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MUSLIM CEMETERY GUIDELINES, REQUIREMENTS AND APPROACH: A CASE STUDY AT KAMPUNG TOKAI, PENDANG, KEDAH

Aizazi Lutfi Ahmad^{1*}, Nur Shazmiera Shamin Sha Bani², Muhamad Azrul Azwan Azman³, Mohd Sabri Mohd Arip⁴, Mohamad Azal Fikry Ali⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Department of Built Environment Studies and Technology, College of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi MARA Perak Branch

Email: aizaz232@uitm.edu.my, 2023969989@uitm.edu.my, azrul114@uitm.edu.my, sabri416@uitm.edu.my, azalfikry@uitm.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

Significant guidelines and considerations for the establishment and maintenance of Islamic cemeteries, particularly with regard to the cultural, religious, and legal facets of Muslim funeral practices. This study presents a comprehensive overview of the requirements and approaches necessary for creating respectful and compliant cemetery spaces. Drawing from religious teachings, legal frameworks, and cultural traditions, the article outlines key principles such as burial orientation, ritual practices, and environmental sustainability. By amalgamating insights from religious scholars, legal experts, and cemetery management professionals, the article offers a valuable resource for administrators, policymakers, and community members involved in the development of Muslim cemeteries. Through a balanced integration of tradition and contemporary considerations, the presented guidelines aim to facilitate the creation of inclusive and harmonious burial grounds that honor Muslim beliefs while adhering to modern practicalities.

Keywords:

Muslim Cemetery, Guidelines, Religious Practices, Cemetery Management

Introduction

The Muslim cemetery is one of the organizations' symbols for the image of the Muslim community. Improper administration of Muslim cemeteries is a serious issue that is frequently brought up (Ahmad et al., 2015). The establishment and maintenance of cemeteries hold a

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significant place in societies around the world, representing the final resting places of loved ones and serving as spaces of reflection and remembrance. According to Mohamed Afla (2018), for specific religious and cultural communities, these spaces take on even greater significance, as they are intricately woven into the fabric of their beliefs, traditions, and practices. Among such communities, Muslims hold a profound reverence for the proper and respectful burial of their deceased, guided by religious teachings that prescribe specific rituals and orientations.

Due to this, based on PLANMalaysia@Semenanjung (2012), the construction of Muslim cemeteries necessitates a careful and thorough strategy that honours both the spiritual foundation of the traditions and the realities of contemporary cemetery maintenance. This article delves into the critical subject of "Muslim Cemetery Guidelines: Requirements and Approach," aiming to bridge the gap between age-old religious practices and contemporary considerations in cemetery management. With an awareness of the cultural, religious, and legal dimensions entwined with Muslim burial practices, this study presents a holistic overview of the necessary guidelines and approaches for establishing and maintaining cemeteries that meet both religious requirements and practical needs.

Literature Review

Muslim Cemetery Guidelines

The Principles of Cemetery Land

There are six main principles for creating Islamic cemeteries that are based on PLANMalaysia@Semenanjung (2012). These guidelines must be followed in order for the cemetery planning to be done properly and successfully for community use, with a focus on sustainability. In order to avoid challenges and problems with land limitation and inadequate facilities and amenities, land cemeteries must be maintained because the number of deaths is recognised to be increasing daily (refer Figure 1).

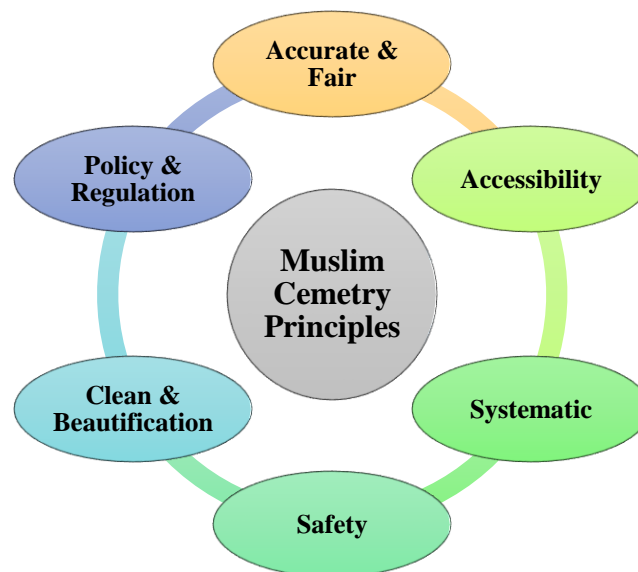


Figure 1. Muslim Cemetery Principles

Source:PLANMalaysia@Semenanjung (2012)

Accurate and Fair

As a result of this principle, every necessity of each race or ethnicity's religious, cultural, and philosophical views shall be taken into account. In addition, it is crucial to offer facilities that meet the requirements and demands of the communities in a way that is complementary to the goal of providing community facilities.

