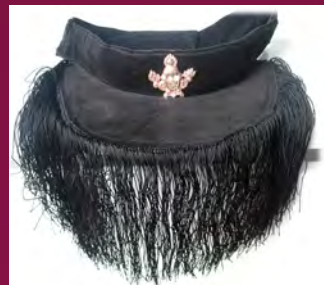




RITUAL ARTS

for the MODERN CHÖPA



January, 2011
LAMA JINPA



2011

CONTENTS



A SACRED RITUAL INSTRUMENTS

1	Damaru	7
1b	Damaru Case [Shup].....	12
2	Damaru Pendants—Chöpen.....	13
2b	Chöpen Ornaments: Melong	14
3	Shing Kanglings	15
3b	Shing Cases [Shup].....	18
4	Bells-Dorje	19

B SACRED DRESS

5	Domra (Chöd Hat).....	21
6	Rigdzin Shamo (Chöd Hat).....	23
7	Tiger Seat Rug	25
	Price List.....	28
	Contact & Ordering.....	29
	Chöd Pray Flags—Cut Outs!.....	31



Damaru Works®

Authentic Sacred Instruments of Tibet

OUR VISION

The mission and vision of *Damaru Works* is 5-fold:



1. To perpetuate and preserve the traditions of Vajrayana through the accurate creation and dispersal of ancient Tibetan ritual crafts with absolute integrity.



2. To provide the highest quality traditional practice materials to serious Vajrayana practitioners, especially Chöpas, Ngakpas and Yogis and Yoginis—lay practitioners of the West. Such materials are increasingly rare as commercial, low quality goods have become the norm in India, Nepal and the outlets that sell these products in America and Europe.



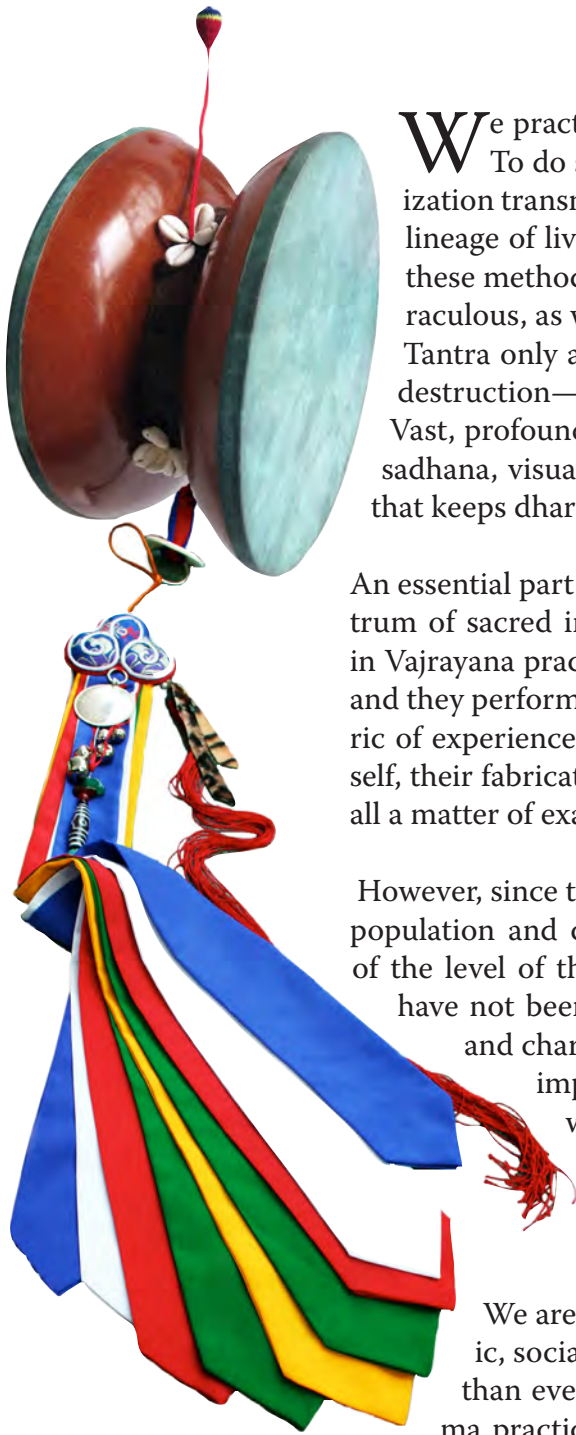
3. To support the best traditional craftsmen, who are few in number, so that they may flourish and continue their work, passing on their art to future generations of skilled workers.



4. To provide financial support for our Tibetan, Bhutanese and Nepalese lamas who coordinate acquiring these sacred and precious items.



5. To use funds from sales to further unique projects, related to the preservation and perpetuation of various texts, translations, audio and video archives and so on. In fact, 100% of all profits are to be used to benefit the Dharma, and most specifically the various lineages of Chöd.



