



## **Death and dying**

### *Ritual and Remembrance*

#### **Dr Erica Borgstrom:**

Death,  
we all die,  
but the rituals, customs and traditions that mark the end of life vary between places and cultures throughout the world, for example...

During Mexico's  
Day of the Dead families and friends honour the deceased  
By leaving their favourite food and drink by their graves. It's said on this public holiday for 24 hours family members are reunited with the departed  
Unless that means the return of weird Aunt Susie.  
There's plenty of dancing during this celebration but none quite like the Tibetan skeleton dance

A sacred dance performed by Himalayan Buddhists that represents the acceptance one's mortality, many ritual skeleton dances have never been seen by the public so they almost certainly look nothing like this. Not to be outdone by the Tibetans,

Ghanaian funerals don't only consist of a good boogie, they also include  
Large public processions, singing, huge feasts and of course you'll often find people sobbing hysterically.... Who've never met the departed because they're professional mourners.  
It's also quite common to see funeral promotions on billboards, radio and TV.

But who's interested in TV when you can live stream a funeral like the Brazilians  
This service has been available since the turn of the century and although it was initially designed for individual families it's now become popular viewing for total strangers  
Inevitably leading to that age old debate over what to watch... football or funeral

However when it comes to public engagement Remembrance day and Memorial day elicit the participation of hundreds of thousands/ millions who remember those that died during military service by observing a 2 minute silence, Wearing poppies  
In North America they also have cemetery decoration days on addition to consuming traditional Memorial Day recipes

But when it comes to funeral food none do it quite like those in the American South who celebrate the lives of those that have died with dishes like Jambalaya, Tomato aspic and hearty casseroles

But the prize for the most interesting food devoured at a funeral goes to those that actually eat the deceased. Historically, tribes in Papua New Guinea and South America Practiced Endocannibalism as a final gesture of good will to the tribe and the family As they believed this forged a connection between the living and those that have passed.