Accessibility

The planning should be completed with an easily accessible road network. To guarantee that the development is accessible, it is crucial to make this provision. The aspect of accessibility must be explicitly supplied when it comes to cemetery, crematorium, and columbarium provision in order to guarantee that the place can be reached and accessed within the framework of burial events, visits, and management.

Systematic

The systematic principle can be seen as the requirement for systematic element adaptation on issues pertaining to layout creation and management systems. In order to ensure its sustainability for both present and future use, PLANMalaysia @Semenanjung has determined that the performed matters must satisfy the need within a short-term to long-term period.

Safety

Choosing the best location for the burial site will create safety. The safety thought implies a safety concern for the area around the cemetery, crematorium, and columbarium, which must not be contaminated. On the other hand, the existence of facilities must be protected from harmful rituals that encourage bad behaviour and opposing religious ideas.

Clean and Beautification

Ensuring that the cemetery is constantly clean, attractive, well-kept, and equipped with all necessary amenities, such as parking, resting places, and waiting areas.

Policy and Regulation

The provision of these facilities shall be in accordance with the relevant policies, rules, and laws that have been stated and which satisfy the requirements and provisional principles.

Land Requirement in Cemetery Land Guidelines

In order to ensure that the cemetery area is built systematically, the General Rules of Cemetery Land recognize the general rules for cemetery land that consist of all cemetery kinds. The land requirement that been realigned to cemetery area are based on the community composition and the races involved (PLANMalaysia@Semenanjung, 2012). According to the 2012 Cemetery Land and Crematorium Guidelines, the estimated area for cemetery land allocation is based on the local population. It is claimed that 8,000 people can be accommodated on one (1) hectare of cemetery property. This estimation uses the formula and calculations from the guideline and is based on the assumption that 5 out of 1000 people die each year. On the other hand, each state authority can decide the ratio of cemetery land based on the state's existing needs (see Figure 2).

$$C_t = P_t \times Mr \times Sz \times Rg$$

C_t = Cemetery land on Year t
P_t = The Total of Population
Mr = Death Rate
Sz = Average of Cemetery Lot Size
Rg = Distance Between Reuse Cemeteries

Figure 2. The Formula of Cemetery Land Requirement

Source:PLANMalaysia@Semenanjung (2012)

Muslim Cemetery Site Planning

The principles of Islamic cemeteries are intertwined with fundamental Islamic ideas like respect for life and death, devotion to the Qibla, and accountability as the caliph on earth (PLANMalaysia@Semenanjung, 2012).

Funeral Orientation

The way the body is positioned in the grave and the direction it faces are referred to as the burial orientation. There are various basic principles of Islam that relate to funeral etiquette:

- **Qibla Direction:** When burying a body, it is recommended to face the grave in the general direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, also referred to as the Qibla. Islam gives this advice to demonstrate a sense of harmony in devotion.
- **Orienting The Body:** The deceased should be buried with their face towards the qibla. The corpse's face is directed towards the qibla while its head and feet are in the north and south, accordingly.

Ritual Practice

Ritual practices have to do the way rituals and prayers are carried out during a funeral. In Islam, there are a number of procedures that must be followed while burying a body:

- **Prayer and Recollection:** It is advised to repeat particular prayers, such as takbir prayers, requests for forgiveness, and some zikrs, before burying the body. This is a way to honour the relics.
- **Recitation of Surah Al-Fatihah:** It is also common practice to read Surah Al-Fatihah or other Quranic verses at funerals. This is an attempt to beg God's pardon and pity for the deceased.

Environmental Sustainability

The responsibility to protect and maintain nature while burying someone is known as environmental sustainability. In the context of the environment and sustainability on a global scale, the following principles are being emphasized:

- **Selecting a Fertility Material:** To ensure that the materials used in the burial process, such as grave wood or kapan cloth, come from sustainable sources and do not have a harmful influence on the environment, they should be carefully chosen.
- **Utilization of Dangerous Chemicals and Materials:** The use of hazardous chemicals should be avoided during the burial process as they can contaminate the surrounding soil and water.

