Approaches to Mortality in Islam

L3 TALKING TO THE DEAD

GARY R. BUNT

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Every soul will taste death.
Then to Us will you be returned.
Qur'an: 29/57



2

Ritual responses

- Need to distinguish between 'natural death' and other forms of death
- Suicide > sin
- Martyrdom – different ritual responses (dependent on context)

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Islamic responses

- Death: comes to all (and is articulated as such in the Qur'an)
- Appropriate treatment of the dead is required (dependent on circumstances)
- Follow appropriate ritual and cultural responses (as indicated in Islamic sources)

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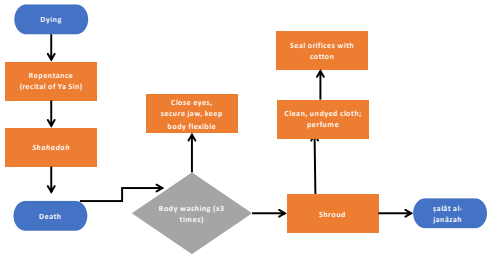
Process

- The dying should repent
- Last words should be the shahadah
- Body is washed (by family) in preparation for burial

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NORMAL PROCESS

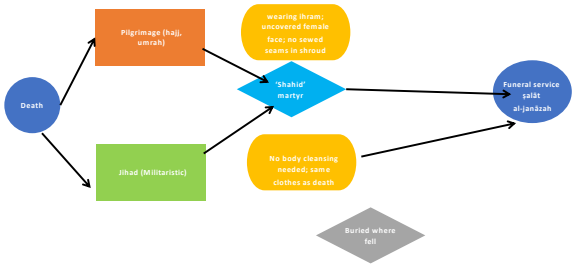
MORTALITY IN ISLAM



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MORTALITY IN ISLAM

RITUAL EXCEPTIONS



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ṣalāt al-janāzah

- One man to say funeral prayer (standing by head of man, body of woman)
- Body oriented towards Mecca
- Feet foremost, on right side
- Body placed without coffin 6ft under, in niche or trench, which is sealed by bricks (earth slightly raised)
- Cheek bared, placed on stone
- Simple headstone

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ṣalāt al-janāzah

- Allahu akbar (God is great) x4 times
- Test of faith in front of the angels Munkar and Nakir (the denied and denier) – answering their questions. – mourners address the deceased with advice.

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Practice from Sources

- Nothing specific in the Qur'an regarding funerals
- Practice of Muhammad and his followers is important precedent
- *Ya Sin* recited prior to death (s.36)

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Hadith

- *Al-Tirmidhi narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "When the deceased – or one of you – is buried, there come to him two black and blue angels, one of whom is called al-Munkar and the other al-Nakeer. They say: 'What did you say about this man?' and he says what he used to say: 'He is the slave of Allah and His Messenger. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.' They say: 'We knew that you would say that.' Then his grave is made spacious for him, seventy cubits by seventy, and it is illuminated for him. Then it is said to him: 'Sleep,' and he says: 'May I go back to my family and tell them?' They say: 'Sleep like the bridegroom who will be woken by none but the dearest of his family to him,' until Allah raises him from that resting-place of his."*
- *But if he is a hypocrite he says: 'I heard the people saying something so I said something like what they said. I do not know.' They say: 'We knew that you would say that.' Then it is said to the earth: 'Squeeze him.' So it squeezes him until his ribs interlock, and he will continue to be tormented therein until Allah raises him from that resting-place of his."*

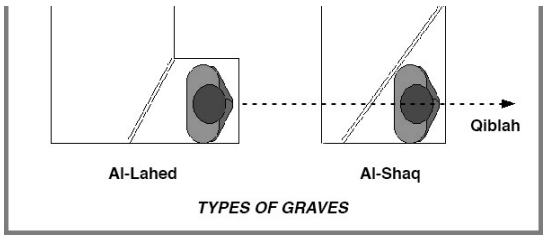
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Opinion about Surah Ya Sin being recited (Sheikh Assim Al Hakeem)

