

## Ethno Malayan Religious Practices and Imaginary Transaction for the Departed: Curriculum Consequences for Pre-Service Teachers

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to dissect and analyze the rituals and practices of prayers for the dead common among the Ethno Malayan culture and makes use of the results in the formulation of the pre-service teacher education curriculum. Data had been collected through data mining and in depth interview of the participants integrating the written prayer using qualitative method. The findings revealed that; 1.) participants have the same imaginary transaction that is related to the written prayer but differ on their imaginary transaction based on their experiences; 2.) chanting and repetition of prayers are the most common among the Ethno Malayan culture. Chanting and repetition however, encourages rote memory learning; 3.) imaginary transaction happens when there is inconsistency in the practices against beliefs and value system; 4.) study suggests that the main reason for the presence of imaginary transaction is the inconsistency between practice and belief system. It is concluded that when applied to teacher education curriculum, that inquiry based learning will have more meaningful and lasting impact on the students. Therefore, it is recommended that the curriculum should lean towards inquiry-based learning that will develop critical thinkers among learners.

**Key words:** *imaginary transaction, Ethno Malayan, practices, prayers for the dead*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Culture is part of human life as it reflects the origin, beliefs, attitudes, languages, religions, customs, practices, and traditions. Knowing culture will help understand ones origin and practices of doing things. If knowledge of culture is unclear, it can cause confusion, vague understanding and realizations that would lead to imaginary transactions.

In multicultural Ethno Malayan Countries, rituals, tradition and practices are very rich. One of the most popular traditions and practice is the praying for the dead.

In the Philippines, even before the Spaniards came, the Filipino pagans were already honoring the body of the dead by offering chants and rituals that would bring them to the next life. This is influenced by the belief that the *anitos* will protect them from any danger towards their enemies and with the notion that through prayers the sins of the person who died will be forgiven and he will be saved from the fires of hell.

Analyzing what is in the prayer of the dead among Catholic Christians and looking at the imaginary transaction of the one who prayed will lead to clarity of the purpose of continuously reciting the prayer of the dead. There is failure in communication and problems happen when the message from the source is unclear to the receiver (Williams and Kemper, 2004)

With this phenomenon, there is a need to understand the content of the written text and the rituals and practices of the Cebuano people in praying for the dead and relate it to other Ethno Malayan countries for the bigger perspective.

#### Objectives

The study dissect and analyze the rituals and practices of prayers for the dead common among the Ethno Malayan culture and to use the results in the formulation and revision of the pre- service teacher education curriculum considering the aspect of culture.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prayer of the dead is one of the traditions of Filipino Christians that is done in remembrance of those who have passed away. In the second book of Maccabees, in the Old Testament, Judas Macabee, a Jewish leader, prayed to God to save his dead soldiers for the sin committed of wearing an amulet, that was taken from a pagan temple during their troops' battle. (*II Maccabees 1239-45*). That was the beginning of the belief

that the living person can pray for the one departed to be free from sin and make them reconciled with the creator.

There are some incident from the New Testament that proves prayer for the dead were already practice even on the time of the Apostles. Paul offers a prayer to Onesiphorus who had died *“May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day” (II Timothy 1:18)*. This is an old custom of the Roman Catholic that handed down from generation to generation.

Bishop Edward K. Braxton of Belleville, Ill stressed that our faith teaches us to pray for the dead. This is proven in the practices of the Catholic Christians who honor the dead during the celebration of All Soul’s and Saint’s Day, the 9 days for Novena Prayer for the dead, which is a series of days specifically allotted for prayer after the day of death of a departed loved one and the 40 Days Prayer. These kinds of practices show faithfulness on the values and belief that were inherited from traditional practice.

Based on the study done by Mazzie (2016), "Praying the prayers of the dead is only a matter of what a believer should and should do in spite of all the questions they are making. Some believe that prayer has an effect on the one praying and not so much for the recipient of the prayer. This belief in this study can be proven to confirm the implications of prayer in their lives and how prayer changed them.

According to Mazzie (2016), prayer is not only the words that come out of ones mouth but the truthfulness and the manner in which one prays. Mazzie's contentions is to prove that prayer is important; however the way of praying, the posture during praying and other aspects related to the act of praying must also be considered.

In the Philippines, family members offer prayers, candles and flowers to the one departed. This is also practiced in other Ethno Malayan Countries. The manner though in honoring the dead, differs: the number of days allotted for praying for the dead, the rituals, the materials needed, and the food offered.

For example, Thai, Burmese, Laotian, Cambodian, Sri Lankan and Chinese, funeral ceremonies last over 49 days. But the acutal prayer for the dead is recited for seven (7) days to ten (10) days.

