

From Chod to Feeding Your Demons: A Western Approach to Tibetan Tantra



What is Chod?

Chod is a complex seven step Tibetan tantric Buddhist meditation practice. Its main purpose is to help practitioners attain enlightenment by “severing” the root causes of human suffering.

Tibetan transliteration: *gCod*; pronounced: *chö*

- To sever or cut

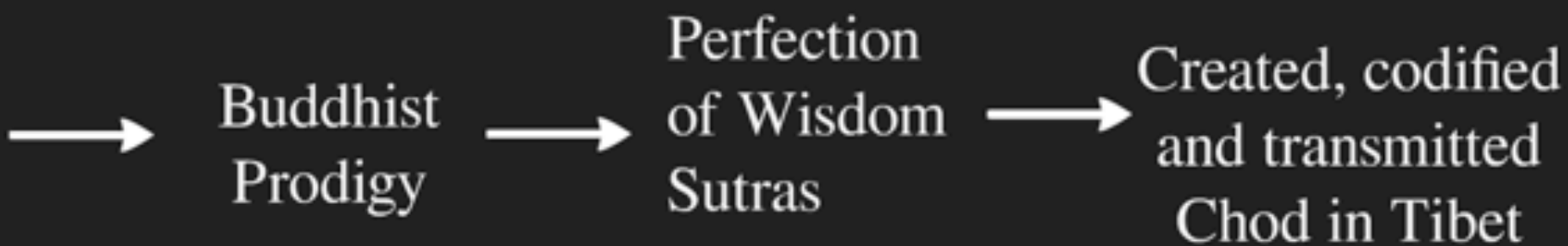
Pa Dampa Sangye



11th Century C.E.



Machik Lapdrön



Pa Dampa Sangye



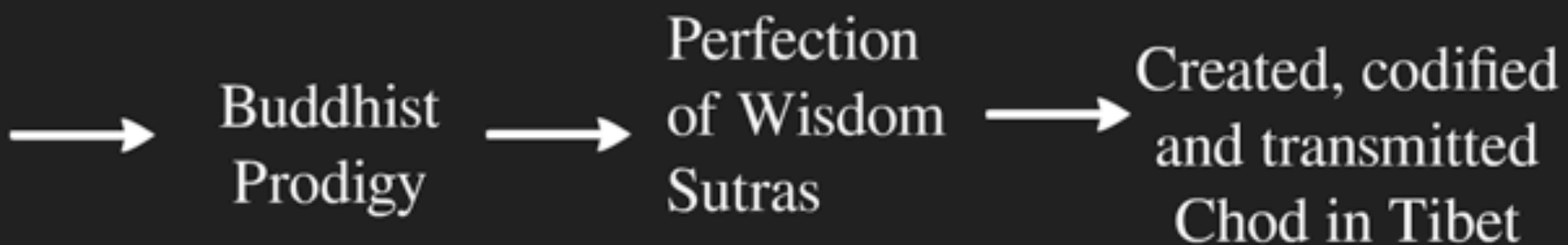
11th Century C.E.



Machik Lapdrön



1055 C.E.



Regardless, Machik occupies the role of primary disseminator, codifier, and symbolic representation of the source of Chod's contemporary and ancient use.

Lama Tsultrim Allione



Prezi

Tara Mandala



- Founder and Director of Tara Mandala
- Former Tibetan monastic
- Officially recognized as an emanation of Machik Lapdron.

