previously, the burial takes place the day after a person's death; if, however, the family has to await relatives from far away, it is held two or three days after. Another exception is when the day following the death is a Monday. Some people believe that to bury the dead on a Monday is a bad way to begin the week, as it may invite another death. It is therefore put off till the following day. Older residents say that this is a comparatively recent practice, probably introduced by immigrants to the town.

Be that as it may, every effort is made on the day of the burial to see to it that all traditional rituals are observed at each stage.

These rituals usually show a blend of affection and fear. The relatives go through them to show their great respect and love for the deceased, as well as to avert the return of his spirit or another possible death in the family.

BEFORE THE DEPARTURE FROM THE HOUSE

Before the coffin leaves the house, the members of the bereaved family pay their last respects in a special way. If the deceased is a parent, the grown-up children and close relatives either kiss the dead person's hand or put his hand to their foreheads, as a last gesture of respect (*katapusang paggalang*) or as a final farewell (*huling paalam*).¹⁰ Because they consider this practice unhygienic, the educated usually omit it; the older people interpret this omission as the lamentable deterioration of that beautiful tradition according to which the younger members of a family daily make the *amen* or *mano* as a sign of respect for their elders.

Instead of kissing the hands of the deceased, small children are lifted over (*lakdang*) the coffin, so that the deceased parent or grandparent will not come back to visit them. How this gesture can prevent the return of the deceased, nobody could explain. The old people simply say it is so, and so it must be. This is especially observed with children who are very dear to the deceased, provided they are still small enough to be lifted over by one man standing on one side of the casket and handed over to another man standing on the opposite side. Some people do the *lakdang* only once; others do it twice, so that the children are put down on the same side of the coffin from which they are lifted. This practice is followed by many in the belief that it will keep the spirit of the dead from visiting the children, which would make them susceptible to sickness. Some even go as far as to believe that deceased mothers can make their infant children suck from them and so cause the infants to die. In addition to the *lakdang*, some families take still other precautions to prevent the spirit from approaching the children. The parents or relatives clothe these children with a red-colored dress, or cover them with a red blanket, or place a new stick broom (*walis tingting*) at their side

10. If it is a child who has died, the parents, and oftentimes the child's sponsor at baptism (*ninang* or *ninong*) as well, touch the lips or forehead with their hand or simply give a blessing.

as they sleep, or hang a brass or bronze key (*susing tanso*) around their neck as a pendant. This is based on the belief that the spirits are afraid of red, since it is the color of blood. They are also afraid of a stick broom because it can hurt them by poking. They likewise fear anything made of brass or bronze, and in this case a key is preferred because of the hole in it which makes it easier to hang as a pendant.

Both the amen and the lakdang take place either before the departure from the house or before the interment in the cemetery. In any case, before the coffin is finally closed, the family is given an opportunity to take a last look at the corpse, a moment which almost invariably drives the already grief-stricken family to tears.

In the next step of taking the coffin out of the house, a number of "do's" and "don'ts" are observed. For instance, members of the bereaved family should not be the ones to carry out the casket. Otherwise, this could bring another death to the family. Again, how or why, nobody knows; the elders (*matatanda*) simply say this is so, and so it must be. Secondly, the casket should be brought out through the door with utmost care, so that it does not bump any part of the house. Again, according to the elders, this is to avert premature death from the family. Some of the younger people, however, see this as simply respect for the deceased. There appears to be a disagreement on the third point. In bringing the coffin out of the house, some say that the corpse's position should be head first; others say it should be feet first. Those who contend that it should be head first say that violation of this practice may lead to another death (*susundan pa*), or that the deceased will come back to haunt (*babalik pa*) those left behind. For this "head first" position makes the deceased unable to come back, since he cannot walk on his head. Advocates for feet first, on the other hand, reason out that this is the natural way one walks (*natural na posisyon sa paglakad*). An informant jokingly remarked: "Baka [siya] maglakbay ng patiwarik. Baka makita ni St. Peter sa langit at sabihing 'Bakit ka nakatiwarik? Hindi kita papapasukin. Bumalik ka sa lupa. Umayos ka ng lakad.'" (If [the deceased] walks upside down, St. Peter might see him and tell him, "Why do you walk upside down? I'll not let you in. Go back to earth and walk properly.")