We practice the ancient and profound path of Vajrayana. To do so, we follow the traditions, knowledge and realization transmitted from Wisdom mind, through an unbroken lineage of living masters, down to the present moment. That these methods even exist in our time and space is already miraculous, as we are told that the rapid and demanding path of Tantra only appears rarely in the cycle of world creation and destruction—and whole eons can pass without its appearance. Vast, profound, sometimes complex, the intricate detail of the sadhana, visualizations, mantra and mudras, are the container that keeps dharma intact, free of contamination or distortion.

An essential part of this matrix of practice is the remarkable spectrum of sacred implements and instruments that are used daily in Vajrayana practice. Their nature is both practical and symbolic and they perform energetic functions that directly impact the fabric of experience and phenomena. Thus, just like the practice itself, their fabrication, form, proportions, materials and details are all a matter of exacting specifications and standards.

However, since the diaspora from Tibet, and the fracturing of the population and culture, there has been a dramatic degradation of the level of the available sacred objects. Yet these ritual arts have not been lost. The texts describing the proper qualities and characteristics of these items still exist, and far more importantly, skilled craftsmen can be discovered who have kept these traditions intact. However, few Westerners have been exposed to these quality materials so that the difference can be discerned.

We are entering a new era of challenges. With economic, social and personal difficulties on all sides, now more than ever we need an impeccable approach to our dharma practice. Guarding our tradition and its sacred intentions, this can be, not a time of loss and shadow, but a time of transformation.

The idea of a “brand,” before it became co-opted by greed and deceit, was a way to guarantee the quality and integrity of a product or service. It probably can be traced back to the guild, craftsman or skilled artist who signed their work to demonstrate its authenticity and true identity. That is still the case to a large degree; You can choose to buy a Honda car, or a Gibson guitar. Or an Apple computer. These names have reputations and are valued or trusted accordingly. And most people will not buy a no-name appliance, or fly a non-name airline!

When it comes to our sacred Vajrayana practice materials, how much more careful should we be in assuring an impeccable level of quality. However, within the realm of such implements there has been no such identification or “branding” system, and practitioners have not had the opportunity to acquire high level, authentic tantric instruments.

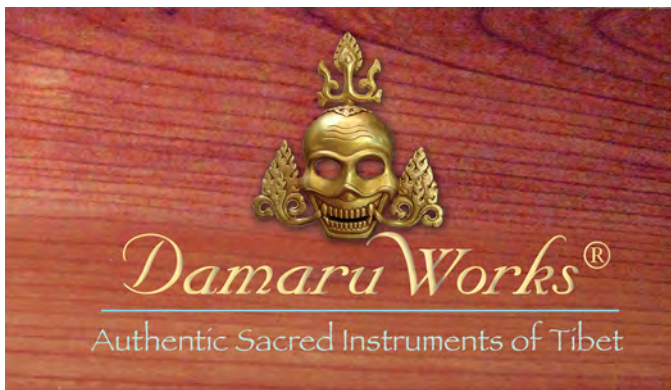
Herein is a handful of important items, especially for practitioners of Chöd of all lineages and persuasions. These items are not found in any “stores,” East or West. They are made to order, by hand, individually and subjected to my personal oversight and interaction. I know each of the craftsman well and most are hand carried by myself from Nepal or Bhutan. Thus arose DamaruWorks, as a way to preserve this superior level of ritual objects.



Furthermore, ALL profits from sale of these items are ploughed directly back into Dharma projects. It is hoped you will truly appreciate and enjoy the dynamic and vibrant items offered here, that are simply found nowhere else.

May the traditions, values and meaning of the MaChik’s sacred dharma reach to the farthest realm.

Jinpa



A certificate of authenticity, numbered and signed, accompanies all DamaruWorks® damarus, your guarantee of quality.

DamaruWorks®
 CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY

DW No. _____

1

CHÖD DAMARU *The Sacred Chöd Drum*

The Damaru (Chöda) is the central instrument of Chöd. It is a sacred Vajrayana implement that—if made correctly—is the dwelling place of the Divine Feminine, the Dakin. Indeed, it is itself synonymous with the enlightened forms of Prajnaparamita, Vajrayogini and Troma. The damaru is the sound of Sunyata or complete openness, a bridge that connects us to the essential source, the basis of being that is beyond name and form. It is also a unique channel for the profound blessings and power of the lineage and a portal for the mystical forces that protect the dharma. The damaru is thus the sound of the dharma itself and a proclamation of the fearlessness of the solitary yogin or yogini. All this being so, an important and deep relationship comes to exist between the Chöd practitioner their Chöd drum or damaru.

Every part of the drum has both symbolic meaning and an energetic function (such details to be published in my forthcoming *Tibetan Chö: Cutting Through to Freedom* from Snow Lion). This being the case, there are many requirements and essential components to its manufacture and use. The art of making these according to the exacting Vajrayana specifications is almost extinct and only a few individual craftsmen carry on the ancient art of damaru fabrication, keeping it vibrantly alive. We are now offering these completely authentic and accurately made Chöd damarus in the West for the first time. Our fabricator is a Bhutanese Chöd and Troma practitioner who upholds the highest standards of workmanship and respect for sacred implements. These Chöda will last a lifetime as a fitting vessel for taming our own mind and that of suffering sentient beings. As sacred works of art, it can be passed on with pride to future generations of practitioners.