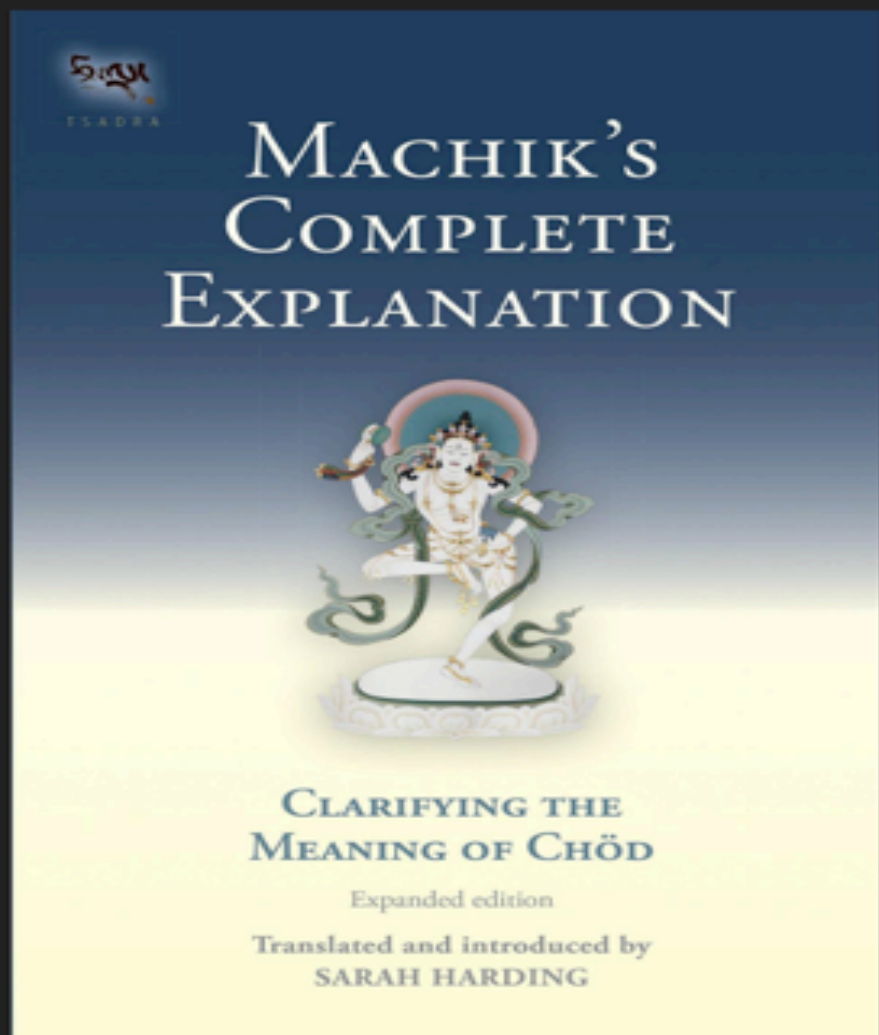
An attempt to "find a way to make [Machik's] approach accessible in a Western context."

