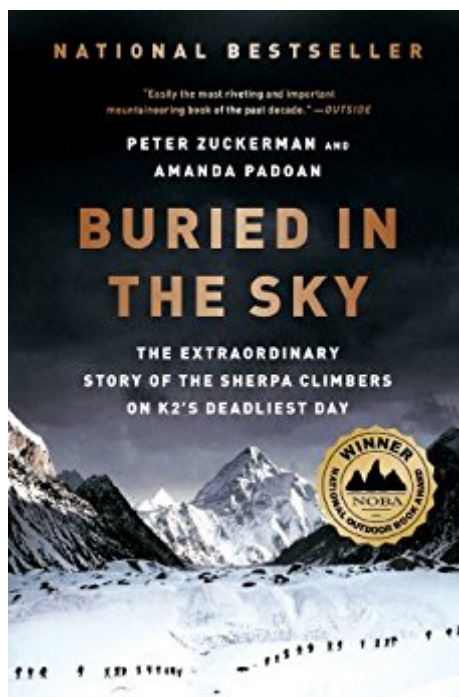


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Buried In The Sky: The Extraordinary Story Of The Sherpa Climbers On K2's Deadliest Day: The Extraordinary Story Of The Sherpa Climbers On K2's Deadliest Day



Synopsis

“Gripping, intense. . . . Buried in the Sky will satisfy anyone who loved [Into Thin Air].” —Kate Tuttle, Boston Globe

When Edmund Hillary first conquered Mt. Everest, Sherpa Tenzing Norgay was at his side. Indeed, for as long as Westerners have been climbing the Himalaya, Sherpas have been the unsung heroes in the background. In August 2008, when eleven climbers lost their lives on K2, the world’s most dangerous peak, two Sherpas survived. They had emerged from poverty and political turmoil to become two of the most skillful mountaineers on earth. Based on unprecedented access and interviews, *Buried in the Sky* reveals their astonishing story for the first time. Peter Zuckerman and Amanda Padoan explore the intersecting lives of Chhiring Dorje Sherpa and Pasang Lama, following them from their villages high in the Himalaya to the slums of Kathmandu, across the glaciers of Pakistan to K2 Base Camp. When disaster strikes in the Death Zone, Chhiring finds Pasang stranded on an ice wall, without an axe, waiting to die. The rescue that follows has become the stuff of mountaineering legend. At once a gripping, white-knuckled adventure and a rich exploration of Sherpa customs and culture, *Buried in the Sky* re-creates one of the most dramatic catastrophes in alpine history from a fascinating new perspective.

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Customer Reviews

I'm one of the few survivors of the K2 'triumph and tragedy' expedition in 2008! I wrote a book myself 'Surviving K2', I read a lot about this historical expedition. A lot of crap was written, mostly by people who have no idea or understanding what mountaineering is all about. But this book 'Buried in the Sky' surpasses my expectations. All the media attention was focused on the Western climbers. This book describes in detail the cultural difference and importance of the Eastern climbers. On one hand we think we are living in two separated worlds, and on the other hand (especially when climbing mountains together) we are one and the same human beings. We have to face the same problems in our families when disasters happen. But the brilliant thing of this book is the accuracy and precision of the almost 4 years of research after the whole tragedy happened. Even I was surprised in details reading the story of the lives of the Sherpas but mostly the lives of the HAP's (Pakistani High Altitude climbers). A must to read!

You don't need to be a mountaineer to enjoy this book. It's an intoxicating story of courage and ambition at the edges of survival. And, for me at least, it was more than that, too - a window into a culture that fundamentally challenges the way I look at the world. I loved the book, and when I finished it, I felt smarter. The story literally starts with a cliffhanger. It's midnight. Two freezing Sherpas are climbing without ropes, dodging falling blocks of ice. Then they slip, sliding down the deadliest stretch of K2, a mountain in Pakistan that's considered much more dangerous and difficult than Everest. Then it's about 30 years earlier. We're in the Sherpas' villages. We learn how the older Sherpas consider mountain climbing a sin, how mountain gods shape the lives of the Sherpas, why Sherpas almost always have one of seven names. We follow the main character, Chhiring Dorje Sherpa. His mother dies, his dad goes mad, his family needs to eat and Chhiring, at age 14 starts climbing Everest. He eventually becomes one of the best climbers in the world, escorting the more celebrated western mountaineers up peak after peak. As Chhiring and others start to climb K2 and the 2008 disaster unfolds, characters who dislike each other are forced to hang from the same ropes. A giant block of ice breaks off all the ropes, trapping the climbers near the summit. Some people are buried alive. Some go crazy or freeze or are left to hang tangled in rope. Several are heroically saved under devastating conditions. The Sherpas, in many cases, save the day. In all, "Buried in the Sky" is incredible storytelling and an eye-opening education. It's one of the best non-fiction books I have read in decades.

This book sets the gold standard for a new style of mountaineering literature. Not only does it make visible the indigenous climbers upon whom everyone else's success depends, but it provides an inside look at the cultures and the spiritual traditions that enable them to face death on one expedition after another and to risk their lives to save others. Amazingly, it is a fast moving adventure story as well. Zuckerman and Padoan are to be commended for their attention to detail as they convey the essence of Balti, Ajak Bhote and Sherpa culture from an insider's point of view. If you've ever wanted to know more about Himalayan mountaineering than the story from the western point of view, or wanted to get past the travelogue portrayals of the high altitude climbing sherpas whatever their ethnicity, this is the one book that covers both. And finally, this is the story of a unique hero by anyone's standards. Chhiring Dorjee deserves to be a household name and his actions a model for all mountaineers. Climbers speak often of the brotherhood of the rope. Chhiring lived up to the highest level of that ideal with his inspiring quote, "we will either live together or die together" and his life saving actions that day. Not surprisingly, he also engages in village development work during his free time, proving that the ideals of cooperative mountaineering are useful elsewhere. Of course I am somewhat biased as I am an anthropologist with a mountaineering background, who has studied Chhiring's home area of Rolwaling Valley for almost 40 years. And yes, I know him personally.

As a fan of *Into Thin Air* and an uncle to the authors, I was looking forward to this book about the conquest of K2 from the viewpoint of the high altitude workers commonly referred to as Sherpas. Once I started reading this book I couldn't put it down. The authors provide a look into Sherpa culture and the conflict between that culture, the desire to conquer the world's most difficult summits, and also secure a financial advantage for their families who live an impoverished life in a spectacular setting. The climbing sequences are gripping, heroic, and tragic. I felt that I could hear the ice crack and the avalanches roar as they crushed and consumed the unfortunate. As with most tragic accidents a series of small missteps and bad judgment lead to the death of 11 climbers in one day in August 2008. I have no desire to scale 8000 meter peaks but if you ever do be sure to bring enough rope!

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