On the next page is a summary of details, showing why these sacred drums are radically different than all the inauthentic, ineffective and shoddy Nepalese and Indian drums sold through Western importers.

Wood

- Our drum shells are made of finest hand picked SengDeng wood (*Acacia* spp.), free of defects, cracks, etc., with exquisite finish.
- While in ancient texts, there are several acceptable woods, generally three styles exist today: the *gold*, *red* and the *black*. The gold or red style is identical the SengDeng damaru that is held by MaChik in various sadhanas. These trees are as much as 200-years old, and often only a single damaru can be made from them! Such forests and woods no longer exist in Nepal whatsoever. Our wood is from Bhutan or sometimes Sikkhim.
- ✗ Commercial damaru-makers receive various woods from outlying Nepalese villages, the cheaper which are just called “ordinary” woods but NONE are real SengDeng.
- ✗ Most commercial damarus also have internal knots, cracks and defects.
- ✗ They are from trees that are too small, which is why they are 2-colored in almost every case: the pith and the cambium layers. Also, to save wood, these drums are also made too thin.
- ✗ Some claim to be made of Sandalwood (*Santalum album*); Due to extreme expense and rarity this is now impossible.

Skins

- Trin pak (Cloud Skin) is the “gold standard” of the damaru drum heads. The goat skins are treated according to ancient terms, wherein they are buried with certain minerals salts (copper) and herbs for over a month. The result is a natural skin with a uniquely resonant and multi-layered mantric tone.
- They do not lose tone or become warped and damaged. If they become looser from moisture at any time, merely coming into a dry area restores the original tone.
- The living skins should be gently rubbed with a small amount of lanolin on a regular basis. (Note: the inner skins are marked by the highly secret “35 Dakini Blood,” as prescribed in the authoritative *Mindrolling Manual of Vajrayana Implements* (2003).
- ✗ Commercial damarus have skins that are PAINTED green, which totally destroys the living skins, desiccates them, and makes them liable to splitting or irreparable warping.
- ✗ Note that you will NEVER see a conga drum or any other percussion instrument with a painted skin! This destroys the sacred, living nature of the damaru.

Mantra

- The interior of the drum has a red pigment ground, upon which are hand-drawn gold mantras and seed syllables, as prescribed by traditional texts and terma. These include mantras of the Prajnaparamita, Dudjom Vajrayogini, Troma and so on.
- ✗ Commercial damarus either have no mantras or have cheap photocopied paper mantras glued inside. This makes them essential worthless as a Chöd damaru.

Cases

- Our sturdy cases have wide straps, tight fit and a moisture-protective *wool lining*.
- ✗ Commercial cases are flimsy and do not absorb moisture from the drum skin.

Conch and Iron Rings

- A white conch shell ring encircles the strap of the collar, and a metal (iron, steel or copper) ring connects the chöpen banner.
- ✗ Commercial damarus are missing the iron ring and the conch shell is either absent or often made of white plastic!

Damaru Components



High quality Seng Deng
(Acacia Wood)

Trin Pak Terma
Natural Skins

Leather strap

Conch shell ring

Metal ring

Banner head

5-color Chöpen
(Note: They come with
a regular pendant of
overlapped high qual-
ity silk brocade)

\$395

Damaru Details



Trin-pak skins, made as per Terma instructions, by burying for a month with minerals and herbs, showing the typical textured, multi-colored look.



Fine woodwork, suede leather strap and cowrie shells.

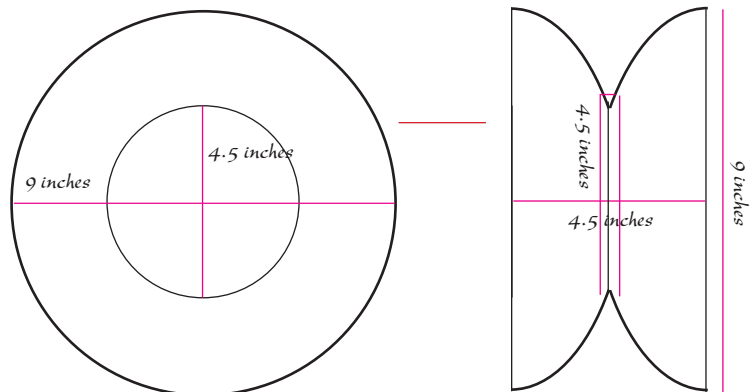


Traditional gold mantras on red or black ground.

High quality, hand-picked SengDeng wood.



Proper dimensions of the Chöd damaru, showing a 2:1 ratio of diameter, depth & opening between the two bells.



Commercial Damaru Defects!!!



Until starting DamaruWorks, I have not found a single commercial Damaru in Nepal or India that was made properly! These photos are of very typical drums found in Western online stores.

Wood

Contain cracks, repairs with putty or patches, made of soft or porous wood, insect damage, knots and other defects which make them unsuitable. The proportions are also wrong, with too shallow a bowl.

Skin

Painting the skin destroys its resonance and basically “kills” it by clogging its pores. These lifeless drums will easily become warped and lose tone, which can be permanent.

