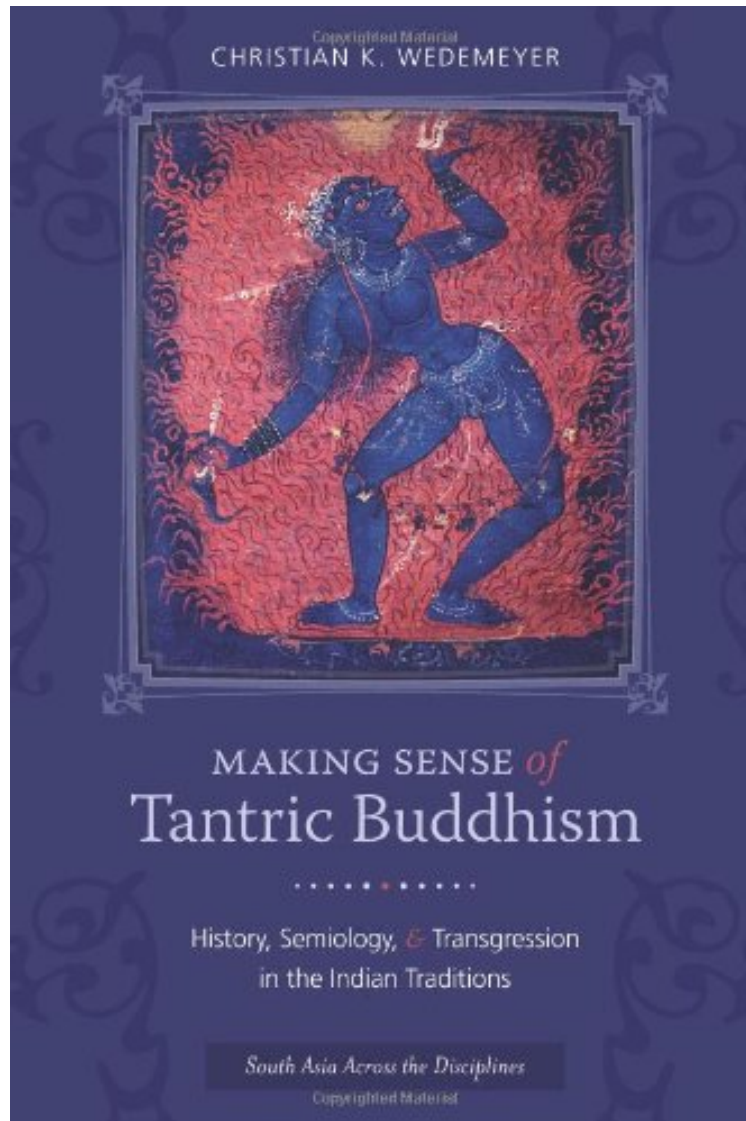


(Download ebook) Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions (South Asia Across the Disciplines)

## Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions (South Asia Across the Disciplines)

Christian Wedemeyer

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**Christian Wedemeyer : Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions (South Asia Across the Disciplines)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the

