

Ritual observation essays examples

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



Islam death and burial rituals

Death is usually a painful yet an inevitable experience. In Islam, death is not only considered a rite of passage but also a determining moment of where the soul of the deceased will go. Death rituals are a common observance, which are aimed at ensuring that the deceased has a good send off and allow the family members and friends to mourn their deceased. Burial of the dead in Islam is done within the day of death except in other avoidable circumstances. I had the opportunity to attend a burial ritual for a male Muslim and observed how the ritual was conducted.

Some of the sacred objects of the ritual that I observed was the grave, which was dug, deep straight and curved at one end, believed to facing maker. The curved end is where the head will be placed. There were also some white cotton clothes in two pieces that were used to cover the body. There was some water, detergent and perfume which were used to wash the body at least three times. There was also the Quran, which was used to guide the mourners to recite some specific prayers. The imam, who was dressed in his ceremonial clothes, was also available to lead the mourners through the rituals. There was a mixture of both genders even though the women were not allowed to follow the procession to the gravesite.

Immediately after death, people stream in at the home of the deceased or some worship place where they comfort the deceased relatives. Wailing is not allowed and so people only talked in small voices. The first procedure was to wash the body where only male mourners were allowed around it, since he was not married. I also realized that those who washed the body were his close relatives and had knowledge of the procedures. Since I was

not among the close relatives allowed close to the body, I was not able to observe exactly what happened but on inquiry, was told that the body was washed three times with detergent and the last wash with perfume.

After the body was washed, it was shrouded in three white cotton clothing, which was perfumed. This is according to the teachings of Prophet Mohammed who recommended at least three white, simple yet modest sheets to be wrapped around the body. After the body has been wrapped, Salaat-ul Janaazah is performed which is a Muslim prayer for the dead. This considered an important procedure, failure to which it will bring a curse of sin to the community. The imam led the mourners through the prayer outside the mosque, performing takbir. The takbir was performed six times with those behind the imam forming three rows. While performing the first takbir, all mourners lifted their hands but it was not compulsory for them to do that with the subsequent takbirs. After narrating each takbir, they placed their hands on the chest as a way of honour.

Specific prayers follow the takbir for the relatives of the dead as well as salaam. The prayers usually include asking for forgiveness on behalf of the dead to invoke Allah's mercies. After all the prayers have been made, the body is carried to the grave site with the procession being composed of only males according to Islamic teachings. There is no casket and so it is buried only in the sheets that have been used to wrap it. In the grave, the body was laid perpendicular on the right side and the head facing Mecca. There was also three palm-sized soils that were put aside by the gravediggers. One was placed beneath the chin, the other under the shoulder and the other under the head. The next of kin usually do the placement of the soil and in this

case, the brother of the departed soul did it.

After the body was lowered, the next procedure was to put soil on the body and bury it. Those who were present took the soil in their hands and threw it in the grave three times reciting a verse in the Quran. The verse signified that they were created from sand and so should return to it. More prayers are usually made over the body in the grave asking Allah for their forgiveness as well as reminding them of their faith. After the grave has been fully covered, it is stumped and patted to shape. This is done under the supervision of elderly men at the grave site. After all has been done, there is the last collective prayer that is made for the dead and the relatives. A grave landmark is not always allowed in the Muslim religion but if it must be put, it should not be above thirty centimetres above the ground. Flowers were also scattered around the grave with rose waters as a form of paying last respect.

After burial, there is a mourning period of about three days where friends visit the deceased family. During such visit, they are supposed to avoid decorative clothing and jewellery. Widows are usually separated from any male and prohibited from remarrying up to a period of not less than four months. This is usually to check and insure that she was not pregnant at the burial of his husband. Even though loud wailing is not allowed in Islam, grieving is allowed. Family members are not prohibited from publicly expressing their sorrow at the death of their beloved as long as it is done in a dignified manner in a manner that will not undermine Islam faith.

Funeral rituals among Muslims differ from one region to the other and depending on how the person faced their death. However, Islamic laws give

appropriate directions that need to be followed depending on whom they are in Islam and how they died. For instance, there are different rituals for those who are martyred, those who died far from their country and have to be buried by non-Muslims. In all cases, prayer remains to be an important ingredient, which is aimed at cleansing the community from any curse. There is also need to pray for the relatives of the deceased for giving them the strength they need to overcome the grief. The deceased is also prayed for to invoke mercies for his or her sins. Cremation and burying the dead in caskets is prohibited in Islam. The people conducting the burial ceremony are supposed to be in their ceremonial clothes of worship. Visiting of the graves is also a common practice after burial. The visit is done for the purpose of remembering the dead and reflecting on the life and the legacy of the dead.