

Vietnamese death traditions: the fanfare of vietnam's funerals

[Life](#), [Death](#)



Cultures worldwide have many different practices for showing their respects to their fallen loved ones, whether it is different clothes, separate beliefs of the afterlife, how they think of the dead, rituals, death ceremonies and so much more. Like other cultures, all Vietnam events and festivals are mainly dedicated to something or somebody. They worship their loved ones, ancestors, and even their Kings that played a vital role in the society that they live in today. One day in particular that they remember their fallen ancestors is called " Thanh Minh", also known as Day of the Dead. Thanh Minh is celebrated in the third lunar month, during this event or festival, people visit the graves of their fallen and pay their respects. In addition, the graves are to be cleaned, and foods and flowers are to be offered along with incense sticks being lit. During ancient times, the king would oversee the ceremonies as it was of great importance to the rituals of the royal court. On the first day of Thanh Minh, the king dedicated the ceremony to his ancestors that then led to the first three days of the third month the set time for the ritual.

Thanh Minh was not only to remember and pay respects to the fallen, but to become a tradition for the other member of the clan to reunite. Depending on religious beliefs, many of the Vietnamese culture believes that souls live on after death, but especially that a person should die in their home surrounded by his family. Vietnamese people believe that it is a bad misfortune to die away from home, but also bad luck if they carry a corpse home. Although many people are rushed to the hospital even if they are sick, if it is evident that they will die, they are rushed home with all haste so that their demise may take place there. The Vietnamese also believe that the

fallen should have a proper burial so that they can enter the afterlife. If they don't, their ghost will stay on Earth and can possibly cause harm to their family. The offerings that family provides, is to prepare the deceased for the afterlife, such as food, money, and clothes. The traditional and modern-day Vietnamese funerals are similar although the traditional Vietnamese funeral included several elaborate rituals, especially for the wealthy. The wake was almost a week-long celebration or possibly longer if the relatives had lived further away. They would wash and dressed the body in traditional clothing to prepare for burial, also covering the face of the deceased with a white piece of paper or a handkerchief. In fact, covering their face was a symbolic barrier between the dead and the living, it would also shield visitors from too great of an emotional shock. They would also put rice and three coins in the deceased's mouth along with a chopstick between their teeth, so that the soul will never be hungry.

The body is usually on a bed under a mosquito net, in some areas, a bunch of bananas are on the stomach of the deceased with the hope of distracting the devil from devouring the dead person's intestines, in some cases, a knife is placed on the stomach as a weapon against the devil. Family members wash the body with lotion and dress it in the best clothing, also they would cut the nails and put the trimmings in small packages and attached to the proper hand and foot in which they were cut. At least in 3 years' time, when the body is exhumed and the bone has transferred from the wooden coffin to an earthenware box for the final burial, the clippings would help in identifying the correct bones. In the past, caskets were often brought ahead

of time, especially in the mountain areas, the coffin would be used in the house as a bench, although this practice has been abandoned in towns and cities. Traditionally, the body was kept in the home for as long as six months, sealed inside the casket. Currently, the body is kept at home about a week or less. The deceased's family would have created an altar, so that the body stayed at home for a week to several months. They would then bring the other offerings that include flowers, money, and food, shortly after burning incense or paper money.

Normally, there would be a burial at a cemetery or at the family's property, and during the planned event, musicians would play the gongs and drums. Mainly everyone at the burial ceremony would celebrate with food, drinks, music and prayers. In today's Vietnamese funeral, the preparation of the body usually just involves covering the body rather than the original rituals. In addition, the wake only lasts for a few days rather than weeks, and still, there is a procession to the cemetery, but not as elaborately planned as the traditional processions. After the ceremony has taken place, there is a 49-day mourning period where the mourners wear black or white to symbolize their mourning, while this is occurring, widows shouldn't remarry during this time. On occasion, the deceased's family visits the grave and leaves flowers and other offerings, and would have annual celebrations on the death anniversary to honor and remember the fallen. The Vietnamese culture has proven to be a very diverse and different way of life, especially when it comes to treating the deceased. They use most of their old traditional practices even in today's world, showing how much faith they have in their

original beliefs. The Vietnamese culture has since evolved overtime but still showing the same respect, love and honor that they would give to the deceased and doing so in their original way.