Mantras

Mantras are absent or, as shown here, simply photocopied and glued in. Examination also reveals many errors in orthography, syllables, etc.

Rings

The required steel rings are universally absent as a connector to the Chöpen. And instead of proper conch rings there is either none or often plastic discs!



Large epoxy patch over serious crack



Porous wood, knots, crack, glued in mantra



Brand new \$125 Damaru interior with sloppily pasted in mantras



One-year old damaru; warped, flat-toned painted skin

1b

DAMARU SHUP



Protective Case

Unlike cases of commercial damaru-makers, our Damaru cases are provide secure and safe carry of the damaru, with broad strap and tight closure. The interior is not cotton, but wool-lined to absorb moisture and protect the tone of the natural skins. They are a standardized maroon color, high quality silk brocade with gold-yellow trim. The DamaruWorks logo is an “optional” attachment, as this lovely embroidered patch has a simple adhesive backing for easy removal—or sewing on your jacket!



2

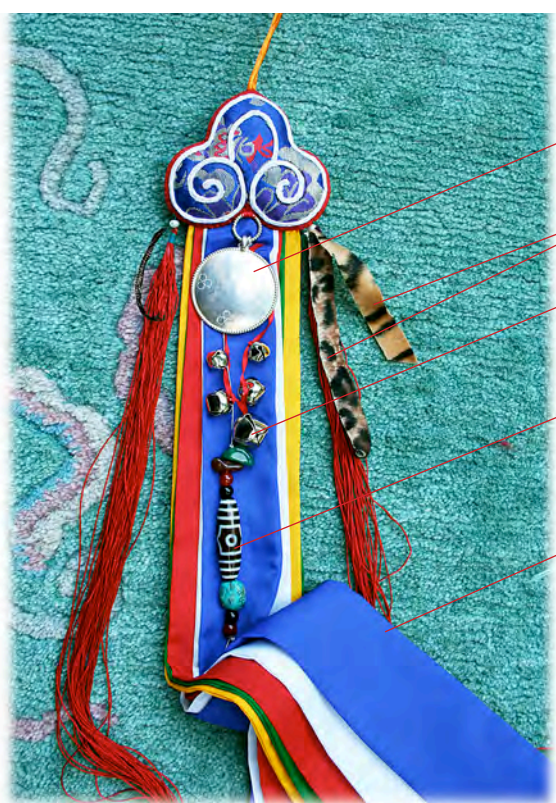
CHÖPEN



Damaru Banner

The pendant of the damaru is a victory banner, proclaiming the vanquishing of the four maras and the prison of samsaric mind. Consisting of a triangular header and a tail, they ornament the simplicity and power of the drum. The drum is the sound of Emptiness, the pendant is the splendor of its manifestation into the world, into the five Buddha Families, five skandhas and five elements. Especially, they are an expression of the Five Dakini (Khandroma) families, the elegance and power of the feminine Wisdom energy, freely dancing in space (Tib: Khandro means “she who travels in the sky [of mind]).

Instead of the polyester brocade and small panels that are used today, we have had classic-stye chöpen fabricated, that reflect the long and meaningful traditions of Chöd. These are 100% Benares silk, with nine full length panels going in a sequence from blue (space-sky), white (water-clouds), red (fire-sun), green (air-vegetation) and yellow (earth-mountain) at the center, and then repeating the same pattern to the back. These move beautifully and elegantly and are a fitting proclamation for the activity of Chöd.



- Silver mirror or melong*
- Tiger and leopard “fur”*
- Yerka or bells*
- Semi-precious stones*
- 5-Dakini family colored silks*



Our current chöpen have a three-jewel design on the header, and no longer have the unwieldy red tassels.

\$75

2b

CHÖPEN ORNAMENTS

Melong, Yerka, Rinchen, Tag pak



The tail of the damaru is completed by certain essential ornaments. These include:

1. Mirror or melong.
2. Yerka or small jingle bells.
3. Semiprecious gems: turquoise, amber and dzi bead.
4. Tiger and leopard skins strips.
5. Human hair (which you will have to acquire yourself!).

Melong

The mirror adorns the center of the chöpen, traditionally silver, but brass is acceptable, due to the higher price of silver. This melong is both the expression of pure, stainless dharmakaya mind and the indivisibility of luminosity and emptiness.

Yerka

The yerka or small bells call the dakinis and are the sound of their joyous laughter. Their presence is an essential part of the damaru's sound. Sadly, this became one of the missing ingredients in the translation of Chöd from old Tibet to India and Nepal and then to the West. This tradition must be revived by today's dedicated practitioners.

Skins

Tiger and leopard skins magnetize and overcome the wild passion of oneself and others and attract beings of the 6 realms. We use the finest "faux furs" available today, which carry the animal energy, while respecting the lives of these magnificent beings.

Stones

Dzi, turquoise or amber stones. placed on the handle, attract the three kinds of non-human spirits (above, upon, and below the ground respectively).