ON THE WAY TO THE CHURCH

On its way to the church the funeral procession is usually accompanied by the local band of six to twelve musicians. Even though the funeral hearses have a sound system for playing appropriate music, the *Banda 49* of the town is still preferred by many. As the coffin is brought out of the house, the band plays a dirge or *punebre*. If, however, the deceased happens to be an unmarried man or woman, upon the request of the parents and friends the band at times plays more joyful tunes, as *pase-doble* or *kuratsa*, instead of the usual solemn music.¹¹ Such music, they say, befits the carefree and fun-loving life of young unmarried men and women. In this they follow the same way of thinking as for the ringing of the bells.

During the funeral procession the coffin is carried by four male volunteers all the way from the house to the church. These men, usually distant relatives and friends of the bereaved family, readily offer to bring the deceased to his resting place as a token of their affection or gratitude. Very often the funeral hearse is simply made to follow at the end of the procession. The coffin is also at times placed on rollers and pushed instead of carried. The members of the bereaved family walk behind the bier, each one accompanied by a relative or friend for moral and sometimes physical support. All the other people follow.

Normally the procession proceeds directly to the church; there the priest awaits the corpse to bless it. There is, however, a more solemn rite, popularly known as *dapit*. First, the priest and the acolytes are fetched at the church by the band. Upon arrival in the house, the priest prays over the corpse and sprinkles it with holy water, while the family stands around the open coffin. The coffin is then brought out of the house and the procession starts. The acolytes, bringing the cross and the candles, lead the procession. Three times the procession stops on the way (*posas*) for the priest to pray over and bless the deceased. Some five years ago, a few chanters used to sing the responsories in Latin at each *posa*. One informant, the sacristan for 39 years, recalls that the *Credo quod Redemptor meus vivit* (I believe that my Redeemer lives) was sung at the first *posa* in front of the deceased person's

11. The *pase-doble* or *kuratsa* is played also at the funeral of a child.

house; *Qui Lazarum* (You who called up Lazarus), at the second posa midway between the house and the church; and *Memento mei Deus* (Remember me, O God), at the third posa in front of the church. Today, the parish priest simply recites or chants all the prayers and responsories in Tagalog. He takes them from the Tagalog translation of the 1969 *Rite of Funerals*, which provides a prayer to be said in the home of the deceased (*Sa Tahanan ng Yumao*).¹² At the first posa, he adapts the prayer for the vigil (*Vigilia sa Patay*), at the second posa, from the Collect of the Mass for the Dead (*Panalangin sa Misa sa Patay*); and at the third posa, from the prayer for a Burial without Mass (*Libing na Walang Misa*).¹³

The dapit is expensive, and only the few prominent families in town request it when an elderly member of their families dies. In a way the dapit has likewise become a status symbol. As one informant remarks: "Klas po ang dapit," implying that the dapit is high class. But aside from the well-to-do who can afford it, the deceased hermanas and hermanos are usually given a dapit funeral by the parish priest, sometimes free of charge (*gratis*), in recognition of their service to the Lord in the parish.

IN THE CHURCH

As the procession approaches the church, the dubla is rung, adding to the somber atmosphere that is building up. The dead person is carried into the church feet first. Many say this is the normal way a person enters the church, facing the altar. A few others say that the head must be first, lest another person die soon. The coffin is brought to the front altar and a crucifix placed on it.

Every family in Baras wishes that its departed loved ones receive the last blessing of the Church. A Mass for the dead is usually celebrated, or at least the parish priest blesses the body before it is brought to the cemetery.¹⁴ In cases where the priest cannot be present on the day of the burial, he gives the blessing

12. *Ang Paglilibing*, translated by Mons. Jose C. Abriol (Manila: Catholic Trade School, 1972), p. 18.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 26, and 60.