## Indian Traditions (South Asia Across the Disciplines):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Pretty heavy reading  
By Samhara  
Pretty heavy reading. The first part dealing with the history and origin theories of Tantric Buddhism is not analysed in much depth. Wedemeyer picks his fights with the older and some now less accepted theories; but doesn't adequately argue for or against some of the more prominent origin theories. Those that look at homologies of mantra, doctrine, deity iconography to identify a inheritance to or from Tantric Buddhism and other traditions. He does cite some scholars I was previous familiar with, so I immediately picked up a very shallow argument in his analysis of their work; good example was Alexis Sanderson. If you read this book, within the first part and you come across this argument of Shaivism and Tantric Buddhism, it would be worthwhile to google Sanderson and read the articles Wedemeyer cites (they are free to access). He spends a couple of paragraphs dealing with this rather complex issue, most of it is superficial and then goes to slam Sharma and Bhattacharya (for a few pages) - who even a lay reader would read and raise an eyebrow. The second part is very well written. For those who are heavily interested in Buddhist Tantras - this constitutes essential reading. Wedemeyer makes a fair attempt to give different layers of interpretation and historical theories that all collectively go to explaining the plausible context of the behaviour of the early Buddhist Tantrikas. There is a pretty good study of the Guhyasamaja (in brief). Overall I was largely impressed by the book, it was at times difficult for me to understand as the language is quite complex. But that is my own personal quibble. I really did appreciate and enjoy reading the second section of the book, although my primary interested was in reading about Buddhist History. This, I am afraid was neither explained well nor reasoned with any degree of evidence or depth that would make what he is saying compelling. Overall the bibliography of the section in itself is an excellent study - thats what I largely appreciated, as the first part does serve as a decent summary of previous authors on the subject of Tantric history.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. great book  
By Gregory Ge  
This is a brilliant book. Well-researched, brilliantly structured, easy to follow, and not a word wasted. Concise, precise, and lucid, the book is not only a fantastic work on Buddhism - it is one of the best books on history and historiography. One cannot but feel immensely impressed by the work Wedemeyer put into this little volume. It not only challenges a person's perceptions of esoteric Buddhism; it will change your perspective on history. That being said, I do have one minor critique. Mr. Wedemeyer seems to enjoy using the words "clear" and "clearly." One of the first lessons I have learned from law school is when such words are used, the subject matter is always unclear. When using such words, though supported by authoritative evidence and ample analysis, one cannot help but wonder - is he hiding something? Is the conclusion really so "clear?" As a word, "clear" does not have a very definitive meaning. I certainly hope that Wedemeyer will be able to replace word with more suitable alternatives. But still, amazing book.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Foundational Study of Tantra  
By Rodney P. Devenish  
This is an extremely well approached study of an important question in Tantric Buddhism: how to reconcile the transgressive elements of tantra in the light of tantra's underlying spiritual and higher religious goals. What are the main factors and origins that has led to tantra becoming a major field of meditation practice throughout Asia, both for Buddhism and also Hinduism? Christian Wedemeyer, applying a vast first hand knowledge of the subject, has written what is undoubtedly the best study of the subject so far written. His thesis is thoughtful, constructive, learned and informative. Janet Gyatso has called the book a milestone in the field, and I heartily agree. Every Western student of tantra wishing to understand the tantric approach to life and religion, should read this book as a matter of course.

Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism fundamentally rethinks the nature of the transgressive theories and practices of the Buddhist Tantric traditions, challenging the notion that the Tantras were "marginal" or primitive and situating them instead both ideologically and institutionally within larger trends in mainstream Buddhist and Indian culture. Critically surveying prior scholarship, Wedemeyer exposes the fallacies of attributing Tantric transgression to either the passions of lusty monks, primitive tribal rites, or slavish imitation of Saiva traditions. Through comparative analysis of modern historical narratives that depict Tantrism as a degenerate form of Buddhism, a primal religious undercurrent, or medieval ritualism he likewise demonstrates these to be stock patterns in the European historical imagination. Through close analysis of primary sources, Wedemeyer reveals the lived world of Tantric Buddhism as largely continuous with the Indian religious mainstream and deploys contemporary methods of semiotic and structural analysis to make sense of its seemingly repellent and immoral injunctions. Innovative, semiological readings of the influential Guhyasamaja Tantra underscore the text's overriding concern with purity, pollution, and transcendent insight issues shared by all Indic religions and a large-scale, quantitative study of Tantric literature shows its radical antinomianism to be a highly managed ritual observance restricted to a sacerdotal elite. These insights into Tantric scripture and ritual clarify the continuities between South Asian Tantrism and broader currents in Indian religion, illustrating how thoroughly these "radical" communities were integrated into the intellectual, institutional, and social structures of South Asian Buddhism.

Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism is a major contribution to our understanding of Indian esoteric (or Tantric)

Buddhism. Christian K. Wedemeyer writes with verve, humor, and most crucially remarkable clarity, managing to explain difficult texts and ideas with great lucidity. (Roger R. Jackson, Carleton College) An important new work in Buddhology (Choice) Highly Recommended. (David Templeman South Asia) Wedemeyer not only provides an advanced introduction, but also makes the reader question the assumptions (and almost everyone has assumptions about Tantra!) they bring to and expect of the study of Tantric Buddhism. (Justin Thomas McDaniel Religious Studies) A clear work that engages a fresh methodology in order to articulate a new theory of Buddhist antinomianism, offering thereby a novel way to 'make sense' of tantric Buddhism. (Journal of Religion) [An] important and useful contribution to the study of Tantric Buddhism in India. (Sumit Guha H-Asia) About the Author Christian K. Wedemeyer is associate professor of the history of religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School and in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations. He is the translator and editor of Aryadeva's *Lamp That Integrates the Practices: The Gradual Path of Vajrayana Buddhism According to the Esoteric Community Noble Tradition*, and his research concerns the history and literature of Buddhism in Southern Asia and Tibet.