Silver mirror or melong \$65



Melong and Yerka



Yerka, rope, tiger and leopard skin strips

\$25

Yerka—Dakini Bells

3

SHING KANGLING

Acacia Wood Kangling

The thigh bone trumpet is an essential implement of Chöd, and has many meanings and subtle functions for the practitioner. Most Westerners, however, are not aware that if one does not have a human bone kangling, one can effectively use their own curled hand to blow through. Additionally, both wood and certain horn kanglings are acceptable and correct methods of practice.

As stated in the definitive *Mindrolling Manual of Vajrayana Implements and Dharma Objects* (Nyagur Nyingma College, 2003):

“Formerly in Tibet, at some monastic centers at various periods, the traditions of sounding the thighbone horn, *wood kangling* and deer kangling were renowned.”

The creation of our specially crafted wooden (Tib: shing) kanglings has surpassed all expectation! They are exquisite, made of Sengdeng (Acacia), the same dense and resonant wood used to make the traditional Chöd damaru. The sound is brilliantly clear and resonant and easier to play than the bone kangling. The mouthpiece is made of hand molded brass, scribed with three types of decaying heads—fresh, rotting and dried skull, representing the three kayas, as in a katvanga. The skin around the head is made of goat and white in color. It has the same energetic and tsa-lung effects as a bone damaru, and carries your own energetic signature of wind through your hand bones. They contain internal beeswax coating, just like a bone damaru, as a moisture barrier and to make the sound more resonant.

The advantages of a wood kangling include the following:

- There is no problem whatsoever with transport or visibility in public as with human bone.
- Bone kanglings are almost never from a known origin and often not from reliable sources. For example, kangling are not to be used from diseased individuals or who died from contagion, those who died from an accident, heretics, non-Buddhists or samaya breakers, etc.

- They are less wrathful and gentler in action, since they carry only your own life energy-signature.
- The price is comparatively reasonable and affordable.
- Not subject to cracks or damage, as with fragile bone.
- Wood also retains our “ngodrup” or siddhi, the accumulated positive energy of practice.
- They are a work of art that can last a lifetime and be passed on as a sacred legacy to future practitioners.

As with all wood carvings, each has slightly different grain and wood texture. Each of these, hand-crafted by our Bhutanese artisan who is a serious Chöd and Tro-ma practitioner, takes time to create. Thus they are available in limited supply and not always “in stock.”

\$175



Demonstrating the proper hand hold of the kangling.



The three faces of the brass mouthpiece

Acacia Wood Kangling



Hand-crafted of finest SengDeng or Acacia wood (same as the traditional Chöd damaru)



Tsewong Rinpoche with Shing Kangling, Pharping, Nepal



Stitching skin covering and fine details of brass mouthpiece



Internal wax coating for moisture barrier



Case or “Kang Shoop”

The finest Kangling cases I have ever encountered, thick and semi-rigid.....



In our standardized Damaruworks® color and size.



4

DRILBU

Tibetan Ritual Bell

The bell and dorje are the most basic requirements of Vajrayana practice. They represent the two poles of Skillful Means (vajra) and Wisdom (bell), feminine and masculine, form and formless and so on. The bell is actually Prajnaparamita, or the Yidam, within the Mandala. As such, every part and nuance of design has meaning and significance (see Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols).

Form

Designs vary from the 5-pointed vajra representing the Five Buddha Families and other five-fold principles, and the 9-pointed vajra, expressing the intermediary directions, or the Five deities of the mandala in union—actually ten, as the tip is also of dual nature. The five-part design is most typical of Kagyu practitioners, while the 9-based is more often used by Nyingma practitioners, as it also represents the Nyingma nine yantras or stages of the path. The Dzogchen variation, and an old design as well, is the hollow ring in the handle, below the deities face. The choice is personal or based on advice of one's mentor or lama.

Upper Section

There are a wide variety of qualities, both in the form and the bell itself. The flourishes vary from stream-lined to ornate, depending on artist and tradition of the craftsmen, but the higher the quality, the more skilled the carving. Most vajras and bell tops are of a gold-colored brass (an alloy of tin and copper). Cheap Nepalese or Indian gold plating wears off within months. The more expensive “fire gold,” is a permanent type of process, and usually done only by custom order.

Rarely the tops and dorje are also made of copper, also by special order. Gilding can also be done at any later date, as the bell handle is “glued” to the bell through a kind of resin and brick dust to allow removal. Never superglue or permanently fix the top section! If you ever drop the bell on a hard surface, the handle may break away, to be refitted again. But if it is glued permanently, the bell itself will crack or shatter.

Bell

The “working end” of the bell is made of 3 (brass and silver), 5 (copper, iron, gold, silver and mercury) which greatly changes both quality of sound and price.

The bell may be blackened by a special process (this is not just paint or carbon blacking), or left in their natural state. If the silver content is high, they will in any case acquire a patina over time.



Since this is a core part of one's practice, and should last a life time, only a high quality bell with dramatically resonant sound should be acquired. Higher pitch bells are considered Dakini or Feminine Energy bells, while deeper resonance bells are associated with the Pawo or Masculine Energy. High quality bells only come from Dehra Dun or Sikkim.

