

**REINCARNATION AND SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP:
A CASE STUDY OF H.H. THE 17th GYALWA KARMAPA,
THE HIGHEST BLACK CROWN LAMA OF
TIBETAN BUDDHISM**



**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (COMPARATIVE RELIGION)
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2007**

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Namthip

Mrs. Namthip Srichan
Candidate

T. Pun

Asst. Prof. Tavivat Puntarigvivat, Ph.D.
Major-Advisor

Justin Meiland

Lect. Justin Otzen Meiland, D.Phil. (Oxon)
Co-Advisor

B. Mahaisavariya

Prof. Banchong Mahaisavariya, M.D.
Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies

T. Pun

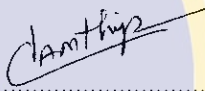
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Chair
Master of Arts Programme in
Comparative Religion
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities

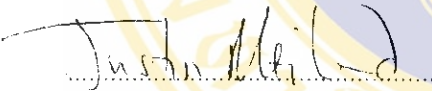
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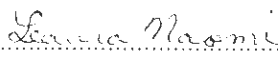
was submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University for a degree of
Master of Arts (Comparative Religion)

on
October 9, 2007

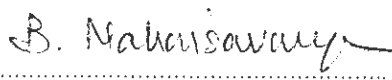

.....
Mrs. Namthip Srichan
Candidate



.....
Lect. Justin Otzen Meiland,
D.Phil (Oxon)
Member


.....
Assoc. Prof. Wariya Chinwanno, Ph.D.
Chair


.....
Lect. Leaura Naomi, Ph.D.
Member


.....
Asst. Prof. Tavivat Puntarigvivat, Ph.D.
Member


.....
Prof. Banchong Mahaisavariya, M.D.
Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Mahidol University


.....
Assoc. Prof. Suree Kanjanawong, Ph.D.
Dean
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Mahidol University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest heartfelt gratitude to His Holiness the seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje for giving me the opportunity and the special permission to do research on this thesis topic.

I wish to express my special thanks to Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen (Jigmela), and Mrs. Somala Somjaj Gyaltshen, his wife, of the Shambhala Hotel Mountain Resort at Rumtek, Sikkim, India for supporting and lodging me during my research and for giving important data for this study.

I am also thankful to Mr. Norbu and Ms. Tshering Ongmu Chungalpa, his daughter, and family for helping me forge direct- experience with lamas and Tibetans.

Thank you very much to Khenpo *Chodrak Tenpeal* Rinpoche, the principle of KIBI, Mr. Karsang Bhutia, Mr. Gagyu, and all the officers of the KIBI for their warm service and also thanks to the KIBI library for its access to documentary research materials.

I would also like to thank Mr. Tsewang Topdhen and Mr. Kailash Negi for their interpreting help.

Special thanks to Tulku Songye Chophel Rinpoche, who supported my first visit to India. I am also thankful to Tibetans, Sikkimese, Indians, and India for their friendship.

I am highly thankful to my advisors, Dr. Tavivat Puntarigivat, Dr. Justin Otxzen Meiland, and bhikkhuni Dr. Leaura Naomi for their guidance and leading me to the accomplishment of this thesis and thanks also to lecturers and friends for their kindness.

I am also thankful to the Graduate Studies Alumni Association of Mahidol University and the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Mahidol University for their financial support via a scholarship and research grants.

Lastly, I would like to express my special thanks to my father and mother, teachers, Karmapas, *Bodhisattvas*, and Buddhas for blessing me to be successful in studying Buddhism on the traditional Tibetan path.

S. Namthip

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NAMTHIP SRICHAN 4636244 SHCR/M

M.A. (COMPARATIVE RELIGION)

THESIS ADVISORS: TAVIVAT PUNTARIGVIVAT, Ph.D, JUSTIN OZTEN MINDLAND, D.Phil (Oxon)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a qualitative social research to study the significance of lama leader reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism by focusing on His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the highest leader of lamas in the Black Crown (Kagyü) Sect. The aim is to analyze the religious reasons for creating a spiritual leader in a reincarnated form. All data sources involve direct experiences, taken from India, documents from the library of the Karmapa International Buddhist Institutes, New Delhi, interviews with His Holiness and key-informants in Kalimpong town, Darjeeling, West Bengal, and observation participation with lamas and Tibetan in Kalimpong town and Rumtek in Sikkim state.