14. In the case of children, the Mass for the dead is usually omitted. Only the funeral ritual for children is celebrated.

in the home before he goes away, or in the cemetery when he returns. Or, if the family can afford it, another priest is requested from any of the neighboring towns to celebrate the Mass or bless the body. If no priest at all is available, the sacristan or the hermanas conduct a simple prayer service in the church.

In general the whole funeral liturgy is in accord with the latest ritual and its spirit.¹⁵ The priest, wearing violet vestments, celebrates the Mass in Tagalog. The people, led by the hermanas, actively participate in the Mass by frequent responses; sometimes a choir leads the singing. The writer was present on one occasion when a member of the bereaved family read the first reading. There is seldom a homily. During the sign of peace the young acolytes kiss the hand of the celebrating priest; the family and the rest of the congregation greet one another with a slight bow. Soon after many approach the altar in two lines to receive Communion. Immediately after the Mass the commendation and the blessing of the corpse follow.

The informant mentioned before as having been the main sacristan for many years until the middle of 1977, said that different parish priests during that period had trained him to conduct a prayer service for the dead in their absence. He based it always on the official ritual prevailing at the time. After reading the epistle and the gospel, he was accustomed to give a short sermon, mainly on "not losing hope like the pagans" (*huwag mawawalan ng pag-asa na gaya ng mga pagano*). He then ended the service with the prayer of the faithful. He did not bless the body with holy water.

After the liturgical services a group photograph of the assembled family with the coffin opened is sometimes taken inside the church to serve as a remembrance for absent relatives. The coffin is then closed and carried out of the church with the feet of the deceased first. To the tolling of the church bells the funeral proceeds to the cemetery. If, however, the deceased has been a government official or has served the country in any way, the coffin is covered with the Philippine flag, brought to the municipal hall for a short necrological service, and then carried to the cemetery.

15. *Rite of Funerals*. The Roman Ritual (revised by decree of the Second Vatican Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI [Washington, D.C.: 1970]).

ON THE WAY TO THE CEMETERY

The procession now from the church to the cemetery is almost exactly the same as the previous procession from the house to the church. For example, there are the same band and music, the same order, and the same method for transporting the coffin. As before, the priest does not normally accompany the procession unless there is a *dapit*. Even if there is, there are now no stops or *posas*.

IN THE CEMETERY

The burial takes place either in the Catholic cemetery near the church, or in the municipal cemetery farther away.¹⁶ The parish records show that most of the townspeople bury their dead in the municipal cemetery.¹⁷ The main reason given for this is that it is cheaper to have a burial place there. Another reason is that, since it is older and already holds the remains of beloved relatives, families wish as much as possible to have all their dead together in one place.

In the cemetery the casket is opened again for a last viewing by the bereaved family. In the case of *dapit* the priest once more prays over the corpse and blesses it with holy water. If the kissing of the hand and the passing of little children over the coffin have not yet been performed, they are usually done at this stage. But even as the grieving family weeps, they must be careful not to let their tears fall on the corpse. Should the tears fall on the corpse, people say several things may follow. The deceased, seeing the intense sorrow of those he has left behind, may leave with a heavy heart (*mahirap sa kalooban ng namatay*; *hanggang sa kabilang buhay ay dadalhin pa niya ang kalungkutan*), or may have a hard time on his way to heaven (*mahihirapang umakyat sa langit*), or a hard time in the next life (*mahihirapan ang kaluluwa sa kabilang buhay*).

16. Children who die without baptism are not buried in the Catholic cemetery lest, as some say, they become *tianak*, i.e., a folkloric elf or goblin. For this reason they are buried just outside the walls of the Catholic cemetery or, if parents so prefer, in the municipal cemetery. Many others simply say that children who die without baptism, no matter where they are buried, become *tianak*, whereas children who die after being baptized, even by a lay person (*buhos-tubig*), go straight to heaven.