\$200-\$275



Dehra Dun High Quality Dzokchen bell



Sikkim Exquisite Quality



Brocade Case with Tie Closure



Five-prong, with blackening

5

DOMRA

Padampa Sangye Chöd Hat**The Domra: Demon-Seer of Chöd**

The domra is a unique type of headgear and facial ornament, brought to Tibet by the great master of Shijé or Indian Chöd, Padampa Sangye. The origin of this name may refer to its bear-like appearance (Tib: dom = bear), but there may be other, hidden meanings to the name that have yet to be revealed. In standard use by various lineages of Chöd practitioners, it is particularly popular among followers of the lineage of Padampa Sangye, such as Lama Wangdu Rinpoche, as well as practitioners of the Longchen Nyngtik of Jigmé Lingpa, i.e. Laughter of the Dakinis. This basically includes all Nyingma



and many Kagyu and Bön lamas as well. It is more often worn in solo practice and by wandering yogis, rather than in larger monastic assemblies.

Meaning and Secret Function

According to tradition, the main purpose of this unusual apparatus is simple: to shield the timid and frightened spirits from the brilliance of the practitioner's powerful and luminous gaze. The energy streaming from the eyes of an individual who has some Chöd experience or Mahamudra/Dzokchen realization can indeed be overwhelming for



lower spirits, even though they are themselves noxious and frightening harm-doers. Thus one wears the domra out of compassion that one wears, to allow all lower guests to partake of the red feast. It is also appropriate for sur (smoke offerings for the dead), where again, one wishes to shield certain lower classes of invited guests from the yogin's powerful gaze. Indeed, any time one makes a peaceful offering, such as that of a Kartor or white torma, the domra should be used, so as not to intimidate the timid Shidak or local-dwelling non-human entities, land spirits, nagas and so on.

However the deeper energetic and shamanic purpose of Vajrayana Implements is not generally discussed in traditional texts. Such information stays within the line of oral transmission, or is left for the discovery of the practitioner during meditative states. Thus the domra is far more than an outer shield; It is also a magnifier of inner vision. Using the domra, one becomes attuned to the presence of the "outer demons," and as the ongoing Chöd ritual and meditation deepen, to one's inner demons as well. Possibly this is due to the insulation from the outer world that one feels when using such a

“mask.” But clearly more is at work here. In fact the domra is a remarkable piece of sacred science that provides direct seeing into deeper realms and dimensions, the kind of vision that greatly helps the compassionate work of the Chöpa.

An Essential Element of Practice

The domra itself consists of a short visor, not unlike one worn by a poker player or sunbather, jutting out 4 to 6 inches from the forehead. It is made of black felt with a black or red underside, from which vertical black ropes or strings hang freely. About 6 inches in length, these are traditionally made of yak hair, though nowadays cotton, silk or polycotton strings are used. This arrangement allows the practitioner to see clearly through this screen, but his/her eyes are obstructed to the outside viewer.



Fabrication

There are no “domra stores” in this world! We have these domras fabricated by a skilled Tibetan tailor in Nepal, based on a sample from Lama Wangdu’s monastery. Some alterations were made based on the advice and experience of Lama Wangdu, Tsewong Rinpoche, Lama Pema and Lama Tobchen of Nepal. The unique solid silver or solid copper flaming skulls are made to order by our metalworker in Nepal, cast by the “lost wax process” and finished painstakingly by hand (i.e. there is no “mold” and they are not machine stamped). For serious practitioners of Chöd, these are a rare manifestation of the ancient secret tantric sciences, with unusual and unique properties. Once our current batch is gone, they will only be made to order, which can be a lengthy process.

Silver Flaming Skull



Red underside of the domra



Copper Flaming Skull

Silver **\$80**
Copper **\$60**

6

RIGDZIN SHAMO *Chöpa's Hat*

Tradition tells us that this hat (Tib: shamo) was created by Rangjung Dorje (1284-1339), the Third Karmapa, though its prototype might have been that worn by MaChik's son himself, Tönyon Samdrup. The most important early codifier of the MaChik's tradition of Chöd, Rangjung Dorje's collection of texts, the Rinpoche Tsogley Trengwa or Precious Rosary contains the full gamut of rituals of the Kagyu Chöd tradition. But it was also fully assimilated by all Nyingma Chöd lineages. Thus this Knowledge-Holder's (Rigdzin) Shamo is in widespread use by virtually all Nyingtik and other Nyingmapa chöpas.

It can be used during the entire chod ritual, or during specific parts of more extensive sadhanas, especially when one is making offerings to Higher Guests, performing praises and so on. It is also appropriate for group and solo practice; For example, at the Dudjom gumpa and Lama Wangdu Rinpoche's gumpa in Nepal, these are worn by monks, nuns and practicing lay people during any extensive ritual or larger Chöd ceremony.



Practitioners at Lama Wangdu's monastery in Nepal



Shamo lying flat

Made of brocade silk, with a two color pattern, it's shape is somewhat similar to the hat commonly worn by Kagyu and Nyingma lamas in general. But it is distinguished by having no flaps, and a stiff lower collar in a lotus pattern. It is thus similar to the Rechungpa hat, with its fur collar, the hat that is also traditionally shown on the head of MaChik's son. Usually the upper and lower sections are dark blue with red trim, as illustrated here. For a less-wrathful approach, the reverse colors can be used. Dudjom practitioners of the Troma cycle wear a similar-shaped hat, the crow (karak) shamo, with its characteristic upper bird shape. This is also seen in various other wrathful rituals, such as Zor, for averting negative conditions.