The study results found that the theory of the reincarnation of the highest lama cannot be proved. However, its cultural, moral, and spiritual significance for Tibetans cannot be underestimated. One reason for combining the cult of the Buddha and *Bodhisattva* with spiritual leadership is to inspire faith so that lay people follow doctrines. It allows a closer relationship between the monastic arena and society. Traditional teaching and culture are closely intertwined with relying on a spiritual leader for guidance. Thus, Tibetans are students, and His Holiness is the teacher in both Dharma activities and religious ceremonies. Moreover, the spiritual leadership of His Holiness upholds an important moral and traditional role in Tibetan culture. However, while His Holiness is considered an exceptional human being and applies very intelligent skill-in-means in his life, he feels as if he is a normal human being and that he also can continue the fundamental role that spiritual leadership plays in promoting Buddhism and bringing peace to society.

The findings suggest that the political role of a spiritual leader must also be balanced by an understanding of the spiritual significance of the position, whereby the Gyalwa Karmapa leads human beings and society toward peace. In this way, spiritual leadership acts as a tool for general human cultivation and the protection of Buddhism.

KEY WORDS: REINCARNATION / SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP / GYALWA KARMARPA / BLACK CROWN / TIBETAN BUDDHISM

94 pp.

การอวตารและความเป็นผู้นำทางจิตวิญญาณ: ศึกษากรณีท่านเกียลวากรรมาปาที่สิบเจ็ด ผู้นำสูงสุดของลามะนิกายมกุกุดำแห่งพระพุทธศาสนาแบบทิเบต (REINCARNATION AND SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF H.H. THE 17th GYALWA KARMAPA, THE HIGHEST BLACK CROWN LAMA OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM)

นำทิพย์ ศรีจันทร์ 4636244 SHCR / M

ศศ.ม. (ศาสนาเปรียบเทียบ)

คณะกรรมการควบคุมวิทยานิพนธ์: ทวีวัฒน์ ปุณฺณชริทวิวัฒน์, Ph.D., จัสติน ออสเซนมิลแลนด์, D.Phil. (Oxon)

บทคัดย่อ

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพทางสังคมศาสตร์ เพื่อศึกษาความสำคัญของการอวตารของผู้นำลามะในพระพุทธศาสนาแบบทิเบต โดยมุ่งศึกษากรณีท่านเกียลวากรรมาปาที่สิบเจ็ด ทรินเล ทาเย คอจี ผู้นำลามะสูงสุดแห่งนิกายมกุกุดำ (กาจู) เพื่อวิเคราะห์เหตุผลของศาสนาในการสร้างผู้นำทางจิตวิญญาณในลักษณะอวตาร ข้อมูลรวมถึงประสบการณ์ตรงนำมาจากอินเดียทั้งหมด เอกสารจากห้องสมุดของสถาบันชาวพุทธนานาชาติแห่งกรรมาปา (กีบี) กรุงนิวเดลี สัมภาษณ์ท่านเกียลวากรรมาปาและผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญในเมืองกาลิมปง เขตดาจีริง รัฐเบงกอลตะวันออก และสังเกตการณ์แบบมีส่วนร่วมกับลามะและชาวทิเบตในเมืองกาลิมปงและเมืองรุมเทคในรัฐสิกขิม อินเดีย

