

The Little Green Book

Volume II Chapter 21

On the Mortuary Ritual

If a part of the body becomes detached, whether after or before death, and one touches such a part when the cleansing of the corpse has not yet been completed, one must undergo a purifying ablution; but this is not necessary if the part of the body involved is boneless.

If one touches a bone or a tooth removed from a corpse, ablution is necessary; but it is not required if the bone or tooth was removed from a live body, unless there is a muscle attached to it.

One must avoid leaving a dying person alone, placing a heavy object on his belly, leaving him in the care of a man who has ejaculated or a woman who is having her period, speaking too much in his presence, weeping, or leaving him in the sole care of women.

Ablution of a dead man by a woman, or vice versa, is forbidden. But the woman may perform this ritual if the man is her husband, and the man in the case of his own wife. However, it is preferable that they do not do it.

It is forbidden to look upon the sexual organs of a dead man or woman. The person performing the ablution ritual commits a cardinal sin if he violates this ban, but the ablution does not thereby lose its validity.

During the ritual, the genitals of the corpse must remain covered, even if only by a piece of wood or a brick.

If a person dies in a well and it is impossible to get the body out, the well must be shut off and become his tomb.

If a child dies within the mother's womb and it is a danger to her life to leave it there, it must be extracted in the easiest way possible; it can, if need be, be cut into pieces; this should be done either by the woman's husband or by a woman of this profession.

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One has no right to exhume the body of a Muslim, not even that of a child or of a madman, unless it has turned to dust.

One may exhume a body if it is done in order to remove a still living child from its mother's womb, or if there is danger that a wild animal may devour it, or that a flood may carry it away, or that it may fall into the hands of the enemy. One may also reopen a sepulcher in order to deposit in it a part of the departed one's body which has been found or recovered after burial.