Upright Shamo



These hats are made to order by our excellent craftsmen in Nepal, according to our specifications and based on the traditional shamo details. Hat sizes vary from 13 to 15 inches in circumference.

\$75

7

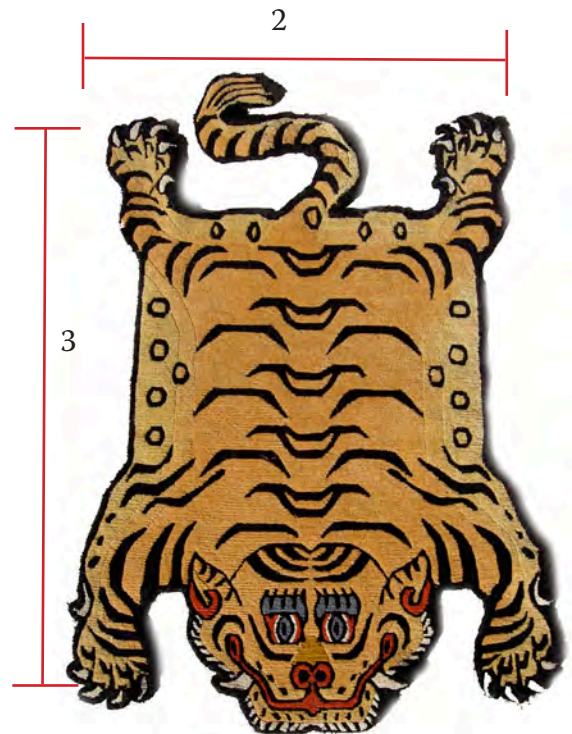
TIGER SEAT

Takgi Den



Animal Skins

Animal skins, whether sheep, yak or carnivorous beast, have been used for survival from the elements, comfort, convenience and status since humans could hunt or domesticate animals. They were a ready source of material for creating clothing, dwellings and furnishings. Skins and furs form a natural mat or rudimentary carpet, and have been used in this way from prehistory up to our present technological age. Thus the use of skins as a meditation seat also goes back to earliest times. However, they acquired quite a new purpose, meaning and symbology in the context of Vajrayana. Indeed, wild animal hides formed an intrinsic part of the tantric lifestyle and accoutrements of the wandering yogis and yoginis of ancient India. Dorje Trollo, the wrathful emanation of Padmasambhava, rides a tiger as his consort and Dombi Heruka, the great mahasiddhi, is also depicted in this iconic form. In fact a number of the legendary 84 Mahasiddhis are typically portrayed seated on animal skins, including Virupa and Bhayani (depicted on the left). The migration of the Secret Mantra Path to Tibet also brought numerous tantric implements, instruments and specialized forms of dress, and the animal skin seat was readily adopted. Milarepa, like many other great saints of India and Tibet, is traditionally shown sitting on a deer or antelope pelt, and even Sakya Pandita (shown below) is shown in yogic pose on a tiger skin—and wielding a bone kangling!



The Woven Rug

Rugs in Tibet were numerous and essential parts of nomadic, village and monastic lifestyles. They were portable, warm, and also became a sign of status and wealth. With tribal Central Asian, Indian, Chinese influences and especially Buddhist influences, a unique Tibetan style of carpet developed. Meditation rugs, woven from yak wool, might typically have patterns of dorjes, auspicious symbols or other dharmic themes. But for the yogi, and particularly the chöpa, the wild animal pelt was the preferable seat.

All the traditional texts that list the chöpas tools of the trade mention the damaru, bell, kangling and tent, followed closely by the tiger seat, “with its claws intact.” Tiger pelts would have been fairly plentiful and available, their natural range spreading from India and Nepal to China. Hunters or villagers eliminated animals that encroached on their territory, while the large cats still had vast uninhabited regions in which to roam free. Then, as now, in spite of the Buddhist respect for all life, hunting and meat-eating was an intrinsic part of Tibetan culture. The dwindling tiger population worldwide, and a very favorable change in human consciousness, has made the killing of these magnificent animals abhorrent to the modern mind. It is not clear when the transition to the woven wool tiger took place, but certainly the two traditions existed simultaneously, and today the tiger carpet has happily taken the place of an actual tiger pelt.