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ทฤษฎีการอวตารของลามะชั้นสูงนั้นไม่สามารถพิสูจน์ความจริงให้ปรากฏออกมาได้แต่อย่างไรก็ตามไม่ควรมองข้ามความสำคัญในด้านจริยธรรมและด้านจิตวิญญาณในวัฒนธรรมการอวตารของชาวทิเบต เหตุผลหนึ่งเพราะผลแห่งความศรัทธาอันแรงกล้าในความเป็นผู้นำทางจิตวิญญาณของพระพุทธเจ้าและพระโพธิสัตว์ร่วมกันนั้นก่อให้เกิดความรู้สึกศรัทธาผลักดันให้ผู้คนน้อมรับยอมปฏิบัติตามคำสอน ทั้งผลักดันให้สังคมและวัดมีความผูกสัมพันธ์กันอย่างใกล้ชิด คำสอนและวัฒนธรรมที่สืบทอดมาผูกคั่นแน่นพันกันเป็นเกลียวไปสู่ความเชื่อมั่นไว้วางใจในตัวของผู้นำทางจิตวิญญาณเพื่อการนำทาง ด้วยเหตุนี้ชาวทิเบตคือนักเรียน และท่านเกียลวากรรมาปาคือครู ผู้สั่งสอนอบรมทั้งด้านกิจกรรมและพิธีกรรมทางศาสนา นอกจากนั้นในความเป็นผู้นำทางจิตวิญญาณของท่านเกียลวากรรมาปาเองถูกคำนวณไว้ด้วยคุณค่ามาตรฐานพฤติกรรมมนุษย์ที่เกี่ยวกับศีลธรรม จริยธรรมและกฎธรรมเนียมในวัฒนธรรมทิเบต อย่างไรก็ตาม ท่านเกียลวากรรมาปา ทรินเล ทาเย คอจี เป็นมนุษย์อัจฉริยะ ที่ประยุกต์ใช้ความฉลาดให้เป็นทักษะชำนาญในการดำรงชีวิต ท่านเข้าใจดีว่าท่านเป็นแค่มนุษย์ปุถุชนธรรมดาที่สามารถดำเนินชีวิตไปตามหลักการบทบาทที่ผู้นำทางจิตวิญญาณควรกระทำเพื่อเผยแผ่พระพุทธศาสนาและนำพาสังคมเข้าสู่สันติสุข

การวิจัยนี้มีข้อเสนอแนะว่า บทบาททางการเมืองของผู้นำทางจิตวิญญาณจำเป็นต้องตระหนักถึงความพอดีในสถานะของตนที่มีความสำคัญด้านจิตวิญญาณด้วยเช่นกัน อาศัยสิ่งนี้เอง ท่านเกียลวากรรมาปานำพามนุษย์และสังคมเข้าสู่ความสงบสันติ ดังวิธีการที่กล่าวมา การแสดงความเป็นผู้นำทางจิตวิญญาณในรูปแบบการอวตารเป็นเพียงเครื่องมือที่ใช้สำหรับการอบรมสั่งสอนมนุษย์ธรรมดาทั่วไปและเพื่อการพิทักษ์รักษาพระพุทธศาสนาไว้เท่านั้นเอง

