

UNDERSTANDING ASIAN FUNERAL TRADITIONS

Asian Funeral Traditions

Characteristics of an Asian funeral can be as unique as the life being celebrated. Tradition is important in Asian cultures and our caring experts can help you plan a service that will honor your loved one in the best possible way. Whether the service is traditional or non-traditional, we can show you how to incorporate small or larger details that will honor your heritage.

Characteristics of an Asian funeral

Asian families span a vast geographical, ethnic and religious area, and they may follow Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Muslim, Christian or other religious practices. In general, Asian funerals are known for length, dignity and solemnity. It's common for Asian families to plan a solemn and beautiful event as a display of respect for their loved ones.

Respect for elders. A deep reverence for elders is a cornerstone of Asian culture, and an important part of Asian funerals. Keeping the casket open is considered respectful to the elders and to the person who has passed away. The family plays a key role in organizing the funeral, along with the help of a monk, priest or other clergy member who reflects the family's chosen religious practices.

Dress code and colors. At Chinese funerals, white or yellow mums are appreciated, as white chrysanthemums symbolize lamentation or grief. Traditionally, Asian families wear white at the funeral and opt not to wear any jewelry. Red is considered the color of happiness, so the family does not wear any red clothing or accessories. Western influences have made black attire more acceptable at Chinese funerals, but in some instances, people who wear black will add a white armband to their outfit.

Honor. It's common for Asian families to honor their loved one with three full days of visitation prior to the funeral. During this time, they prefer not to move their loved one. If facilities allow, the family may choose to stay with their loved one throughout the visitation period, even preparing meals on-site.

Use of incense. The grieving family may burn incense or paper money at the gravesite as a symbol of helping their loved one along on their journey to the afterlife.

Varied customs

Cultural funeral traditions may vary depending on where a family is from. For example, Korean funerals vary widely depending on the economic status and religious preferences of the person whose life is being honored. In Japanese funerals, [cremation](#) is generally chosen, and the memorial service follows Buddhist or Shinto customs depending on the family's religious preferences. Filipino funerals have become westernized in many ways, but they are still characterized by a public wake held for three to seven days.

Buddhism is Asia's most widespread religion, and the majority of Buddhists in the United States are Asian Americans. [Buddhist funeral customs](#) vary from country to country, but Buddhists often choose cremation. It's common for Buddhist memorials to include an altar with a portrait of their loved one, where friends and family can bring offerings of candles, incense, flowers and fruit. A Buddhist service may be presided over by a monk, and an image of Buddha could be placed near the altar.

Planning an Asian funeral

If you are seeking to plan a funeral that will honor your family traditions and the wishes of your loved one, Dignity Memorial professionals can help. It's important to choose a funeral home provider that is familiar with Asian funeral traditions and able to assist you in [planning a fitting tribute](#) for your loved one. We specialize in honoring family customs while adding personal details where appropriate. Our funeral homes offer cremation services, and many include a private witness room where the family can gather to pay respects and reflect on the life being honored.

Whether you need help selecting appropriate flowers, setting up an extended visitation or creating a solemn and beautiful event, turn to us for compassionate care. Find a Dignity Memorial location near you to start planning your own unique memorial.