- **Waste Management:** After the burial process, it is important to make sure the cemetery area is kept in good condition. Maintaining cleanliness, refraining from leaving trash in cemeteries, and making sure that food scraps and other waste are disposed of appropriately.

Methodology

The research methodology uses secondary data as a means for analysing factors connected to the capacity and accessibility of land. The necessary information relates to the death rate, the present population in the study region, and households in Pendang District. In conclusion, this approach is appropriate and accurate for use in the study to determine future estimates of the number of residents dying in the study region as well as to analyse the demands and needs for the usage of cemeteries. The information was also gathered via a site survey in the project area to evaluate it in the context of the fundamental planning guidelines for Muslim cemeteries.

Analysis and Findings

Mortality, Population, Cemetery Land Projections and Requirements

Multiple restrictions on the data of the existing population in the qariah covered by the study region have been deduced by the data collection procedure. The current population has been calculated using the formula of 1,058 houses multiplied by the household size of Pendang District, which is 4.2. Therefore, 4,444 individuals are considered to be the entire estimated population for qariah Pekan Tokai. Figure 3 displays the coverage of qariah Pekan Tokai. The population and mortality rates of qariah Pekan Tokai have been inferred from the projection analysis.

Projection of Mortality

The Masjid As-Syakirin Committee provided data on the study area's mortality rate, which was three (3) fatalities per month, which was acknowledged as a low death rate consistent with population estimates. To calculate the mortality rate for one year, multiply the monthly mortality rate by twelve (12) months for simplification. In line with the population estimate, which is based on 2020 statistics, the starting-year projection uses the same year. In order to strengthen it, the cemetery land was filled to the second layer in 2010. Study on its needs to find alternatives to the land limitation after ten (10) years, when the cemetery land has nearly been used to its maximum percentage of 75.9 percent. However, according to the guidelines, recycling the cemetery takes 30 years. The projection, however, will begin in the year 2020 and continue for an additional ten (10) years, examining the present land availability from 2020 to 2030 and studying the solutions to solve the land limitation needs (refer Table 1). According to Table 1, the expected number of deaths within fifty (50) years, beginning in the year 2020, is 1,800, with a mortality rate of 36 per year. The estimated population and this mortality pattern are congruent. As a result, the overall death toll illustrates the need for and capability of cemetery land provision in the year 2060.

Table 1. The Projection of Mortality Within Fifty (50) Years

Projection of Mortality Within Fifty (50) Years				
2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
36	720	1,080	1,440	1,800

Source: Masjid Kampung Tokai Committee, 2022

Note:

- i. Average of Mortality per Year: 3 mortality/month x 12 months = 36 mortality/year
- ii. Cellar of Year: 10 years



Figure 3. The Coverage on Pekan Tokai Qariah in Nine (9) Settlements

Source: Google Maps

The Current Land Availability

The study area covers 0.54 hectares of land. The old Masjid Pekan Tokai, which is still operational and undergoing structural renovation, is included in this area. In 2010, it was discovered that the area had virtually reached its maximum usage for the second level of the land-fill framework. The cemetery layout is defined in squatter form without any boundary or partition to distinguish between the oldest, gender, or cemetery category. In addition, as shown in Figure 4, the cemetery land in the study area is dispersed without an appropriate division for each category of corpses in the context of systematic cemetery management. The cemetery land coverage in nine (9) communities, which include villages and residential areas, is depicted in Figure 3.



Figure 4. The Kampung Tokai Muslim Cemetery's Qariah Coverage

Source:Google Maps

Influence of Culture and Religion for Muslim Funeral in Kampung Tokai Qariah

Both culture and religion have an impact on Muslim funeral customs. These customs combine Islamic principles with regional norms. According to the conducted interview, the Masjid As-Syakirin committee has acknowledged that the cemetery burial arrangements were made by randomly based on the present situation's layout. The summary of how Islam and culture influence Muslim funeral customs is listed in Table 2.

