

Intro:

Chenrizig is said to be the buddha who watches over the world from the time of the death of Siddhartha Gautama to the time of the future buddha Maitreya.

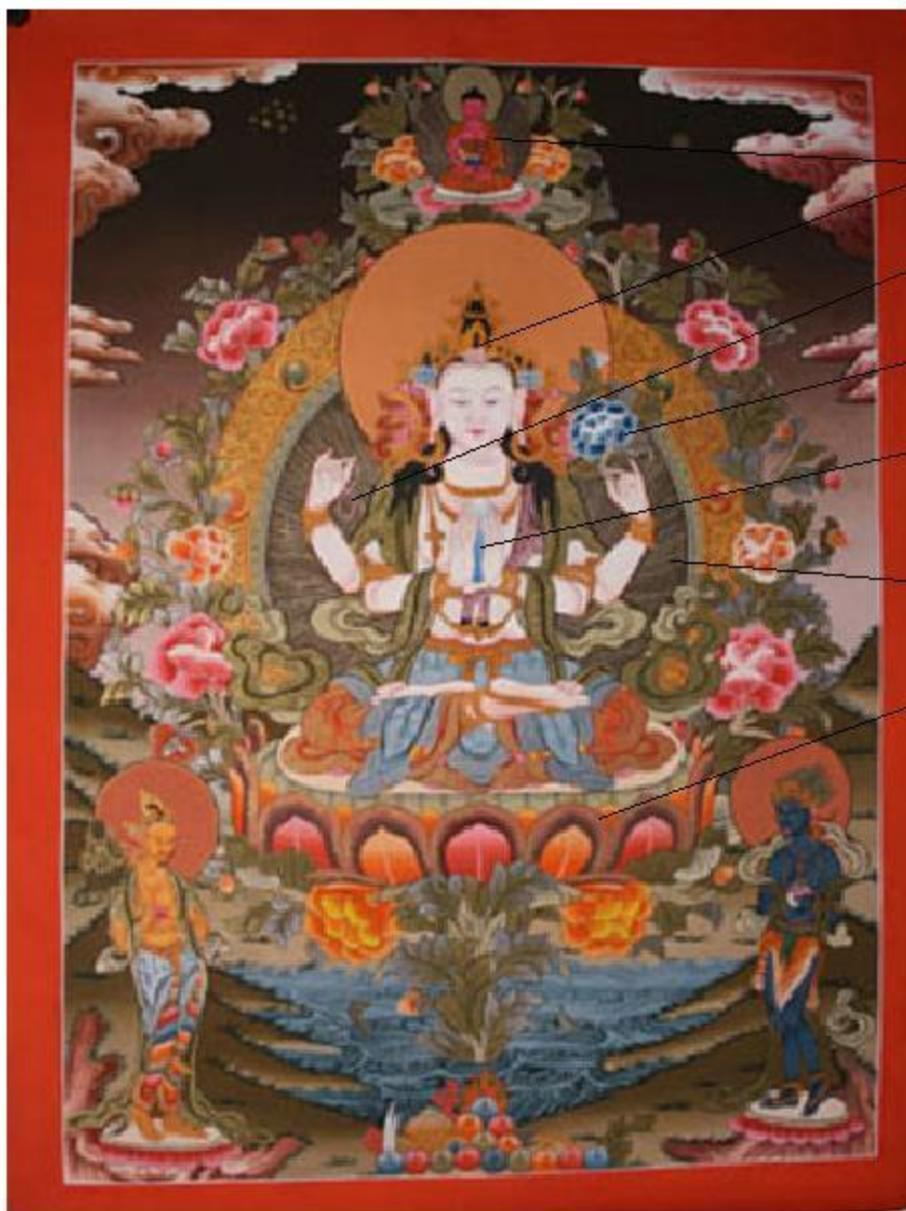
Mythology: Chenrizig is said to have sworn to help all beings reach an end to suffering. He is said to have reached out to all beings and in his attempt grew a thousand heads, arms, and legs so that he can help all beings humans and animals. There is also mention of his numerous limbs being put together by another buddha Amitab.

Prayer: Om Mani Padme Hung

Mantra recitation is an important part of visualization because it creates a direct path way to the buddha or virtue they represent lying latent within yourself. For example when reciting chenrizig's mantra Om Mani Padme Hung one would naturally visualize his form and articles he carries but on a deeper level one is said to find a pathway to compassion found latent within themselves. The act of this mantra recitation is in fact the act of seeking compassion within yourself so you may send it out to the benefit of all beings in this world.



Visualization of Chenrizig, The Bodhisattva of Compassion



Practitioner's Description:

"The most common visualization of Chenrizig is in his white form with four arms, two legs, and one head."

"Upon his head rests a crown and on top of his hair rests another buddha."

Left Arm: holds the Lotus, which represents enlightenment.

Right Arm: holds a crystal rosary said to represent flawless wisdom.

The Front Two Arms: held together at the chest in a triangular shape with the thumbs tucked inside representing the offering of the wish fulfilling Jewel (enlightenment)

The Disk at his back and behind his head represent his thousand arms, legs, and heads.