Feeding Your Demons

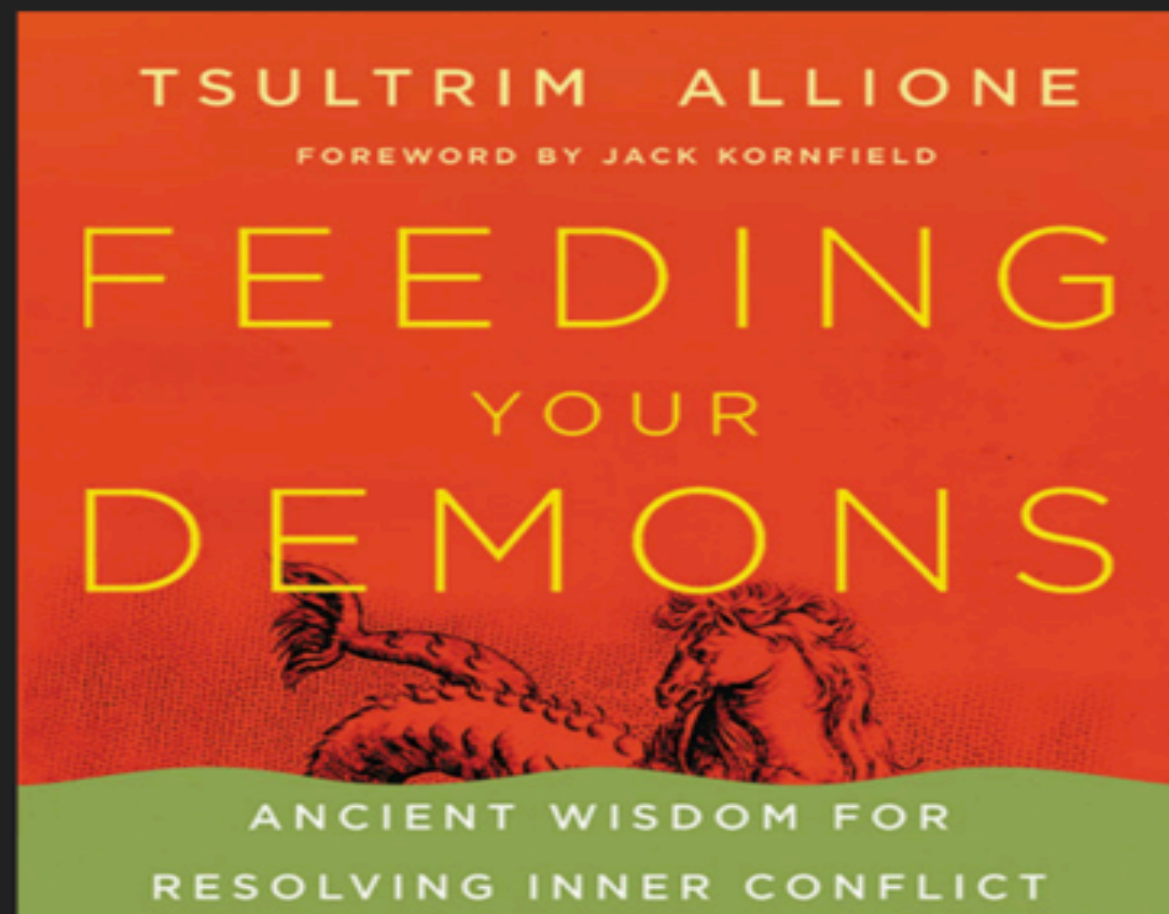


My Approach:

- To what extent is Feeding Your Demons a rendition of Machik's Chod practice?
- What insights does FYD gives us about the nature of Buddhism as practiced in the West?



"One of the most comprehensive written texts extant within the Chöd tradition attributed to Machik"



FYD's only descriptive and liturgical guide, written by Lama Tsultrim Allione

- Alterations in Rituals
- Institutional Restrictions
- Meditative Philosophy

Rituals: Deity Yoga

- a practice in which one visualizes themselves in an enlightened form, which is thought to transfer buddha-qualities to the practitioner and expedite the enlightenment process.



FYD

1. Find the Demon
2. Personify the Demon and Ask What it Needs
3. Become the Demon
4. Feed the Demon and Meet the Ally

- Western approaches for suffering remediation only address the superficial problem
- identifying an illness' underlying need and feeding it can release the energy the disease is harboring



Institutional Restrictions

- Tantric Buddhism, in general is considered esoteric.
- The rituals are only available to experienced practitioners with explicit permission from an authorized teacher.

Lama Tsultrim Allione

"Feeding Your Demon ... doesn't require any knowledge of Buddhism or of any other Tibetan spiritual practice."

Meditative Philosophy

FYD: a way to access the subconscious by observing mental imagery

- observe whatever arises from your subconscious

Chod: an intentional conjuring of visualizations

- intricate details with regard to the proper visualizations that will assist the practitioner on their path to enlightenment

Conclusion

- FYD reflects a radically different practice than traditional Chod.
- Transformations of the soteriological dimension indicate that Allione has innovated a pragmatic Western version of Chod with a telos more concerned with psychological and physiological well-being than buddhahood.

Buddhism in the West

Pragmatism

VS

Transcendence

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