

## The Ritual of Chod in Tibetan Religion



In order to understand Tibetan religion, this thesis isolates the ritual of gcod (pronounced chod) as a pillar of Tibetan cultural ingenuity for three main reasons. First, gcod developed during a critical period of cultural development in Tibet (tenth-thirteenth centuries); it epitomizes a renaissance formation of high culture. Second, studying gcod reveals the variety of soteriological, cosmological, and ritual influences that lead to a definitive Tibetan religion. Finally, the study of gcod yields important insights into the Tibetan religious economy that is the stage on which ritual and soteriological competition play out. While keeping these broader concerns in mind, gcod will be discussed in four chapters. In the first, the historical and cosmological contexts for gcod are discussed. In the second chapter, gcods fit into Buddhist soteriology will be described and affirmed. Third, the role of gcod in Tibetan local religion will be discussed along with descriptions of the gcod pas professional competitors. Finally, the gcod ritual proper will be described in as much detail as possible. In addition, both the introduction and the conclusion discuss possible avenues for gcod in ritual discourse (within religious studies). With these investigations in mind, this project will proceed to argue that the heart of all these innovations and syntheses is their this-worldly focus, which is generally true for Tibetan religion. The reason why gcod perpetuated is because it was instrumental in solving mundane problems, not because of the profundity of its doctrinal content.

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