Table 2. The Influence of Culture and Religion for Muslim Funeral in Kampung Tokai

No.	Item	Description
1	Use of Shrouds (Kain Kafan)	Shrouds are used to cover Muslim bodies in the parish before burial. By wrapping the corpse in a white shroud, a prayer is offered to Allah SWT, asking that the god purge the body of sins and mistakes, just as white fabric is purified of filth and stains.
2	Facing the Kaaba (Qibla)	During the burial process, the deceased is typically oriented towards the Kaaba in Mecca, which is the qibla (the direction Muslims face during prayer). This is a universal Islamic practice.
3	Janazah Prayer	The Muslim community prays the janazah (funeral prayer) before the burial. This prayer, which normally takes place at a mosque or the place of burial, includes a plea and requests forgiveness for the deceased.
4	Prompt Burial	The Islamic tradition encourages immediate burial after death. In this Qariah, as in other Muslim-majority countries, efforts are made to conduct burials as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours of death, if feasible.
5	Purification Ritual	The deceased's body is often cleaned and purified before burial. According to Islamic traditions, this practise denotes cleanliness and purity.
6	Burial Rituals	Following the burial, family and community members may hold post-funeral gatherings where they may recite Quranic verses or

		engage in remembrance of the deceased. These rituals are a way to honor and remember the deceased.
7	Cultural Mourning	The way people grieve and express their condolences can vary across cultures within Malaysia. Family and friends often come together to provide moral support to the grieving family.
8	Cemetery Design	Muslim cemeteries in Malaysia are typically designed in accordance with Islamic principles. They feature rows of graves facing the qibla, and graves are usually marked with simple headstones or markers.

Source: Masjid Kampung Tokai Committee, 2022

The similarities between Islamic teachings and local culture are frequently reflected in Muslim funeral rituals. The usage of the kain kafan, facing the Kaaba, and the janazah prayer are among the fundamental aspects of Islamic burial that have not changed despite cultural influences on Muslim burial customs. These practices are in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Integrated Muslim Cemeteries, A Concept Based on Legal, Cultural and Religious Considerations

The Cemetery Land Capacity and Requirement at Tokai Muslim Cemetery's Qariah

According to the implemented analysis, the study area's current cemetery land is now 75.9% fully utilised for cemetery uses. In contrast to the projection method, which was anticipated to last for fifty (50) years, the existing land availability can support cemetery purposes for 0.04 hectares for five (5) years. Based on the circumstances, it is proved that the study area is need the most effective alternative on solving the issue of land limitation. Yet, the study area's land capacity and requirement provision must be controlled with a systematic way (see Table 3).

Table 3. Estimation on Land Availability Usage for Land Capacity and Requirements

No.	Item	Calculation
1	Allocation on Cemetery Lot	= 0.04 Hectares (400 m ²) = (400 / 2.16) m ² = <u>185 Cemetery Lots.</u>
2	Land Maximum Usage	= 185 lots/ 36 mortalities per year = <u>5 Years.</u>

Recommendation for Environmental Sustainability

Multilevel Muslim Cemetery

According to the results, a number of recommendations should be carried out to improve the study area's condition in accordance with needs and requirements. The most practical solution that can be implemented in the study area, in terms of land capacity and needs, persists as the Muslim multilevel cemetery, given the current land availability. By the year 2035, a new Muslim cemetery design will be used in the study area. A multilevel cemetery has been built deeper into the ground horizontally. The cemetery's organisation and lot size are multiples of

the former Muslim cemetery. On the existing available area, a multilevel cemetery might be built to accommodate more mortalities for burial (refer Figure 5).