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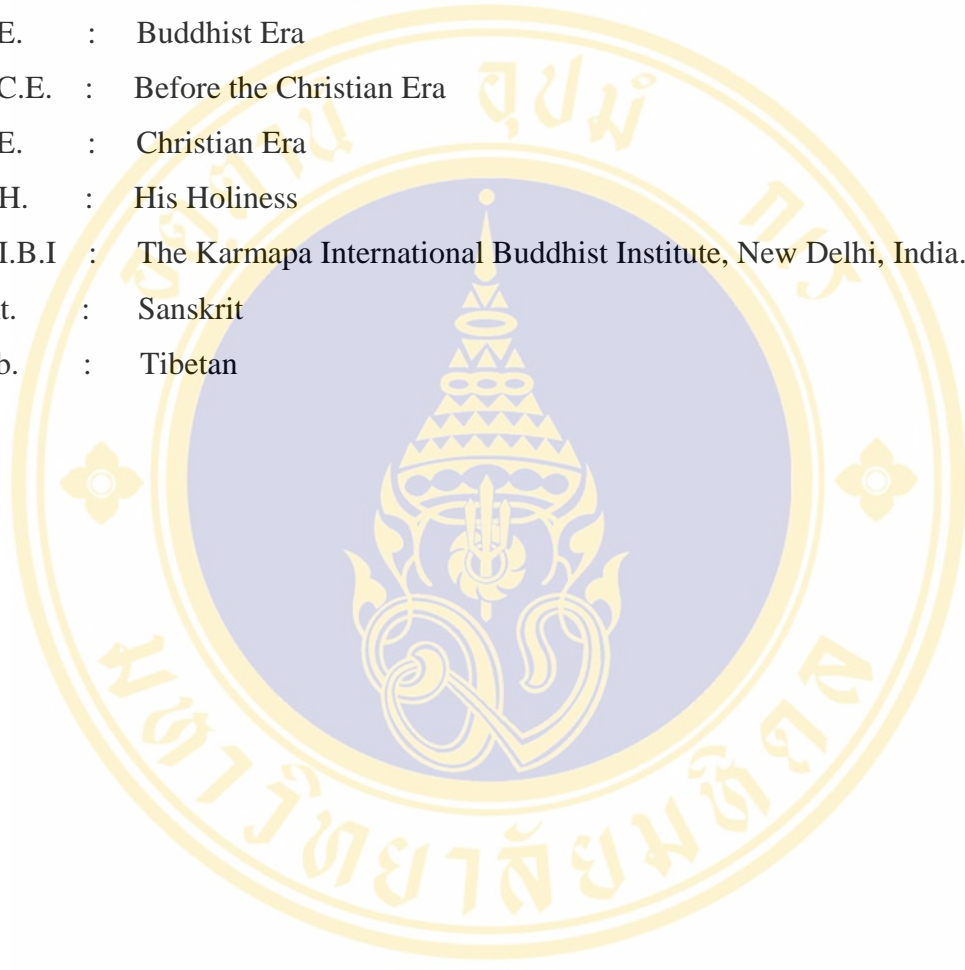
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LEST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.E.	:	Buddhist Era
B.C.E.	:	Before the Christian Era
C.E.	:	Christian Era
H.H.	:	His Holiness
K.I.B.I	:	The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute, New Delhi, India. (KIBI)
Skt.	:	Sanskrit
Tib.	:	Tibetan



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Tibet has been governed formally by lamas of the Geluk sect since the 1640s C.E. In 1960 C.E., Tibet was seized by the Chinese government and the Tibetan government pattern was changed to be communist (Richardson, 1984: 41). But even though governed by a Chinese communist regime, Tibet still has an outstanding culture and tradition due partly to being governed by lamas for more than 400 years. The spiritual relationship between religious leaders and Tibetans is something unalterable in society as belief in lama leaders from one generation to the next is fundamental. For this reason, the reincarnation of lama leaders has been a long held tradition among Tibetans up until the present time.

The concept of reincarnation among Tibetan lamas arose in the Karma-Kagyu sect, which is a sub-sect of the Kagyu sect, or Black Crown sect in modern parlance. This idea was employed for seeking out a new leader since lamas were not allowed to have sex or, therefore, produce children. Thus, the reincarnation of lamas was invented by the Karma sect, which adapted the teaching of Hindu reincarnation from the *Sankaracharya* Sect (Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1989: 31). The *Sankaracharya* Sect was adopted by Tibetans from Indian academics, who came to Tibet for promoting the sect's scriptures (ibid., 1989: 31). Later, the ideology was gradually mixed with the *Mahāyāna* sect of Buddhism in Tibet and transformed to be the *Tulku* theory of the Karma-Kagyu sect. The Kagyu sect was therefore the first to have a reincarnated leader in Tibet. In order to express the status of the Supreme Patriarch and the sect leader, the title name "Gyalwa Karmapa" has been employed for reincarnation leaders since then.

