

The rite of nokan or the encoffinment religion essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The rite of Nokan or the encoffinment where the corpse was placed in a casket during the funeral. Traditionally, the ceremony was to relieve the family of their grief by cleansing the dead of all his worldly suffering, while hoping they would have a better life in the afterlife. The specialist handled all the necessary requirements for ease of passage into the afterlife.

In early times there were two main traditions practiced Shinto and Buddhist traditions. According to Shinto traditions, the dead as well as the family unit from which he/she came from were considered to be unclean and impure; therefore the corpse had to be washed for purification.

Traditional Japanese believed that the dead person's soul remained impure for some period following death before purification through memorials done by the relatives of the dead; thereafter the soul was deindividuated into an ancestor god or goddess. Traditional Japanese opinion that dead people are impure is based on the Kojiki myth, where maggots came out of the rotting body of a god. Traditionally burial gowns were also considered garments for travelling that prepared the dead when travelling to the other world.

The encoffinment rite was done by the family members as death was unclean. In modern times, in keeping with this rite, family members wipe the corpse clean with a cotton cloth dipped in alcohol with the assistance funeral specialists.

Traditionally Japanese funerals were to serve as prayers for the deceased person's soul while also serving as the family's time for public mourning as it was meant to keep their loved one in their memories.

Typically a Japanese funeral follows the sequence: when someone dies, they are placed to rest in their homes. The corpse was placed with the head pointing the North, copying the deathbed of Gautama, and the head of the bed is well decorated. Then the previously mentioned encoffinment process. The first night after one's death is called the Tsuya; and it is for close family and friends to remember their beloved. In the morning, a cleansing meal is served called Okiyome. The funeral is thereafter carried out where the Jukai rite also known as receipt of commandments gives the dead an opportunity to receive the Buddhist commandments, automatically making the dead a disciple of the Buddha, and the dead person is accepted into Buddha hood.

After all this, the deceased embarks on the journey to the other world as the coffin is carried out of the house and burnt in a crematorium to ashes.

Presently about 99% Japanese are cremated while only about 1% are interred. These changes in preference on the method of sending off the dead have been brought about by the Country's main religion, changes in dwelling environments and changes in technologies. During the high-growth era of the 1970s, cremation became popular outside of metropolitan areas and crematoriums were built in several places as a matter of national requirement.

VIEWS HELD BY JAPANESE ON CORPSES

Generally the elderly Japanese do not perceive the body and soul as a duality, that is flesh and spirit. The corpse is considered a very important part and if funeral rites are not carried out, the deceased's soul will not be mourned. It is very important that the corpse is attended to and the death is <https://assignbuster.com/the-rite-of-nokan-or-the-encoffinment-religion-essay/>

mourned by as many people as possible. Additionally the corpse must be well taken care of until all rites have been carried out. The body is not just considered a vehicle or an object or a shell for the soul but it is considered an entity with a will, hopes and rights therefore the family has a responsibility to care for them, respect them and accord them a befitting farewell..

CONTINUATION OF LIFE AND DEATH

The Japanese considered death a passageway leading to the continuation of death and life.

The Japanese held contradicting ideas concerning the dead. Even though they wish for and hope that the dead resurrect, they live in fear of the spirit and the possible return of the dead founded on the Shintoist principle of impurity, as explained earlier on in the funeral rites. They believe impurity is transmissible and transferrable and that, a house that experienced a death and even those involved in handling the corpse are also impure. Therefore Japanese funerals have a combination of rites to reaffirming death, protect the dead, and prevent bad luck and curses and prevent the dead from resurrecting. Some practices invoke the spirit of the dead from having a feeling of longing; which include Ichizen-meshi a single bowl of rice given to the dead and Matsugo-no-mizu which is water given to the dead at the time of death. There are other contrasting customs like the Sakasa-buton or upside-down futon, whereby the dead persons blanket is placed facing upside-down, and the Sakasa-byobu or upside-down folding of the dead one's screen, where a folding screen is placed upside-down on top of the

head of the deceased's bed, and Sakasa-mizu or upside-down water, where the water for cleaning the corpse is prepared by adding hot water into cold water rather than pouring cold water into hot water as normal. All this is done with the primary aim of separating the scary situation of death from people's day to day lives and also to prevent pulling others in to death.

Other customs were also used traditionally to make it impossible for the departed soul to remain in this life or to make an attempt to return to this life. They included making burial gowns without closed stitches or backstitches , and the practice of turning the coffin three times when taking it out of the house which was done in order to confuse the deceased preventing them from ever coming back home. Similarly the deceased's bowl of rice is shattered, and the deceased exits the house through an exit that is not the front door. Throwing of salt is also another practice aimed to remove the uncleanness and impurity brought about by the death. Up to now, there is the Kichu custom a 49-day mourning and grieving period, during which the family does not attend any festivities. During this period, since the family was made unclean by the death it is shunned and avoided. There is also Mochu which is a one-year period. A time when the family mourns the death of their member and remembers the departed.

Conclusion

In conclusion we have discussed in this assignment how traditional Japanese viewed death their traditions and their myths concerning death and all the elaborate preparations they carried out when sending off their dead

relatives. Why and how all the rites were practiced. How the deceased's family had a responsibility to give the dead a befitting burial and respect
<https://assignbuster.com/the-rite-of-nokan-or-the-encoffinment-religion-essay/>

them because it was assumed that the dead retained their individuality as they had it before their deaths. The idea and belief that death is a station led to a continuation and made it possible for communication between the old and the dead.