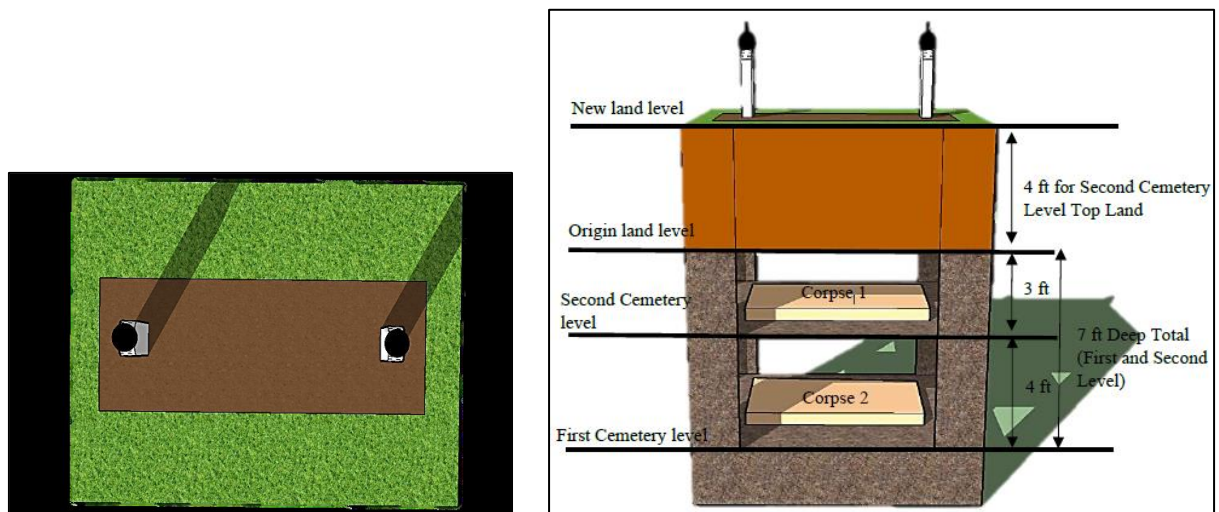


Figure 5. Top View of Multilevel Muslim Cemetery (Left) and Cross-Section of Two (2) Level Muslim Cemetery (Right)

Source:PLANMalaysia@Semenanjung (2012)

Concept of an Integrated Muslim Cemetery

The concept of an integrated cemetery can be understood as the grouping and integration of all cemetery types to enable the orderly placement of the cemetery. When this idea is put into practice, it makes it easier and more systematic to build a cemetery. It is crucial to modify this concept since Muslim cemeteries are becoming less common today, making it important to make the most of the available space. The cemetery land must have space or a setback between each cemetery lot for a pedestrian, landscape, or green buffer zone, following the guidelines (see Figures 6 and 7).



Figure 6. Example of Green Buffer Zone Between Cemetery Lot



Figure 7. Illustration of Integrated Cemetery Land Concept

Source:PLANMalaysia@Semenanjung (2012)

Burial Orientation and Ritual Practice

In Islam, burial orientation and ritual practice are very significant and should be carried out with respect and in accordance with religious teachings. Here are some different practices for burial orientation and the integration of Muslim ritual practices (refer Table 4 and 5):

Table 4. The Burial Orientation

No.	Item	Burial Orientation
1	Qiblah	The qibla, also known as Mecca's Kaaba, should be the direction in which the body is pointed. When praying and burying the body, make sure that everyone is facing the qibla and that the body is in the right place.
2	Funeral Arrangements	Following death, the body must be buried right away. Be gentle and considerate when handling funerals. Ahead of the qibla, make sure the body is buried with its head facing the direction of prayer. When burying the burial, don't trample or throw soil around aggressively.
3	Grave Care	After the funeral, the grave should be well cared for. This includes cleaning the graves, planting greenery, and keeping the graves tidy.

Table 5. The Ritual Practice

No.	Item	Ritual Practice
1	Death Casting	Families typically notify friends and family of a death through phone, text message, or social media.
2	Shroud (Kafan)	A plain, unadorned shroud without any images or embellishments should be used to envelop the body. Environmentally friendly materials ought to be used to make outfits.

3	Doa	Read Surah Al-Fatiha and Surah Yasin and offer prayers for the deceased before the funeral. Then, offer a prayer for the deceased's pardon and serenity.
4	Drooling and Crying	When attending a funeral, refrain from pouring or crying on the body because it is thought to be an excessive expression of sadness. Islam emphasises patience in accepting one's fate.
5	Memorials and Condolences	Hold a memorial ceremony following the funeral to pay respect and recite a prayer for the deceased. Speaking of the excellent deeds carried out by the departed as well as reciting verses from the Qur'an are examples of this.
6	Installing Cemetery Markers (Tombstones)	As a symbol of burial, monuments or tombstones are placed on graves in some Islamic societies. Depending on local traditions, these can be plain or embellished.
7	Remembrances After Death/ Tahlil	A tahlil ceremony is frequently held following the funeral to offer prayers and pay respect to the deceased. Usually, this includes praying and reading from the Quran together. The people left behind should support one another emotionally and keep praying for the deceased.
8	Grave Pilgrimage	Periodically visiting cemeteries to pray and remember the deceased is common among family and friends. This might be a period of reflection and respect.

It is crucial to keep in mind that Islamic funeral practices vary depending on local culture and tradition. As a result, it's crucial to be aware of and respectful of local customs while still following Islamic law when it comes to funerals.

Conclusion

The concept of an integrated cemetery can be understood as the grouping and integration of all cemetery types to enable the orderly placement of the cemetery in Kampung Tokai. When this idea is put into practice, it makes it easier and more systematic to build a cemetery. It is crucial to modify this concept since Muslim cemeteries are becoming less common today, making it important to make the most of the available space. The cemetery land must have space or a setback between each cemetery lot for a pedestrian, landscape, or green buffer zone, following the guidelines (see Figures 6 and 7).

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