The concept of reincarnation for the Gyalwa Kamapa of the Kagyu Sect involves a combination of religious ideas from Hinduism and *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. The

Reincarnation of God in Hinduism was adapted to the Three-Bodies (Skt. *Trikāya*)¹ theory in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, which also contained *Tantric* elements² such as the Six Yogas of *Naropa* and focused on the *Bodhisattva* path of the Ten Perfections.³

The word ‘*Tulku*’ in Tibetan language or ‘*Nirmāṇakāya*’ in Sanskrit means the transformation body of the *Ādibuddha*⁴, who projects a magical body as a human according to the Three Bodies theory in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Thus, the Kagyu sect believes that the Gyalwa Karmapa is a “*Tulku* or *Nirmāṇakāya* of the Lord Buddha who is the reincarnated Four-Armed *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*”, or in Tibetan called “*Chenrezig*.”

Beliefs regarding the *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* in Tibet have a particular manifestation in the Kagyu sect, which mentions a passage about the prediction of *Śākyamuni* Buddha. The prediction said that there will be a new *Bodhisattva* who would be born to spread Buddhism for people living in a snowy land⁵. Not long after the prediction was revealed, the Four-Armed *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* was born in a lotus soaked with light from the pure heart of *Amitābha* Buddha. The *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* announced his intention to the face of the *Amitābha* Buddha that he would teach all barbarians, who lived in a high snowy land to know Buddhism (Landaw and Weber, 1993: 57). In order to achieve such an intention, the *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* projected a reincarnation to be reborn as a man (*Tulku/Nirmāṇakāya*) for teaching Tibetans to know the way of liberation from suffering (*Samsāra*) according to the regime of Buddhism.

The *Bhadrakalpā Sūtra* of Tibetan Buddhism mentions the importance of the reincarnation of the *Tulku* Gyalwa Karmapa in a passage that states that the Gyalwa Karmapa would be a Buddha in the future after having reincarnated a total of 21 times. “He would be enlightened after *Maitreya* Buddha as the sixth Buddha with the name of “*Drukpa Senge or Singedha* (Skt. *Siṃha*),” which means the lion’s roar”⁶ (His

¹ The Three Bodies of Buddha is in the oldest *Mahāyāna Sūtra* in the earliest version of the text (Powers, 1995: 113).

² *Tantric* elements such as the *Tantra Chakra* meditation as well as the controlling of heat and wind into 27,000 channels in a body system.

³ The *Bodhisattva* who has practiced the Ten *Pāramitā* will be a Buddha.

⁴ *Ādibuddha* (Tib. *Chohu*) is the primordial Buddha of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

⁵ Meaning Tibet.

⁶ Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1982: 38.

Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje). There is a comparable idea in *Theravāda* Buddhism, which also mentions future Buddhas after *Maitreya* Buddha, the twenty-eighth Buddha being *Norasiha* Buddha in the *Pali* text (Songklin, Prayote, 1997: 55), or *Narasimha* Buddha (Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1982: 38) in Tibetan text.

In 1110 C.E., Gyalwa Karmapa *Dusum Khenpa* was the first leader of the Karma-Kagyü sect to be reincarnated (Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1989: 32). The reincarnation of Gyalwa Karmapa *Dusum Khenpa* established a series of reincarnated leaders in the Kagyü sect. The success of this reincarnation concept in the Kagyü sect led to its imitation among other sects and Buddhist schools throughout Tibet. Thus, it could be said that the Kagyü sect originated the reincarnation concept for all lamas in Tibet. In addition, a by-product of the reincarnation concept was revealed in the fact that Gyalwa Karmapa governed more areas and had more military power in Tibet.

The success of the reincarnation concept meant that the 1st Gyalwa Karmapa was powerful in both religious and military aspects, as he governed land and was a religious leader in Tibet (*ibid.*). The Gyalwa Karmapa and the monasteries of the Kagyü sect received support in terms of money and other forms of wealth and property from devotees. Gyalwa Karmapa gradually became the master teacher of many groups of Mongolian, Chinese, and Tibetan people and was the most powerful governor in the Tibetan Empire at that time. Since then, Gyalwa Karmapa has been acknowledged as the informal leader of Tibet.

