

Killing inhumani

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Oct 1999

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Robert Borski — 02 Oct 1999, 03:32

How to kill an inhumu/a? Let us count the ways.

According to Wijzer, drowning doesn't work.

Burning them, however, does--this, according to Horn, is the practice in New Viron (anyone willing to see this as a variant on sutteeism--in Hindu religion, the custom where a widow is immolated with her deceased husband on a shared funeral pyre? Oddly enough, if anyone practiced this, you'd expect the Gaonese.)

Yet burying them alive seems to be the accepted method of dispatch in Gaon. But why are the captured inhumani buried in, of all places, the marketplace, sealed under a symbol "too awful to describe, so that no one will dig there again"? This seems to me mighty strange--especially since the inhumani don't die for a really long time? (Hence Jahlee's eventual resurrection from her house of dirt.) Is it because the pavement stones of the marketplace offer an additional impediment? And why aren't the inhumani killed first? Horn, after all, knows that the simple expedient of decapitation works. Surely, he could communicate this to the Gaonese, so they could practice it rather than the live burial method. Even if there's an oral tradition that head removal doesn't work, the Rajan could convince them with a simple demonstration. Or does he need live inhumani to win the war with the Hanese?

Still to be explored: the stake and/or silver bullet method.

Robert Borski

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.