

Tibetan sky burials essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Dance](#)



Gunshots are going off, my men are dying everywhere the chaos does not seem to stop, and suddenly a mortar strikes our bunker. An eerie silence fills the air along with a thick cloud of black smoke.

Ok, now that I've got your attention I would like to explain a bit about Tibetan Sky Burials. There are many burial ceremonies around the world but, the Tibetan Sky Burial in particular, proves to be the most interesting and ultimately the most gruesome of all. The origin of this fascinating burial remains vastly hidden in Tibetan mystery. Since the introduction of Buddhism to the region in the 800s, sky burials have become the most common way to dispose of the dead. They're also among the most captivating social practices to appear from a culture that still remains full of mystery to most outsiders. Normally, Sky Burials were only reserved to people of great significance and importance.

For example, the Dalai Lama and modern-day Buddhas would have been treated with this obscure burial. As time progressed these burials became open to the citizens of Tibet, still following the order of hierarchy the most important citizens would have priority. High priests and monks would be treated to this once in a lifetime event, funny thing is that's the last event they will ever be apart of in their lifetime, hence once in a lifetime. While most of the worldwide burials are open to the public and media, the Tibetan Sky Burial has strict rules that make it hard for foreigners to visit and witness this burial. The rules aim to establish order in the ranks of Tibetan sky burial masters, or priests. The rules were part of a wide-range drive to enforce regulations, and govern participation and hygiene at sky burial grounds in the area surrounding the particular regional capital.

<https://assignbuster.com/tibetan-sky-burials-essay/>

The regulations would “ raise the skills and morals of sky burial masters. ” Priests who conduct sky burials must be officially approved by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Part of the new regulations was aimed at moving unwanted spectators away from the site of the extremely religious practice. The number of people watching burials will be controlled, and any increase in viewers must first be approved by the ministry. People turning up unexpectedly at sky burials, taking photographs and videotaping proceedings must be reported to the local ministry which will punish them.

Similar to rules, Tibetan Sky Burials have several taboos that burial masters and anyone involved in the process try to avoid. After the death of a person, relatives must not dance or sing to ensure that the soul of the deceased can arrive peacefully in heaven. First of all, the relatives are not allowed to watch because it is too painful for them to watch.

Just imagine a wife witnessing hundreds of vultures devour her recently deceased husband’s body, not a pretty sight. Also, mourners are strictly restricted from returning to the relative’s house, in fear of having the soul brought back. Besides relatives and friends of the recently deceased having taboos, there are also a few for non-related audiences. Visitors are not allowed to watch the ritual, for Tibetans believe it will bring negative effects to the ascending spirits. With the ensuring of taboos in place it is time to begin the process.

At dawn on a selected day, the corpse is sent to the burial site, which is far from the residential area. Then the Daodeng, or man who is in charge of the ceremony, starts off by spreading the scent of juniper to attract the vultures.

Why vultures you wonder? Well vultures, in the eyes of Tibetans, are sacred birds which relate to Dakini. Dakini is a tantric deity described as a female embodiment of enlightened energy. It is said that a vulture can sense its death in advance, so it chooses a place on top of a mountain to end its life where human beings can not reach. So Tibetans believe that only the majestic birds are capable for bringing the souls up to heaven.

So after the gathering of the vultures is said and done the Daedong begins to slice the body. The body is cut up into segments. The legs, feet, arms, torso, head, etc... then those segments are cut up into even smaller pieces, bite-size pieces to be exact.

Spices and herbs are then added to the pieces to entice the vultures. The bones are not to be left out; they get crushed up and mixed with flour for the vultures to devour. The pieces are then taken atop a mountain where the Daodeng rings a bell to signal the vultures to come and feast. It is hard to believe that Tibetans are "ok" with this method of disposing a loved one, but it is their religion and their way of life. And so it may seem that the Tibetan Sky Burial is a distasteful and cruel way of disposing of loved ones but the Tibetans have adapted to this method and stood by it all their lives. Not to mention all the detail and careful preparation that is put in these events is tremendously interesting.

And it is those features that make this burial stand out and tower over the rest, from the preparation, to the location and the meaning of the vultures it is all so fascinating.