The outstanding role in Tibet of Gyalwa Karmapa not only made the Kagyü sect widely known throughout neighboring countries, it also created discomfort for the Geluk sect leader, namely *Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso*, or the 5th Dalai Lama. So in 1617 C.E., the 5th Dalai Lama *Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso* asked for help from the Mongolian military to take over power from the Kagyü sect leader or the 10th Gyalwa Karmapa *Choying Dorje*. After gaining supremacy over the 10th Gyalwa Karmapa, the 5th Dalai Lama *Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso* displaced the Gyalwa Karmapa from his high estate and set himself up to be enthroned as king of the Tibetan empire under the support of the Mongols (Richardson, 1984: 41). Since then, the Geluk sect has

formally governed Tibet and established the kingdom's leader and religious leader through the supreme position called "Dalai Lama."

In the Kagyu sect it is recorded that after the Geluk sect leader seized power and took over the property of the 10th Gyalwa Karmapa in 1630 C.E. (His Holiness the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa, 1999: 2), the 10th Gyalwa Karmapa wandered from Tibet to the northern part of India and the Yunnan province of China to practice Dharma. The Geluk sect leader took over more than 22 temples of the Kagyu sect. Only *Tsurphu* monastery, the centre of Kagyu learning still belonged to the Kagyu sect. When the 10th Gyalwa Karmapa passed away, the Kagyu sect still kept the traditional culture of selecting reincarnation leaders for the next Gyalwa Karmapa.

During the eighteenth century (*ibid.*), the Gyalwa Karmapa *Jangchub Dorje* resurrected the Kagyu sect again under the support of the Chinese Emperor, *Yung Cheng*, but this attempt was obstructed by the Geluk sect, which was directly supported in both military and financial terms by the *Ching* dynasty of China's members and noble men. In 1732 C.E. (*ibid.*), the 12th Gyalwa Karmapa was invited by King *Yung Cheng* of the *Ching* Dynasty to spread religion for the Chinese royal court but his mandate was not completed due to the 12th Gyalwa Karmapa dying from smallpox in Beijing⁷. For this reason, the Kagyu sect could not recover its power in Tibet and the Geluk sect still remained the leader in terms of both religion and political power under the support of the Chinese government (The Editors, 1992: 8). In 1959 C.E., the Geluk sect suddenly lost its power in Tibet due to the Chinese government absolutely occupying Tibet.

In the middle of 1959 C.E. (Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1982: 13), the Kagyu sect recovered again in the regime of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa *Rangjung Rigpe Dorje* due to his being given 74 acres of land in Rumtek under the political authorization of the king of Sikkim, India for constructing the Dharma Chakra Center, the new Buddhist Learning Center. The construction project was approved by the Indian government. Later, the Dharma Chakra Center was the new religious center for the Kagyu sect and the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa *Rangjung Rigpe Dorje* returned to be the most powerful Tibetan leader in Sikkim state, India and adjacent areas. With its

⁷ From the report of *Hutogatu*—an official title bestowed by *Ching* Dynasty emperors on certain Geluk sect lamas in Beijing (His Holiness the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa, 1999: 2).

expertise on Buddhism and ability to offer spiritual leadership for Buddhists, the Kagyu sect could recover and expand its power widely and successfully. Many new monasteries were constructed throughout Sikkim, India, Nepal, Bhutan, and China. The well-known reputation of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa *Rangjung Rigpe Dorje* meant that he was attended to by a group of old noble men who strongly respected him and who gave him a Black Crown decorated with colorful diamonds and gems. This Black Crown represented his prestige as a spiritual and social leader who was well-known throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas. For the rest of his life, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa *Rangjung Rigpe Dorje* conducted his life spreading the Buddha's teachings until he passed away on November 6, 1981 C.E., in Chicago, USA (ibid., 1982: 26), without returning to politics again. His dead body was sent back to Rumtek monastery for religious worship and many followers throughout the world came to Rumtek monastery to pay gratitude to their spiritual leader. Nowadays, the Rumtek monastery promotes Tibetan Buddhist culture through architecture, art, religious culture and learning. Also, the monastery is a place for keeping all of the Karmapa lineage statues, the relics of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, and the old Black Crown Hat.