On the other hand, Uztaz Khas shares: *“In Muslim burial practie, the people present will offer three handfuls of earth once the body of the dead is lowered to the ground. As prayers are recited and offered to the departed, the earth is thrown into the grave one by one, three handfuls each to signify and symbolize that we come from the earth and to the earth we shall return.”*

*Additionally, the belief of the Hindus is that when the body dies, the soul separates and goes to meet Yama, the god of death. Yama decides whether the soul will dies till eternity or will be given life again.*

Through the prayers and rituals, the soul will smoothly pass Yama’s conviction to the next life.

According to Muthu Kumara (2011), one should undstrand the reasons and significance of a certain practice or ritual. There are experiences and contentions behind every tradition that is handed down from generations.

With the literature review, the researchers were able to identify and analyze the rituals and practices of prayers. This further motivated to look into the experiences and imaginary transactions of the one who prayed and its implication to our beliefs, practices and values.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Method and Instrument

The study used content analysis method focusing on the written prayer and qualitative-descriptive phenomenological design where the researchers did an in depth interview with the participants on their understanding and experiences in the practice for praying for the dead. Data-mining was also used to look into the practices, beliefs and values of other Ethno-Malayan countries towards the said phenomenon. The results of the study can be used in the formulation and revision of the pre- service teacher education.

#### 3.2 Research Participants and Environment

The study was conducted in the various municipalities in Cebu such as Bantayan Island, Carcar, San Fernando, Lapu-lapu, Talisay and Cebu City. The researchers identified 10 participants who were Catholic, three (3) priests; three (3) paid prayer service indivisuals; and four (4) lay people. They were interviewed to extract their experiences and reasons of praying for the dead.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis

After the in depth interview, the researchers coded and categorized the responses of the participants. The written prayer was then analyzed with emphasis on the message of the prayer and the analysis or comparison of meaning of the practice of prayer from the priest, the paid prayer service individual and the lay. The general picture or result was then used to connect to significant essentials of the teacher education curriculum for pre serve teachers.

#### 4.4 Ethical Consideration

Respondents were oriented on the nature and purpose of the study. They were asked to sign voluntarily the informed consent form to protect their privacy. This ensures the confidentiality of their responses and identity. It was made clear to the participants that they can dismiss anytime. Furthermore, the researchers complied with the Research Ethics Board of the university for Ethical Standards in the conduct of study.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Imaginary Transaction of the Participants Towards the Written Prayer

Written Prayer	Priest	Paid Prayer Service	Lay People
...enable the suffering souls in purgatory to be able to leave that place, especially for the soul of _____.	P1 <i>“Pray, to save them from purgatory”</i>	P4 <i>“malangit sila. Ug mapasaylo ilang mga sala. (that the departed will reach heaven and his sins be forgiven)”</i>	P7 <i>“aron maluwas ang kalag sa namatay sa impyerno.”</i>  <i>(for the redemption of sins and salvation from hell)</i>
Leader: Jesus, through your blood on the cross, Response (All): Have mercy on the soul of ...	P2 <i>“Pray, to remove punishment for their sins and ask for God’s Mercy”</i>	P5 <i>“pag-ampo pinaagi sa dugo nga gihalad ni Kristo maluwas ang kalag sa namatay”</i> <i>(Using the blood of Christ that the soul of the departed be saved)</i>	P8 <i>“maayo sila sa laing lugar og ila sad peace of mind pinaagi sa kaluoy ni Kristo”</i>  <i>(with the mercy of Christ, the departed be at peace and in good place)</i>
Gracious God, through whose mercy the saints rest in glory, we beg you to set free those blessed souls in purgatory, especially for the soul of _____, for whom we are praying in this novena. May you radiate your compassion and love to them so they may enter into your Kingdom. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.	P3 <i>“Pray to save them from the fires of hell and enter the kingdom of heaven”</i>	P6 <i>“Ako lang iampo iyang kalag ma’am na mitaliwan na iyang pagkuwan ma’am ...kanang pag-adto sa langit”</i>  <i>(I pray for the soul of the departed that his soul will reach heaven)</i>	P9 <i>“sana na mapunta na sila sa langit “</i>  <i>(hoping that he will go to heaven)</i>
Sovereign Lord, in whom it is proper to be merciful, through the intercession of St. Michael, the archangel, and by the sorrow of your Blessed Mother who suffered when the soldier pierced your side with a lance, have mercy on the soul of _____ for whom we are offering this novena and bring him/her to your eternal rest in heaven, for the better glory and honour of your name.	P1 <i>“We pray for God’s Mercy”</i>	P4 <i>“ mangayo sa grasya ug kaluoy aron makapahulay sa kiliran sa Diyos didto sa langit.”</i>  <i>(asking for the grace and mercy that the departed be at rest and peace beside the Lord in heaven)</i>	P10 <i>“hinaut unta nga kahayag nga walay pagkapalong magdan-ag sa kanunay”</i>  <i>(the light shine upon the departed without cease)</i>  <i>“ maluoy ang Ginoo nga luwason ang kalag aron makapahulay nga dayon.”</i>  <i>(God will be merciful and save the soul of the departed so that he can rest in peace forever)</i>