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Types of graves

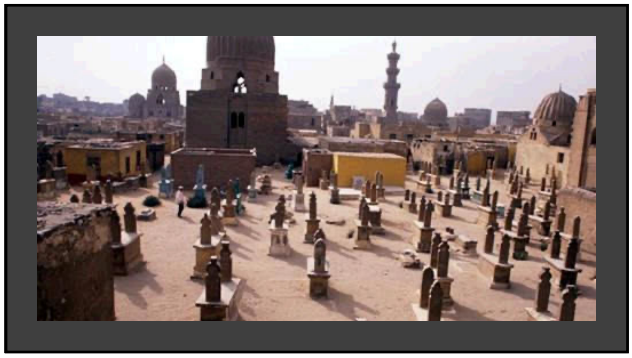


Source: marahaba.qa

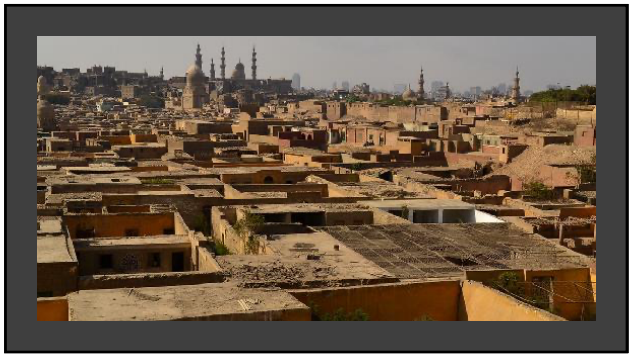
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Understanding Islamic Funeral Rituals



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Channel 4, Muslims in UK struggling to carry out burials within 24 hours

Video

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The Coronavirus P

UK cemetery adopts new way of burying Muslims amid rising coronavirus deaths

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ARAB NEWS

SAUDI ARABIA MIDDLE EAST WORLD BUSINESS SPORT LIFESTYLE

LONDON: A Muslim burial ground in Greater London has adopted an unprecedented method of burying the deceased that is compliant with Islamic law to cope with the growing number of people dying from COVID-19.

The method, which involves burying up to 10 people in individual chambers within one plot after a single funeral prayer is performed for all of them, is being used by Eternal Gardens, which is located in Chislehurst, a district in southeast London.

The second of such "saff" burials took place on Saturday. Saff means row in Arabic, and the name reflects the method of laying the deceased to rest in rows within a plot.

Asif Hassanali, development manager for Eternal Gardens, said his team usually buries a maximum of 10 people per week at the grounds under normal circumstances.

But due to the increase in people dying from COVID-19, his team has buried 30 people this week, including the eight who were laid to rest in the saff burial on Saturday.

"Under normal circumstances, we bury an average of eight people per week. Three weeks ago that figure had doubled, and the following week it trebled. Last week we buried 54 people, and 90 percent of them were coronavirus victims," Hassanali told Arab News.

"Obviously we aren't used to dealing with this sort of volume of burials, and we understood that this would be a problem. I approached my directors and highlighted the need to come up with a plan for our cemetery that will enable us to cope with the

Source: Arab News, April 2020

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ARAB NEWS

SAUDI ARABIA MIDDLE EAST WORLD BUSINESS SPORT LIFESTYLE

Hassanali says Eternal Gardens decided to adopt the saff burial method after consulting local Muslim scholars on the best way to deal with the spike in demand for burials that meant families would have to wait for over a week to see their loved ones buried.

Muslims bury their dead as soon as possible, and the deceased is washed and shrouded in cloth according to Islamic guidelines.

A funeral prayer is then performed, and the person is laid to rest in a grave on their right side facing Makkah. The grave should be perpendicular to the holy city.

Hassanali said although there was enough space at Eternal Gardens to bury the rising number of Muslim coronavirus victims in the area, the challenge he faced was the time it took to dig an individual grave with the machinery that the burial ground has.