1.2 Key Problem

The reincarnation of spiritual leaders in Tibetan society strongly expresses the status and prestige of leaders in areas of religion, culture, society and politics in the minds of Tibetan Buddhists. The reincarnation of lamas is a religious belief which is impossible to prove through biological genetic investigation. Nevertheless, reincarnation is the only proper way to confirm a leader's right over the deceased's property. In each sect, when a new leader was selected through the reincarnation process, it was revealed that the new leaders were always young, approximately two years old. It is also believed that reincarnation among lamas involves transferring the mind/consciousness from the old body to the new one. Memory about the past life such as important events, things used in the past life, a prophecy and important remarks which the dead left behind, are used to identify the reincarnation of the person. Thus, spiritual reincarnation among leaders in Tibetan ideology is a religious belief which has no need for proof, or scientific fact.

Furthermore, as noted, the role of politics and powers, and the need for an authorized lineage of spiritual leaders in religious sects, also added to the significance of the phenomenon of reincarnated spiritual leadership.

The researcher will thus explore the significance of reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism by focusing on the reincarnation and leadership of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the highest lama of the Black Crown Sect (Kagyü) of Tibetan Buddhism.

1.3 Research Objective

This research studies the phenomenon of lama leader reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism through a case study of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the highest leader of lamas in the Black Crown (Kagyü) Sect. It will discuss the reasons behind creating a spiritual leader in a reincarnated form.

1.4 Expectations of the Research

The expectations of the research are to generate true understanding on the reincarnation theory of lama leaders in Buddhism and to find the main religious reasons for generating the religious leaders through a reincarnated form.

1.5 Scope of the Study

1. Documentary research will involve studying primary data such as books, videocassettes, articles from the library of the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in New Delhi, India. Newspapers and documents written by academics concerning reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism will also be used.

2. Field research will involve studying in India through Formal Interviews with key informants and In-Formal Interviews by observation with sample groups of Tibetans in Kalimpong Town and Rumtek in Sikkim, India.

3. The people of this study are Tibetans who live in India.

1.6 Definitions of Terms Used in the Thesis

A Reincarnate: “In Tibetan Buddhism means *Tulku* (Tib.), or *Nirmāṇakāya* (Skt.). A reincarnate lama is frequently an emanation of a particular *Bodhisattva* as a

rebirth of a previous lama” (Geoffrey Samuel, 1993: 195).

Spiritual Leader: “In the Tibetan tradition practitioners must receive a guru's blessings for practicing meditation assiduously. When they develop their devotion to their guru, various benefits will arise. Most important benefits of these are the glimpses of realization resulting from an awareness stripped down to unadorned clarity and openness” (Somala Somjaj Gyaltsen, an expert in Tibetan Buddhism in Rumtek, India).

Gyalwa Karmapa (Skt./Tib.): The title of the oldest reincarnated highest lama of the Karma-Kagyu tradition who is the present highest lama of the Black Crown/Kagyu Sect in Tibetan Buddhism. In Tibetan doctrines it is believed that he is a special holy person who is a physical form or emanation of *Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva* and in the Tibetan sutras the Buddha predicted that after twenty-one reincarnations “he will be the Lord Buddha after *Maitreya* Buddha with the name *Singedha* Buddha” (His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje).

Dorje (Tib.): A small scepter used in Buddhist rituals in conjunction with a bell. “The bell is the symbol of the female principle, or wisdom; the Dorje (Skt. *Vajra*, meaning ‘diamond’ or ‘thunderbolt’) represents that which is indestructible, and is a symbol of the male principle, or method. Together, the union of wisdom and method symbolizes the attainment of enlightenment. Dorje is also a common name for Tibetan men” (Brown, 2004: 298).

Black Crown: A symbol of the highest lamas of the Kagyu sect, which is a unique black hat with gems worn only by the Gyalwa Karmapa. The original hat was offered to the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa by a Chinese group. In the Kagyu mythical tradition, the hat is said to be a material copy of a spiritual crown woven from the hair of celestial beings called *Dakinis*” (Soma Somjaj Gyaltsen, an expert in Tibetan Buddhism in Rumtek, India). The Gyalwa Karmapa wears the black crown hat only during certain important rituals performed on his throne (ibid.). Now the old original jeweled black hat is kept in the Dharma Chakra Center at Rumtek under the protection of the Indian Government (Form the report of Jigme Tenzin Gyaltsen, the present private trustee of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Doje).