17. For example, the Catholic parish records of Baras show that 58 out of the 72 Catholics who died in 1976 were buried in the municipal cemetery, and only 14 in the Catholic cemetery.

Before closing the coffin, or just before sliding it into the niche, those present direct their attention to the position of the face of the deceased. They make sure that it faces straight up and is not tilted (*nakakiling* or *nakatagilid*) in any way. If necessary, a support is added to keep it straight. For if the face is left inclined toward the general direction of the town, it may mean he is inviting people to follow him (*nagtatawag ng kasunod*), which could even lead to an epidemic (*salot*). Likewise, if his face inclines toward the sea; it could mean frequent accidents among the town's fishermen. He is therefore always interred with his back to the town, i.e., facing away from it, to avoid more deaths. However, there are people who say he should be buried facing east (*silangan*), so his soul will be illumined on its way to the next life.¹⁸

IN THE HOUSE OF THE BEREAVED FAMILY

After the burial the bereaved family, accompanied by some relatives, makes its way home. Sometimes a special meal is already prepared for relatives from far away, lest they go hungry on their way, as well as for the members of the band (*musikero*) and the volunteer men who closed the niche. At times the invitation to partake of the meal is extended to all who attended the funeral, as a token of the family's gratitude. In fact, today it is becoming common that the bereaved family offers a substantial meal not only after the funeral but during the whole day of the burial. This is intended to take the place of the meal customarily presented at the end of the nine days of prayer for the dead. This new and growing practice, some say, was adopted from the neighboring town of Morong. It is more convenient for those who are busy in their work or who have come from far away; they need not come back again on the ninth day. The family also finds it more practical in terms of energy and expense.

As evening draws near, the family though physically exhausted and emotionally drained, gathers together with relatives and neighbors before the family altar to pray for the departed loved one.

18. In the case of a child, its *ninang* or *ninong* provides the deceased with a candle. This candle is meant to light the way of the child as it goes on its journey to and in the next life. It is also given so that, when the godparents die, the child can then light their way by holding the candle in its hand.

POSTBURIAL ACTIVITIES AND OBSERVANCES

Immediately after the burial, close relatives and a few friends gather together at the house of the deceased to give the family the comfort of their company. It is during these first few moments that the bereaved begin to feel the pain of loss and separation from their loved one.

With the memory of the deceased still so fresh, family and friends continue to keep close ties with him. Together they offer special prayers for him for nine consecutive days (*pasiyam*). Similarly, the fourth and the fortieth day after his death are given special significance. And even as they gradually resign themselves to their loss and eventually learn to face life without him, the family continues to remember its deceased member with great love.

THE NOVENA OF PRAYER FOR THE DECEASED

For nine consecutive nights, starting on the day of the burial, the immediate relatives of the deceased gather before the family altar to pray for the departed member. They usually invite a prayer leader from among the hermanas, as today only a few know how to lead the traditional novena for the dead.¹⁹ Other people outside the immediate family, oftentimes close relatives and neighbors, voluntarily join the prayers as an act of sympathy with the bereaved family. As they wait for one another before beginning the prayer, the visitors spend the time in some conversation, during which native cigarettes and chewing leaves with betel nut and lime (*nganga*) are served. After some time one of the visitors is asked by the hermana to light the two candles before the altar, everybody kneels and the leader begins the prayer.

The traditional novena prayer for the dead takes the format of the rosary.²⁰ In place of the Hail Marys, ten invocations recalling Christ's passion and death are said for each decade. The response

19. At the time of this study, only four women were recognized as prayer leaders in the town.

20. In the case of children who die, instead of the traditional prayer for the dead, the so-called *trisahiyo*, a prayer of praise to the Blessed Trinity, is prayed for four consecutive days after the burial. It is interesting to note that a number of the words used in connection with children when they die, as *angeles* or *serapines*, (angels or seraphim) are found in the prayer.