"It can take up to an hour to dig each grave, and with the equipment we have available, we're only able to do six individual burials per day, even though we have extra staff available," he added.

"We came up with the idea of the saff burials after we met with local Muslim scholars whom we asked for advice on our options and how we could cope with the increased demand. They approved of the idea of opening 10 individual graves together in a plot that's 10 meters long, 2 meters wide and around 1.5 meters deep," he said.

"We use boards to make individual chambers within this space. The scholars said we have to have a row of soil in between each

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Shi'ism: Ritual (Iraq):

NPR, Shiite Burial Ritual Services in High Demand, 24 April 2006

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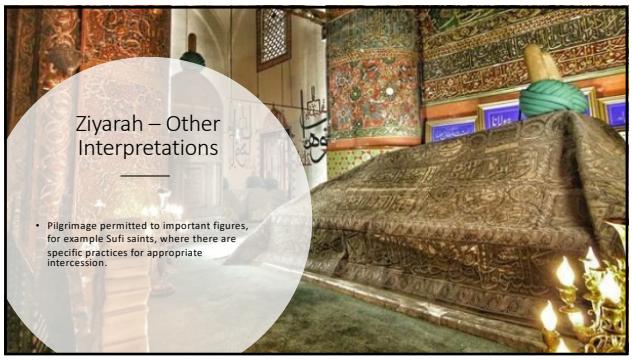
Tomb Visits

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Ziyara

- Different interpretations as to whether this is acceptable
- Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1328) prohibits the practice (as it might turn a grave into a sanctuary)
- This applies even to the Prophet Muhammad's grave (and others of his family) according to some interpretations.

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Ziyarah – Other Interpretations

- Pilgrimage permitted to important figures, for example Sufi saints, where there are specific practices for appropriate intercession.

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Qadiri Sufi Order

The **Qadiri Sufi Order** is another prominent example of an order presenting its activities online: this is part of a variety of networks and movements based on the principles established by the twelfth century scholar Abdul Qader Jeelani (1077–1166), which have spread worldwide.

The Qadari Order has posted a range of multimedia materials online. In terms of spirituality and religious experience, the dhikr ritual invocation of the names of Allah, Qur'an verses and other recitations has a performance element.

Also see Qadiriyya Dhikr:

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Member of Baye Fall Sufi order from the Qadiriyya Sufi School, Senegal.

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A Sudanese Sufi mystic attends a weekly Sufi religious ceremony at the tomb of Sheikh Hamed al-Nil, a 19th-century

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A Sudanese Sufi mystic dances during a weekly Sufi religious ceremony at the tomb of Sheikh Hamed al-Nil, a 19th-century Sufi leader of the Qadiri Sufi Order

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Tidjaniya Sufi Order

The Tidjaniya Sufi Order has a strong presence in west and northern Africa, and is linked to diaspora communities and networks through online materials: one example is Tidjaniya Way, which highlights the life of the order's founder, Sidī 'Aḥmad al-Tijani (1737–1815) though a biography accompanied by an audio reading (Ahmad Tijani, 2012).

In terms of an understanding of the order's sacred spaces, an album depicts shrines in Senegal through video, photos and plans of religious sites. These include film of group dhikr (hadra) invocations in a shrine in the zaouiya (school) of Sidi Abdel Moutalib Tidjani Dakar, Senegal (Tidjaniya.com).

Ahmed Tidjani,
http://www.tidjaniya.com/en/ahmed-tijani.php



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https://youtu.be/KsceB5zAaBQ

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In India, the Shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia (d. 1325) has a web resource giving historical background, practical visitor information, and biographical data about this particular saint

(Shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia).

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Religious meetings and rituals are recorded and posted online from many shines: activities at Data Ganj Bakhsh shrine (honoring 'Ali Hujwiri, d. 1077) in Lahore, Pakistan, have been recorded and posted on YouTube by the Faizaneraza Network, which has a multimedia website, online TV channel, and presence on Facebook and other social media.