He sits upon a Lotus which rests upon a moon acting as cushion.

Observation of Practitioner:

Throughout this description the practitioner remained very animated while using various gestures with his hands and arms demonstrating the positions of the hands, placement of the feet in what is referred to as the lotus sitting position, and even including the crowning of the head. Throughout this process he maintained a mix of excitement in his facial expression with a calm and very centered upside sitting posture.

Sketch of site

pictures of monks

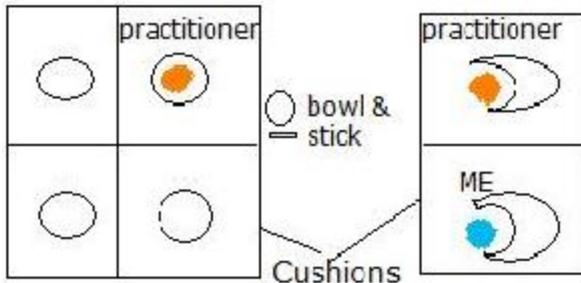
buddha statue



lama's seat: empty



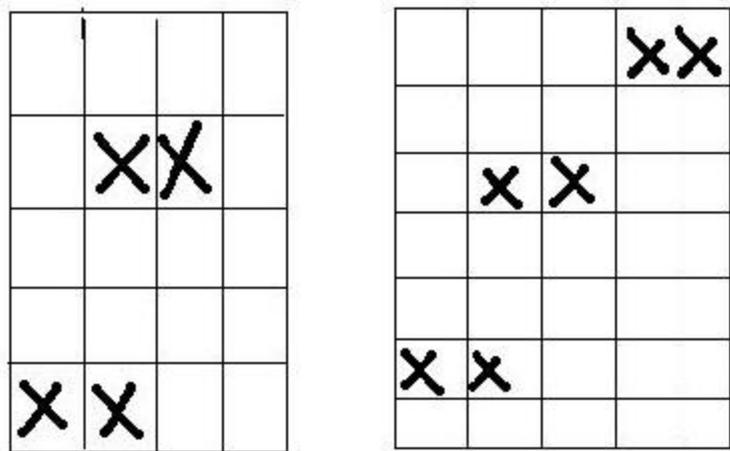
The practitioners were lay people, one said he was going to become a monk next year.



Cushions

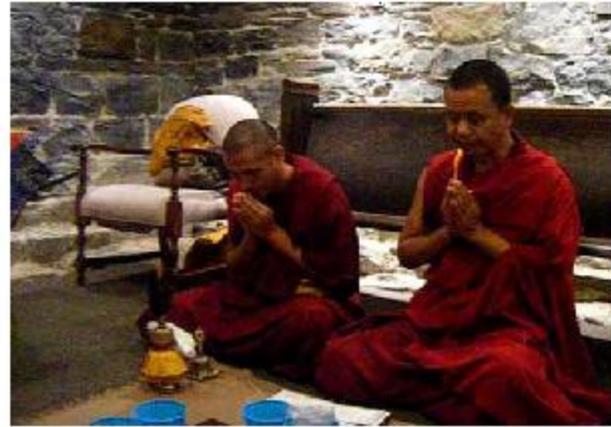
Chairs

X observers



Observable Details:

Both practitioners sat with their knees touching the floor and with their butts upon a cushion. They sat with their spines straightened out and their chest expanded, shoulders back and head slightly bent downwards at a 45 degree angle, with their eyes unfocused. Both wore glasses and removed them during meditation which they said helps them unfocus their eyes. They both appeared very calm and focused during the chanting and during meditation very peaceful. I had a sense that they were not focusing on anything in the immediate room, but instead were focusing inwards. Both practitioners had several casual conversations and even joked around about other members they knew.



Reflection about my experience:

While being familiar with the actions for the practice I believe this site visitation has helped me gain a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the ritual.

During this visit I was most drawn to the idea that the Buddhas represented the innate, latent virtues everyone is said to possess and that the process of gaining enlightenment was merely the awakening of this. The imagery of the concepts was very captivating. I especially liked the imagery of the lotus coming out of the muddy waters to bloom in a clean and beautiful state is representing the awakening of a pure being past the dirty obstacles of desire and attachment.

I think due to my upbringing in a Tibetan Buddhist culture I kept getting distracted by new concepts or ideas that really clarified and gave meaning to a lot of what I previously viewed as custom. Also during some of the mantra recitations I had difficulty following along because I was used to a different rhythm of chanting them. But I believe previous experience with Buddhist practices gave me the confidence to actively participate.

Sequence of Events

The event started with a general description of Mahayana Buddhism as practiced by Tibetans. Next we chanted the opening mantras, along with an explanation of what a mantra is and its purpose (to help guide your meditation). Next was stressed the importance of visualization: to understand the symbolism of Buddhas as the latent virtue within ourselves and that through the repetition of mantras you create an understanding of the Buddha (the virtue they represent) and the Buddha gains an understanding of you. Then the visualization of the Buddhas was described followed by chanting their mantras. A meditation period followed signaled by the ringing of a metal bowl by one of the practitioners.