to each invocation is a supplication that the deceased be forgiven his sins. The litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary follows. The rest consists of petitions that the deceased be granted eternal peace and light and be brought to the glory of the resurrection, together with a number of Our Fathers and Hail Marys. In general the prayers are in Tagalog, although some Spanish and Latin invocations still remain. These remnants of Latin, which are actually mere duplications, are retained by the prayer leaders who believe, two reliable informants say, that they are more effective (*mas mabisa*) and more attentively listened to by God (*mas naririnig ng Diyos*). Although the nightly prayer session lasts only about 30 minutes, many of those present, who began kneeling, are already sitting down or squatting on the floor, with some asleep, before it is finished. Many times, too, some family members are unable to join in the prayer because they are busy in the kitchen preparing the little snack, such as coffee and bread, usually served after the prayer. After partaking of whatever food is prepared and enjoying a little more conversation, the visitors soon take leave.

In the novena for a deceased dalaga or binata, the young friends of the deceased oftentimes offer to take charge of this nightly get-together. They take turns in providing for the refreshments served after the prayer, and lead the others who have come to the novena in enjoying some group singing and games.

On the ninth day of the novena the family prepares a big meal (*handa*), to which they invite not only those who have joined in the prayer but all the relatives, friends, and neighbors who have condoled with them. This is sometimes known as a *patapos* (ending). The well-to-do spend much on this; "may patay-buhay o patay-baboy" (a pig is slaughtered), as they commonly say. The rather poor families content themselves with offering a simple snack of coffee and bread and some native delicacies.

In the case of very poor families, however, instead of having this novena at home, the family simply requests the hermanas to include their deceased member for nine days in the daily prayers for the dead said in the church after the morning Mass. This is done to avoid the embarrassment of not being able to serve a repast, which they cannot afford but which they would feel obliged to provide were they to hold the novena at home. Speaking of this, one informant says, "Kahit mahirap ay napipilitan. Ang nag-uudyok ay kahihyan. Kahit na anong painit ay iniha-

handa." (Even the poor are under the compulsion of social pressure, shame, and embarrassment to provide some kind of refreshment.) Then, on the ninth day of prayer in the church, the family, as a token of gratitude, either offers a pack or two of native cigarettes to the small group of hermanas who have prayed for their deceased loved one, or invites them to a light breakfast at home.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOURTH AND FORTIETH DAY

Many of the people of Baras, especially the older ones, believe that on the fourth day after the burial the deceased returns to his death place, and kisses the mat where he has lain (*hahalik sa hinigan* or *sa kinamatayan*). The deceased only on this day realizes that he has died. An 80-year old informant relates a story behind this popular belief:

Ang kaluluwa ay pupunta sa ilog ng Hordan, maghuhugas ng kamay at marumi. Sa paghuhugas niyang iyon ay nakita niya na nagkakaalis ang kanyang kuko. "Aba, ako pala'y patay na. Ako'y babalik sa aking hinigan at ako'y hahalik." Kaya sa ika-apat na gabi, yung hinigan ng namatay ay hindi hinihigan. Baka bumalik ang kaluluwa. Yun daw ang pagtalikod sa mundo.

His soul goes to the River Jordan to wash his soiled hands. In so doing, he sees that his fingernails begin to come off. 'Hey, I didn't know I'm dead; I shall have to return to kiss my deathbed.' That is why on this fourth night nobody sleeps in that place. For, indeed, his spirit may return. That is when he turns his back to the world.)

The young, on the other hand, are sometimes indifferent toward this belief of the old folks. As one young man said in a group interview: "Minsan ay pananakot na lang po. Katulad ng nangyari nuong minsan. Sabi'y nagpaparamdam nga raw. Yun pala, noong tignan sa ilalim ay mayroong tao." (Sometimes, it is only a threat to scare you. For instance, take this incident. They said that the deceased was making his presence felt. But when others looked under [perhaps under the bed or the house], they found someone only playing a prank.)