Bombers have in the past targeted this shrine, and after a 2010 terrorist attack, clips were also featured online. (Faizaneraza Network)

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Another prominent Sufi site is the mausoleum of Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi (d. 1273) in Konya, Turkey, has been turned into a museum: the virtual tours available online often reflect the touristic potential of the space, including ritual performances by the Whirling Dervishes as part of a sound and light show.

(Kale Pazarlama)

Whirling Dervishes of Damascus

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Treasury of Death Anniversaries - Makhzan-I a'ras (by Muhammd Najib Qadiri)

- Wedding of a holy person to God
- Often on death anniversary
- Travel to tomb > circumambulation + prayer
- Specific ritual and saying
- Scattering of roses
- Recitation from Qur'an specific number of times

- [RENARD, 62]

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Ziyara – Shi'ism

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Karbala, the site of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussain ibn Ali's martyrdom in 680 C.E. and one of the most important religious sites for Shi'a Muslims, has been rendered in 3-D.

Battle of Karbala 3D.

Battle of Karbala.

Karbala Google Earth.

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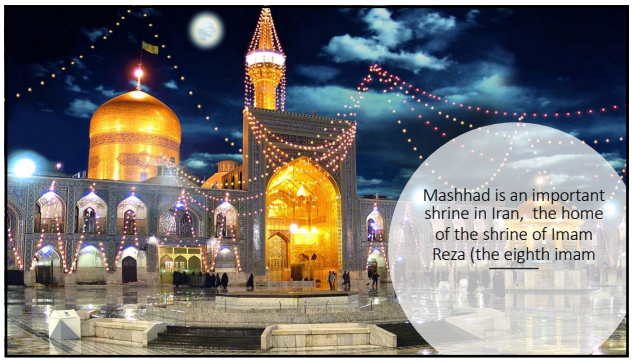


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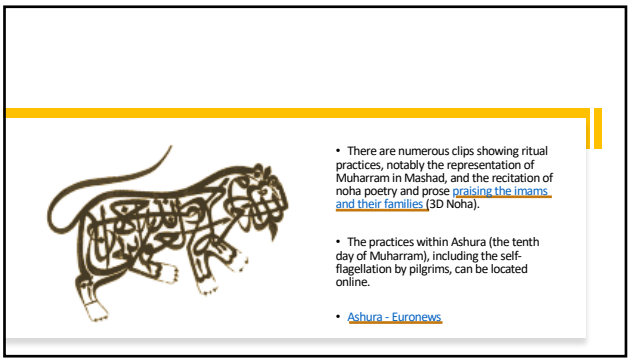


- Individual clips filmed by pilgrims can be found alongside more professionally produced movies, as part of propagation efforts relating to visiting shrines.
- These in themselves can be informative and illustrate others undertaking religious experiences: an example of this can be found in film of the Shrine of Syeda Masooma in Qum, a site for ziyarat (shine or tomb visitation) in Iran; this long clip shows pilgrims in prayer, film of the shrine and mosque, and is accompanied by an audio recording of the musibat (lament) of Fatima (Prophet Muhammad's daughter)
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ba4KvmGqU_

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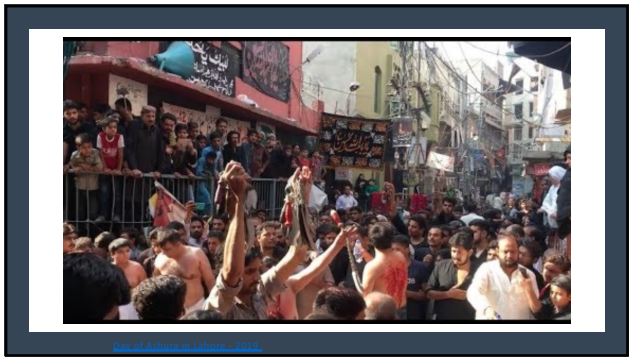
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Taziyah Passion Play

- Many videos showing the Ta'ziyeh passion plays - ritualistic performances depicting the martyrdom of Imam Hussain - can be viewed

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