As shown in the Table 1, the results of interviews and the content of the written prayer convey the same message from the priest, to the one who are paid for prayer service and the lay individuals. The message of the written prayer was understood by the one who prayed.

Table 2 Collective “Psyche” or Belief in the prayer for the Dead

Priest	Paid Prayer Service	Lay People
<p>P1 “Even ako pari ko maglisod ko pagconvinse pagpahunong sa akong pamilya na ihunong na ang paghalad sa mga pagkaon sa altar sa mga patay samot ang pag-ampo kay part naman sa atong tradisyon, sa atong culture ”</p> <p>(Even I myself have the difficulty to convince my own family to stop offering food at the altar for the dearly departed and praying for them because this has been part of the family tradition)</p>	<p>P10 “Isip mga buhi katungdanan nato ang pag-ampo nila basin mapadangat sa gingharian sa langit mao ni ang atong nadak-an ug gitudlo sa simbahan”.</p> <p>(For us, the living, we have the obligation to pray for them and reach heaven through our prayers because we have grown with this teaching from the Church)</p>	<p>P7 “Kay mao man na ang faith sa mga kinaraan, ato gyud tumanon ug gitudlo ni Kristo.”</p> <p>(this is the faith and belief handed down to us from our ancestors so we need to follow as this is also the teaching of Christ)</p>
<p>P2 We pray for them because we believe that by our mistakes and sins in our life we need help, and the help that they need best is our prayers. And through our prayers we also believe in our Catholic faith that their sins would be, not the punishment of their sins would be remitted.</p>	<p>P6 “ituboy didto sa Ginoo na unta, pinaagi sa akong mga pag-ampo makit-an na niya ang kahayag na wala dyud pagkapalong gikan sa Ginoo.” (hoping that through my prayers, the departed will see eternal light of Christ)</p>	<p>P10 “ang sulod sa akong pag-ampo kay pangaliya sa Ginoo nga malangit “</p> <p>(the content of my prayer is for supplication that the departed will go to heaven)</p>
<p>P2 “There is life after death” “prayers remove the punishment of their sins.”</p>	<p>P3 “dapat mag-ampo tayo para ta tabangan”</p> <p>(We have to pray to ask for help)</p>	<p>P5 “yung mga namatay na talagang nagpapahiwatig sila sa mga buhay ” yung mga skin ng aking anak magspot og black, yung mulagom siya yan na ang sign na magpapray sila”.</p> <p>(there are signs that the departed would like to be heard and prayed for especially when I see bruises on the skin of my children)</p>
		<p>“Sa akong bana na feel gyud naku nga nagtan-aw gyud siya pirme ug mitabang pag-ayo sa akong sakit.”</p> <p>(I really can feel that my husband is watching over me and is helping me with my sickness)</p>

Table 2 shows the imaginary transaction that is present in the person who prayed based on their belief and their own experiences towards prayer for the dead. Based on the results of the interview, some of the participants continue to pray for the dead because they believe that the soul will help them with their problems. The participants’ faith leads them to another transaction with the one who offered their prayer to.

It is very clear that the one who prayed for the dead has another understanding on the reasons behind this practice. Imaginary transaction happens during the time they continue reciting the prayer. Participant 3 mentioned, “Dapat mag-ampo tayo para ta tabangan” (we need to pray so that the soul will help us). This

message is not present in the written prayer for the dead but was mentioned by the one who prayed. This is a clear indication that there is an imaginary transaction between the two.

Participant 5 elaborated, “Yung mga namatay na, talagang nagpapahiwatig sila sa mga buhay ”yung mga skin ng aking anak magspot og black, yung mulagom siya yan na ang sign na magpapray sila”. ( Those who died have sometimes asked for help from the living through communicating as indicated by the bruises on my child’s skin). Having that kind of thought gives the researchers realization that the one who prayed has a different understanding and reasons for praying based on their experiences.

According to Bishop Braxton (2015), “Our faith teaches us to pray for the dead.” Our faith can change the way we understand things; accordingly as shown in table 2, there is a clear gap and an imaginary transaction on the part of the one praying and faith. The participants mentioned that their belief in praying for the dead originated from their ancestors and that catechism taught them that praying for the dead will help the souls to go to heaven.