As with the fourth day, so the fortieth day after the burial has a special significance for the people of Baras. Within these 40 days, the spirit of the deceased is believed to remain in the world. It is only on the fortieth day that it is supposed "to leave for its final

destination, wherever that is — heaven, purgatory or hell.” (yayao sa kanyang destino o sa kanyang patutunguhan, saan man iyon — sa langit, purgatoryo o impiyerno). In this connection an informant related a dream told to her by one whose father died. In her dream she heard her father say: “Ako’y aalis na. Ako’y bang tagal sa inyo. Hindi lang ninyo ako nakikita. Ako’y uuwi na sa aking kala-lagyan.” (“I’m leaving now. I have been with you a long time although you do not see me. I’m going where I should be.) Most people simply say that the spirit goes up to heaven (pagakyat sa langit). Some relate it to Christ’s own ascension to heaven 40 days after His death. Another informant adds that a drizzle on the fortieth day is a sign that the soul of the deceased has gone up to heaven (umakyat na sa langit pag umambon).

To mark the fortieth day some families again offer a novena of prayer for the deceased. Others simply offer special prayers on the day itself. As usual, after the prayer comes the prepared meal, but it is generally not as lavish as the one at the end of the pasiyam.

Asked why they pray for the dead, the informants gave the following answers:

Nakakaginhawa sa kaluluwa. (It relieves his soul.)

Kung may sala man ay patawarin na. (If he has sins, he shall be forgiven.)

Para hindi na maghihirap sa gumala-gala ang kaluluwa sa purgatoryo. (So his soul will not suffer roaming in purgatory.)

Para mahango sa kahirapan, sa kumukulong tubig. (To spare him the sufferings, of boiling water.)

Kung nasa purgatoryo ay para mahango na, para tanggapin na sa kaharian ng Diyos. (To release him from purgatory and enable him to enter the Kingdom of God.)

Para maiakyat na siya sa langit. (So he can go to heaven.)

Here ends the customary prayer practices for the dead.²¹ However, if within this period (or after it) a family member dreams of the deceased, this is taken to mean that the deceased is asking for prayer. A day of prayer is set aside, or a novena, and sometimes a Mass is offered for this special intention.

21. The next time the deceased is especially remembered is on the first death anniversary. It is still referred to as *babang luksa* or *laglag luksa* (putting aside the black dress) for, according to the old custom, the mourning clothes are worn till the end of the first year. To celebrate this anniversary some families offer a Mass, others make a novena for the intention of the deceased. In either case it provides an occasion for family and friends to get together, and a big *handa* invariably climaxes the affair.

MOURNING PRACTICES

During the period following a death in the family, the immediate kin of the deceased observe at least two practices as a sign of mourning. One is the abstention from attendance at social gatherings until after the ninth day of prayer for the deceased. The other concerns mourning clothes. The first practice requires no comment; the second offers interesting details.

The women wear black dresses and the men a black ribbon on their shirts. Some years ago the women would even wear a long black mantle (*lambong*) over their heads and faces whenever they went to church or elsewhere, and the men either a black band on their sleeves or a black kerchief around their necks. But times have changed, and adherence to these practices has been gradually reduced to token observances. The young generation of women may still wear black dresses, perhaps for a month or two, but then they substitute a white dress with black patterns. Still later they may discard even this for normal dresses. The men simply wear a small black ribbon or black plastic pin on their shirt pocket. Even this, however, is not observed by all; a number wear it somewhat indifferently, "as long as it is not forgotten" (*habang hindi ito nakakalimutan*).

So ends the telling of the events that follow death in the Philippine rural town of Baras. First, there is the tragic impact of death. Then follows a series of traditional activities that eventually carry the dead person to the grave. In all of this the people of Baras, like people anywhere, accept that such is life and, as surely as there is life, so there is death. But it all ends on a note of hope for the new life of the person they love.

CONCLUSION

We have described chronologically the practices followed by members of the family and relatives of the deceased on the occasion of death, and the reasons for these practices. These reasons give a glimpse of what the people want to express by and through their practices.

It will be helpful now to view them from another perspective, and to group them in a kind of synthesis according to what they express.

