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A Traditional Funeral

By Anonymous

I lost my grandpa 3 years ago. The traditional Taiwanese funeral takes about 14 days (about 2 weeks) to complete the whole ceremony. During one ceremony, we were summoning all our ancestors to the funeral to pick up our grandpa. A Taoist priest asked my cousin to toss a coin to see how the ancestors responded. The first time the ancestor said no, and the Taoist priest was very nervous.

A traditional Taiwanese funeral is long and painful. Both my grandparents' funerals took 14 days (about 2 weeks) to complete the whole process. On the first day, they will clean and dress the body and put the body in the living room for the family to see. The body will be in the living room for 2 days, then they will put the body into the fridge coffin, keeping the body frozen for the next 12 days (about 1 week 5 days). Throughout the 14 days, the family will have to kneel for the entire day while the Taoist priest prays and releases the souls of the dead. At night, all the kids must stay up for whole night to guard the spirit and the body.

There are also a few important ceremonies added into the process. For example, during one ceremony, we summoned all our ancestors to the funeral to pick up our grandpa. The priest was incredibly careful about this because summoning the dead could be extremely dangerous. We only wanted to summon our ancestors, but if the process goes wrong, the evil spirit might come out. He kept telling my big cousin, who was the one that was calling the ancestors, to be careful and to use piety.

The way my big cousin did it was to use two coins and drop them on the ground; if the coins are one head and one tail, this means "yes" from the spirit, and you must do it for 3 straight

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times with one head and one tail. If it is two heads or two tails, this means “no.” That is the way people in Taiwan ask God questions.

On the first toss, my cousin asked, “Ancestors, are you guys here?” The coin was one tail and one head, and it was the same for the next two tries.

The priest said, “Good. Now ask them if they can take your grandpa with them.”

The next three tosses were all heads; this meant a strong “No” and meant our ancestors were mad. The priest got incredibly nervous because the curse might fall on him or the family if the ancestors were mad. He asked if there was any conflict going on in this family. We were all silent because there was a conflict going on. The priest looked at us and understood what was going on.

He then told my big cousin, “Tell the ancestors not to worry. You guys will figure the problem out, and tell your grandpa to not worry, too.”

My cousin then tossed the coins. The priest then said, “Now you guys made a promise to your family; make sure to fulfill it and solve the conflict that you guys have.”

But even until today... the conflict has not been solved.