



Tibetan Rituals of Death: Buddhist Funerary Practices (Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism)

Margaret Gouin

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This book describes and analyses the structure and performance of Tibetan Buddhist death rituals, and situates that performance within the wider context of Buddhist death practices generally. Drawing on a detailed and systematic comparative survey of existing records of Tibetan funerary practices, including historical travel accounts, anthropological and ethnographic literature, Tibetan texts and academic studies, it demonstrates that there is no standard form of funeral in Tibetan Buddhism, although certain elements are common.

The structure of the book follows the twin trajectories of benefiting the deceased and protecting survivors; in the process, it reveals a rich and complex panoply of activities, some handled by religious professionals and others by lay persons. This information is examined to identify similarities and differences in practices, and the degree to which Tibetan Buddhist funeral practices are consistent with the mortuary rituals of other forms of Buddhism. A number of elements in these death rites which at first appear to be unique to Tibetan Buddhism may only be 'Tibetan' in their surface characteristics, while having roots in practices which pre-date the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet.

Filling a gap in the existing literature on Tibetan Buddhism, this book poses research challenges that will engage future scholars in the field of Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism and Anthropology.

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