Most of the death and burial practices in Baras express at least one of three main themes: community and family solidarity, respect and love for the deceased, fear of another death, and of the return of the spirit of the deceased. The different practices can thus be grouped accordingly.

From among the practices expressing solidarity, there are those that express solidarity with the living, solidarity with the dead, or both. Regarding solidarity with the living, a further distinction can be made between solidarity with the community and that of the family. All these distinctions, however, must not be taken as mutually exclusive, since frequently they overlap.

The dubla announcing the death to the community brings people together. It is a call for them to be one with the bereaved family in their hour of need; it is also a call for them to be one with the deceased person as they offer a prayer for him. Everyone seeks to express, in his own way and according to his means, his sympathy or desire to be one with the family of the deceased. The practice of giving *ambag* in cash, in kind or in the form of service, reflects a strong sense of community sharing among the townspeople. So does their attendance at the *lamayan*.

There are other manifestations of this singular desire for unity with the dead, with the family and the community: relatives from far and near come for this occasion; the deceased is never left alone, even during the night; there is the "no bathing rule," in expression of sympathy for the departed as his remains start to decompose; his belongings are kept in one place after the burial, to spare him the trouble of collecting them when he comes back on the fourth day; there is the "no sweeping rule" while his body lies in state, to avoid hurting his spirit which is believed to be roaming in the house and can take the form of a stick or rubbish; when weeping, which is an expression of both grief and solidarity with the deceased, no tears are to fall on his corpse, lest he worry about those he has left behind and leave with a heavy heart; relatives and friends come together to pray for the deceased; the visitors are offered food (*handa*) during the wake, after the burial, during, and at the end of the novena for the dead. The latter especially affirms strong family and community ties. Very often these occasions provide relatives and friends an opportunity to renew acquaintances, to rekindle old friendships, and to retrace forgotten relations in the larger family tree.

Although it is true that most of what relatives do on this occasion manifests their love and respect, there are a few practices that express this more distinctly than others.

The care with which the corpse is given a sponge bath and then dressed with the clothes of his choice, as well as the concern of volunteers to carry the coffin to the grave, speak clearly of the love and respect of those who do them. The kissing of the dead person's hand is a gesture of reverence and final farewell to a loved one. Since in every way the family tries its best to do whatever good it can still do for the welfare of its departed member, it seeks with great concern that the deceased receive the last blessing of the Church and that a novena of prayer be made for him.

It is noteworthy, though not surprising, that a number of these death and burial practices express fear, namely, fear of another death or misfortune to follow, or fear of the return of the spirit of the deceased to haunt the living.

Many of the "don'ts" are observed as precautions against more deaths in the family or in the town: no touching of the corpse or carrying of the coffin by immediate relatives; no bumping of the coffin; no burial on Monday; no burying of the dead with face tilted to the town. The "head or feet first" directive is observed for the same reason.

The other "don'ts" are to avoid various misfortunes: no bathing, lest it cause pain in the body or dandruff to develop; no exposed mirror, lest people be frightened by seeing the reflected face of the deceased in it; no using of the things of the deceased, lest it invite him to haunt the living. The lifting of children over the coffin (*lakdang*), their wearing of red, the hanging of a bronze or brass key as pendant around their neck, and the placing of a new stick broom at their side when sleeping are all other measures taken to prevent the return of the spirit of the deceased.²²

22. Concerning the *lakdang*, it is interesting to note that in rural Cebu there are two important variations. Not only children but all close relatives are involved, and they pass under the coffin (*pasuong*), not over (see Crispina A. Tan, "A Study of Popular Beliefs and Practices on Death and Burial in Rural Cebu" [M.A. thesis, University of San Carlos, 1963], p. 125). The purpose, as in Baras, is to prevent the return of the spirit of the deceased. In rural Bohol, however, close relatives also go under the coffin for a different reason, to prevent bad luck in general (see Francisco Aparece, "The Care of the Sick and the Burial of the Dead in the Rural Areas of Bohol and their Educational Implications" [M.A. thesis, University of San Carlos, 1961], p. 94).