

Funeral

In the 17th century and earlier, the dead could be buried in many different ways. There was no overriding way or ritual that was performed in connection with death. The variations depended on the conditions provided by the surrounding nature, the season in which the death occurred and also on the traditions of the individual family.

After the body had been wrapped in cloth, animal skins or in birch-bark, it could be placed in a bed or in a hollow tree trunk. The body was then taken to the place where it was to be left. A place was chosen that the deceased knew well, near a village or a migration path where he had often passed. The body was placed in a rock crevice, or on an islet in a lake. Most importantly, the predators could not access it. The reindeer, which had dragged the dead man, was slaughtered and buried as well. Usually the dead were buried one by one, but there are different burial grounds, for example graves in Varangerbotten in Norway where several people lie in the same place. The place where the dead were left was avoided in the future. It did not become holy and the tomb or anything in it was never touched.