Despite of the conflicting ideas about the prayer for the dead, this belief is also evident in other Ethno Malayan Countries. It can be seen in their values, belief and practices. As shown in Table 3 below, some of the Ethno Malayan Countries have the same rituals and practices in praying for their departed that give an interesting review of the existing values and practices of the Ethno Malayan Culture.

Table 3. Comparison on beliefs, practice and values of Ethno-malayan Countries

<b>Ethno Malayan Countries</b>	<b>Belief</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Values</b>
Vietnam	<i>-Death is not the end but is the final stage of one life to be transformed into another.</i>	<i>-they pray for the dead through chanting following the monks -An altar was set with a photograph, candles, and incense</i>	<i>-respect</i>
Laos	<i>-The Lao strongly believe that spirits co-exist with the living and that they should be respected. -Many Lao believe that the khwan of persons who die by accident, violence, or in childbirth are not reincarnated, becoming instead phi phetu (malevolent spirits). Animist believers also fear wild spirits of the forests.</i>	<i>- they pray through chanting rituals</i>	<i>-respect</i>
Cambodia	<i>death is not the end of one’s life, it’s simply the end of a life cycle. They believe there do exist a life after death which is rebirth.</i>	<i>- monk will do the sermon</i>	<i>-respect -love -piety</i>
Thailand	<i>represent rebirth and the passage from one existence to another. -they believe in cremation</i>	<i>- chanting by monks -casket is placed on the bier a two-day outdoor wake with music, gambling and barbecues are held. Gifts are piled on top of the casket.</i>	<i>-respect</i>
Brunie	<i>Muslims are always buried, never cremated. Islamic belief holds that only Allah knows what is good or bad for us and that the body should be treated with the utmost respect in life and in death. Burning the dead is considered a form of mutilation, forbidden by Allah.</i>	<i>-bathing -chanting, praying -covering the body with cloth</i>	<i>-respect</i>

Ethno-Malayan countries pray for the soul of the departed, although the manner is different, the realization is that this practice has been handed down from generations and is a clear manifestation of the culture of the Ethno-Malayan race.

Prayer for the dead is purely chanting and repetition and did not promote deeper understanding in the real meaning behind the tradition. Doing chanting, ready made prayer, songs and verses are purely memorization. Imaginary transaction can't be avoided because there is no clear understanding why people need to follow the practices that is contradicting to the belief. According to Muthu Kumara (2011), one must dissect the purpose and significance of traditions and rituals. If doing the rituals for the sake of tradition, there is an unclear understanding and will eventually cause confusion and mere physical activity rather than rooted in deeper understanding.

Connecting this to the curriculum, one can truly see the importance of developing the critical thinking skills to understand the meaning behind everything. It is not enough to just accept what has been handed down as tradition, just like praying for the dead, in the case of this study.

As the practice of prayer is part of culture, the question now is why do Filipino Catholics give reverence and pray for their dearly departed? The Christian faith and teaching as stipulated in the creed says " ...He will come again to judge the living and the dead..."? Other denominations as well believe in reincarnation, rebirth? Thus, there is no need for prayer to bring the soul to heaven because in this belief, the soul will come back in a different form thru reincarnation.

This is a clear manifestation of the unclear, unpronounced and inconsistency in between; the imaginary transactions which happened during prayer for the dead.

Curriculum therefore must be clear, consistent and aligned to address the needs of the learners of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It should focus on the development and training of learners to be critical and avoid rote memory learning.

## V. FINDINGS

The findings revealed that 1.) participants have the same imaginary transaction that is related to the written prayer but differ on their imaginary transaction based on their experiences; 2.) chanting and repetition of prayers are the most common among the Ethno Malayan culture. Chanting and repetition however, encourages rote memory learning; 3.) imaginary transaction happens when there is inconsistency in the practices against beliefs and value system; 4.) study suggests that the main reason for the presence of imaginary transaction is the inconsistency between practice and belief system.

## VI. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that prayer of the dead became a practice of the Ethno Malayan people because of their faith and being obedient to the tradition handed down to them. Accepting traditional practices without clear understanding is an indication that culturally, we are taught to become good followers and passive receivers of information and action. Ethno-Malayan races are good workers, good followers but lack the drive to become good thinkers.

## VII. RECOMMENDATION

The result of the study recommended that the curriculum should be leaned towards inquiry-based learning that will develop critical thinkers among learners. There must be consistency in the alignment of curriculum to avoid confusion and Imaginary transaction.

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