

English Translation:

One of the cultural aspects of Iraqi society is funerals, of course. A funeral is a very sad event, in fact, because a human being is dear in all cases. A funeral is the event that gathers all members of families. It is indeed an occasion to gather all family members in spite of its sorrowful nature. In other words, it stays a very special matter.

The procedures of a funeral: after the burying of the deceased and praying¹ for his soul, after they return from the cemetery, there is what we call three days during which there is a preparation or a *kraya*² as we call it. A men's³ gathering is different, or it is separate from that of women's. Women are usually inside the house, the living room⁴, or something similar. Men are either in a tent...they install a tent. The tent is either outside in the street, in which case the street is blocked, honestly. They install it if there is no space [inside the house perimeter], or they put it in the garden if it is large. Sometimes they install it on the pavement for a brief ceremony. However, the whole ceremony is called *aza*⁵.

The *aza* continues for three days. The *aza* starts at 4:00 PM., for instance. Reading the Qur'an and *Fateha*⁶. This lasts for almost an hour. Then, after sunset, people either pray if there are enough places. People would dine after the *kraya*, after reading the Qur'an, they dine. After that, if there is coffee⁷, or tea, or sweets, according to what available.

After that, they disperse, everyone returns to his home. In most occasions, there are people who would come, if the person is so dear; for instance, if he is a very dear friend, or a dear neighbor, or dear relatives, people would come for three days consecutively. Sometimes, no, there are people who are very busy; in such a case; men come in the third day. Most young men go in the first and third days because the third one is a very special thing honestly, it is the conclusion of the *aza*. That's why people care about day three.

If a person is so busy, he tries hard to go on the third day. If he does not come, there has to be a very good reason for it. For the people who participate in the matter of *aza*, the women's group is different from that of the men's. But generally everyone takes part in this process. In other words, you see young men cook, clean the house, help women with heavy stuff.

¹ The prayer for the dead has no special time but is done before burial.

² *Kraya*: a religious ceremony done by reading the Holy Quran or prayers or praise for prophet Mohamed.

³ *Zilem*; Iraqi slang term used to indicate men.

⁴ *Salla*: a term used for living room. Sometime the term "hall" is used for the same meaning.

⁵ *Aza*: term used for the three-days of mourning.

⁶ *Fateha*: "The Opening"; the first chapter in the Qur'an

⁷ Dark plain coffee is mainly given in special small cups.

Cooking is normally done by women or a cook, depending on the financial capability. However, generally everyone cooperates; I mean for example, if a father, God forbid, passes away, you see his sons, and if he has no sons, you see neighbors and relatives and friends; regarding men, all of them are concerned with the *aza*. You see young men installing the tent, putting chairs, and they take care of everything in fact. And the same goes for women.

A man's *aza* is not different from that of a woman's. I mean there is nothing that degrades a woman just because she is a female as we say. No, both are equal.

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use everyday. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

© 2003-2012 Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and Five Colleges, Incorporated