

SOME FUNERAL RITUAL TRADITIONS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE SOUTHERN REGIONS OF KARAKALPAKSTAN)

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Abstract: This article discusses the funeral ceremony related to human death. It also explains some specific terms and expressions used in funeral rituals. In addition, the information on this topic is presented based on historical works and field ethnographic notes.

Keywords: Types of death, "eternal sleep," bedsheets, izar, reed, khimar, khirfa, funeral, "bone handlers," "weeping," "double grave," "sadr"

Rezyume: Maqolada inson o'limi bilan bo'g'liq dafn marosimi haqida aytib o'tilgan. Dafn marosimidagi ayrim termin va atamalar ham yoritib berilgan. Shuningdek mavzuga doir ma'lumotlar tarixiy asarlar va dala etnografik yozuvlari asosida ko'rsatilib o'tilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: O'lim turlari, "uyg'onmas uyqu", choyshab, izar, qamis, himor, xirfa, janoza, "suyakchilar", "yirtish", "qo'shqabr", "sadr"

Аннотация: В статье упоминается похоронный обряд, связанный со смертью человека. Также объясняются некоторые термины и условия похорон. Также информация по теме представлена на основе исторических трудов и полевых этнографических материалов.

Ключевые слова: виды смерти, «непробуждённый сон», простыня, izar, тростник, химар, хирфа, похороны, «косторезы», «слеза», «двойная могила», «садр».

As we know, the birth and death of a person are natural aspects of life. Throughout our lives, we witness or directly participate in various rituals and traditions. One of these is the funeral ceremony, which, although it symbolizes a sorrowful event, is a frequently encountered occurrence in everyday life.

By studying these ceremonies from an ethnographic perspective, we can gain deeper insights into our people's ethnic identity, national values, and ideology. When examining traditional mourning rituals, it is appropriate to utilize historical sources, written and material monuments, folklore materials, and archaeological findings. In addition to these, field ethnographic records also hold significant value.

According to the animistic beliefs of the Uzbek people, death is understood as an "unwaking sleep." It should be noted that death is divided into two categories: 1) natural death, 2) unnatural death. Natural death includes aging and illness, while unnatural death is considered premature and can also be divided into two types: accidental death and suicide.

The scientific studies conducted by scholars such as N.P. Lobacheva, G.P. Snesarov, A. Ashirov, D. O'rayeva, and Q. Nasriddinov on funeral rituals in various regions of our country are noteworthy. Mourning includes not only the burial of the deceased but also beliefs related to the afterlife, charity and sacrifices, magical customs, various taboos, lamentation, gravestones, and clothing.

Funeral and mourning practices have existed since ancient times and have been carried out differently depending on time and place. Such rituals have been practiced in our homeland as well and continue to vary across different regions to this day. The procedure for burial is

detailed in the Law No. 276 of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted by the Oliy Majlis on December 27, 2010. [O'RQ 2010:276]

The process of saying goodbye to a terminally ill patient is generally similar: close relatives consider it a duty to be by the patient's side, fulfill their last wishes, and be with them in their final moments. After death, the body is moved to a separate room, the chin is tied up immediately, and if the eyes remain open, they are closed. Attention is also paid to ensuring the fingers and toes are straight. During research, we encountered new aspects of the rituals that were previously unknown, though regional characteristics have been preserved. In Sho'roxon neighborhood of Tortkul district, we observed that the body was placed in the middle of the room where women were mourning. This tradition is now rarely seen in other parts of the country. Women sang different lamentation songs in turns while facing the body. In some regions, a rope is strung across the mourning room, and visitors hang pieces of fabric or clothing on it. This may also reflect ethnic distinctions.

The actual funeral process includes emotional expressions, where mourning songs are sung only during the moment of death with heartfelt lamentations. Performing mourning songs at other times is considered a bad omen.

In most regions of Uzbekistan, the ritual washing of the body is carried out by ghassals, individuals with special knowledge in washing the dead. These ghassals typically form an odd-numbered group of three or five. In the past, they lived separately from the general population and married among themselves. They were recognized by rings worn on their middle fingers [Karmysheva B.Kh. p.144]. For this reason, elder women often consider wearing rings on the middle finger inappropriate. In the regions we studied, the cleansing of the body is carried out by close relatives, usually in groups of five or seven people depending on the size of the deceased's body. The deceased is included in the count, and each person has a specific role. These tasks are typically handled by experienced relatives or in-laws. Field notes showed that daughters-in-law do not participate in washing the body of a deceased mother-in-law due to beliefs about modesty. The washing requires seven or nine pitchers of water. A piece of cloth or cotton is tied to the mouth of the pitcher to prevent splashing. This water is then poured under a tree or in a place where people do not walk, into a small dug hole. Sometimes a stone is placed on the hole or the cotton is burned to prevent repeated deaths.

According to some information, if the deceased was a respected elder, the water used for washing the body would be saved and applied to infants during their early postnatal period.

The shroud (kafan) is the deceased's final garment, typically made of 4 to 5 meters of white fabric divided into several parts:

1. Sheet (Choyshab) – a 40 cm wide piece used to wrap and tie the body from both sides;
2. Izar – a piece covering from the navel to below the knees;
3. Qamis – an ancient untailored shirt reaching the knees, used to cover a male's private parts;
4. Himor – a 1.5-meter long and 60 cm wide cloth to cover the head and hair;
5. Xirfa – cloth used to cover the chest. [Karmysheva B.Kh. p.143]

While loud weeping is not permitted in Islam, since mourning rituals have existed since ancient times, the tradition continues. In Kazakh culture, particular attention is paid to women's weeping during the funeral, and women who weep less are even criticized. The women who weep are called "sadr" participants. In their laments, they use phrases recalling the deceased's good deeds or character in a musical tone. In both Uzbek and Kazakh cultures, men do not cry loudly.



The janaza is the prayer performed before burying any Muslim born alive. It is performed facing the Qibla in rows by the community. This prayer is usually not performed for those who commit suicide. The janaza consists of four parts: sano (praise), salawat (salutation), duo (prayer), and salom (peace). If the janaza is not performed before burial, it should be performed at the graveside before the body cools down. After the prayer, people are asked whether the deceased had any debts. If anyone knows of a debt, they are asked to step forward or speak up, and the deceased's children or relatives take responsibility for repayment. [Field notes]

While removing the body from the house, a sieve or similar container filled with wheat is placed, symbolizing the cleansing of the deceased's sins. At the gravesite, before placing the body into the grave, the imam asks what kind of person the deceased was. According to tradition, if seven people testify that the person was good, they proceed with the burial. Typically, male relatives or sons carry the body to the cemetery at a fast pace, changing carriers every 10 steps. Men encountered along the way may also participate in carrying the body as an act of charity.

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