



Death, Ritual, and Belief

Douglas J. Davies

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Describing a variety of funeral ritual, from major world religions and from local traditions, this book shows how cultures cope not only with corpses but also create an added value for living through the growth of afterlife beliefs. The key theme of the book is the rhetoric of death -- the way cultures use the most potent weapon of words to bring new power to life. Human identity and its transformation through mortuary rites is explored through the mummies of Chile and Egypt; African sacrificial deaths; Indian cremations; immigrant cemeteries in the USA; ancestor rites in Eastern religions and Mormonism; and the freezing of the dead in cryonics. Research findings are presented on cremation and afterlife beliefs, especially reincarnation, sensing the presence of the dead, and the death of pets in Britain, to show how mortuary rituals are constantly changing in response to death as a major feature of the human environment.

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