The Meaning of the Tiger Rug

The wandering Chöd practitioner or ngakpa (mantric practitioner) cared little for status or comfort, yet the tiger skin was an important possession. The tiger represents our basic passions and desires, and taking our place on such a seat

proclaims our victory over the lha and dré, the gods and demons of the illusory world of experience and cyclic rebirth. The skin of these carnivorous beasts, who naturally and freely kill rather defenseless creatures, is also endowed with very special energies. On an outer level, the tiger gives us strength and the courage and fortitude to overcome all obstacles and behave with fearlessness. On an inner level, the wrathful, violent vibration, the karma of the desire to kill and the actual deeds performed, provide special fuel for the yogi’s inner meditative experience. In Chöd it is the transformation of these energies, rather than their avoidance, that is the path. The yogi or yogini steps directly into these difficult energies and is forced to develop compassion and confront their own demons. On the innermost level, they help the meditator to cut through hope and fear. This is the same reason that one of the ideal type of kanglings is from the body of someone who died in battle, or through mutual slaying, and why tiger and leopard strips are used on the tail of the damaru.



The Modern Rug

The modern tiger rug comes in a number of varieties, but the one directly related to the chöpas practice are the “cut-out rugs,” which mimic the shape and look of a real tiger skin. These are all hand made on the Tibetan loom, not mass-produced, so each is a work of art, craft and tradition, fabricated from yak wool, usually at 100 knots per inch. Both natural and chemical dyes are integrated, depending on availability and ease of use. Still, like any craft, the work varies significantly. The woven tiger rug links us to our past tradition, and to the transformative and challenging energy of the real tiger skin. Yet somehow, this simple carpet is more than a cartoon replica, or a compassionate substitute. Somehow they have retained a vibrant link to its living brethren.

Going Tiger

One should use this tiger rug or “tak gyi den” as one’s main meditation seat at home, and as a portable meditation cushion for every circumstance or event to enhance one’s practice.

There is a wide range of quality, and since they are hand made, no two rugs are exactly the same. Like all our yogic material, these are not shipped in bulk, but hand-picked. The ones that have the best weave, expression, “personality” and aliveness are adopted for their new home in the West. These rugs can be found on the internet in a few



places, but we will send you a photo of your potential rug and make sure it is the one you want. On my “tiger hunting” trips, I go through as many as are available, seeking those with the energetic qualities that make them fitting as a daily meditation companion and acquiring those with that seem vibrant, humorous, and absolutely alive. Like the damaru, these are effervescent and full of life force, creating sacred space and sacred view. A good tiger rug attracts many invisible helpers, dakinis and protectors. Our practice is more enjoyable, and our meditation stronger and more luminous.



They range in color from reddish brown, to bright orange to a yellow ochre. The ones pictured here are what I call “natural”, as they approximate the color the color a real tiger with a yellow orange coat and a lighter ochre belly.

2 x 3, Available in a range of colors: Blonde, brown, orange, dark orange.

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CONTACT & ORDERING



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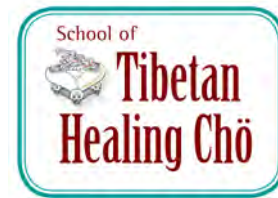


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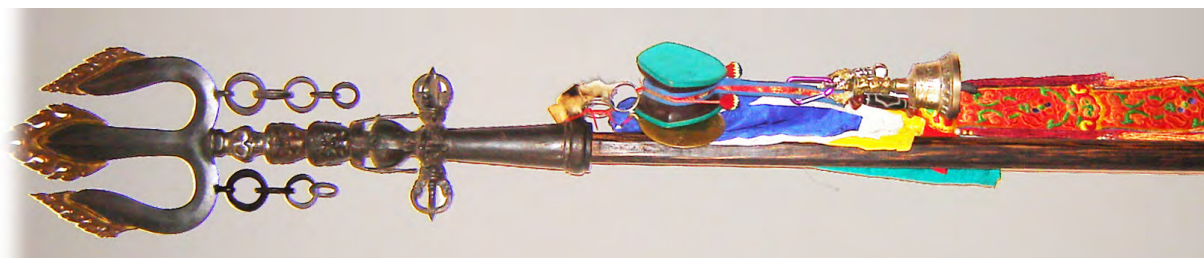
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THE WELL-EQUIPPED CHÖPA



CHÖD PRAYER FLAGS



Opposite are some innovative Chöd “prayer flags.” The first Tibetan word on these strips is CHÖD and the last section contains the central mantra of Chöd, which has the ability to pacify confusion and open the mind and heart to a greater reality:

Om Gaté Gaté Paragaté Para Samgaté So Ha

These can be printed (black and white or color), cut into eight separate strips, and hole punched. A simple piece of biodegradable string or hemp can then be used as a tie, and they are ready for use!

The students at the School of Tibetan Chö are given these as part of their “homework.” While we practice Chöd at home or at our dharma center, it should also be taken out into unfamiliar landscapes. America offers parks, forests, cemeteries, beaches—a seemingly endless variety of different and challenging locations. This is both part of our individual path of transformation, as well as to benefit the land and the many indivisible beings that dwell in this world with us. Thus these small prayer flags are perfect for hanging in an area where we have practiced, either alone or with others, as part of the Chöpas ongoing work in healing the disturbed and damaged environment.

The wind and light playing across the sacred mantric syllables will benefit the area, many sentient beings, animals, insects and humans who live within the vicinity.

And may the victory banner of Chöd be raised across the depth and breadth of both Samsara and Nirvana!

MaChik Chöling



གཙོང་

Chö Earth Healing
pacifying the land through fearless generosity

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