1.7 Related Literature and Research

Among Thai scholars the researcher could find no literature or research works on the Karmapa reincarnation of Black Crown Lamas in Tibetan Buddhism. However, Thailand has many books on Tibetan Buddhism that are translated from English by writers who have studied the concept of reincarnation. The researcher found a Master degree thesis at Chulalongkorn University on the topic of reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism. The researcher also consulted literature and research works about reincarnation written in other countries. The researcher identified four scholarly texts exploring reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism or the concept of reincarnation in other faiths.

1. Samuel, Geoffrey. (1976). *Religion and Politics in Tibetan Society*. Thesis of Doctorate in Social Anthropology. Cambridge University.

Samuel studied the reincarnation of lamas in Tibet in terms of politics and society. From his research he found that political power in Tibet was a matter of maintaining shifting alliances between powerful local landowners, increasingly powerful monasteries, and wealthy trading families. The lamas, both those identified as reincarnated leaders, and those appointed by other means, were very much part of this process and their status and legitimacy was essentially a function of the effectiveness with which their monastic establishment operated in this environment. “Recognition by other lamas and by political authorities, the possession of and right to transmit valued spiritual practices, as well as personal spiritual and other qualities, were all significant components of their status and legitimacy, but none by itself was decisive. The Lhasa government was effectively directly controlled by the Dalai Lama, who gained control in 1640 C.E. (Samuel, Geoffrey)”. The latter coincided with greater control by the large Geluk monasteries. Therefore, for Samuel, reincarnated lamas are a political strategy for maintaining the power of religious leaders.

2. Stevenson, Ian, M.D. (1966). *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. New York: American Society for Psychical Research Volume XXVI.

Stevenson, a psychiatrist, studied reincarnation through the remembered experiences of human consciousness in a child. His research describes how

reincarnation can happen in human beings through a connecting mind/consciousness. The experiences of the old mind/consciousness of a human being can be remembered in the present, regarding matters such as past life, home, persons, events etc. Some special cases involved the rebirth of an old spiritual leader or the claim to receive telepathy from God. A special instance of reincarnation is the case of a Lebanese boy, five years of age. This boy could relate the real full names of people who lived in a far away village. This boy made Stevenson believe in reincarnation and telepathy in human beings.

3. Powers, John. (1995). *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. New York, USA: Snow Lion Publications Inc.

Powers studied specific elements of Tibetan traditions of Buddhism. His research intended to explore the history, philosophy, rituals, and architecture of Buddhism in Tibet. This research described how reincarnation is the transformation of the mind/consciousness of a special holy person or high lama. The reincarnation doctrine in Tibet developed from the Bon religion and the teaching of Indian masters who introduced their religions to early Tibet. Reincarnation became the method for connecting the mind/consciousness of an old leader with a new spiritual leader as Dharma Kings in Tibetan society.

4. Vajradhara Amitabharn, (2004). *Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism*. Thesis of Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies. Chulalongkorn University.

Vajradhara is the only Thai scholar that the researcher has found who studied reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism. In his research he compared the doctrines of Rebirth and Karma in Tibetan and *Theravāda* Buddhism. From his research he found that reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism is connected with the path of the *Bodhisattva*. For the highest lama who has trained the mind successfully, when passing away such an individual will be liberated from suffering in *Bardo* by being able to direct one's consciousness. *Bodhisattvas* who understand the Dharma will be reincarnated in the world. Through the powers of their vows, they can meditate to be reincarnated with awareness in their mothers' wombs in the human form, and are not controlled by karma, like ordinary people.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF REINCARNATION IN TIBET

The theory of reincarnation in Tibet is the result of an evolution and combination of various religious ideologies. The coordination of fundamental religious motifs and cultural ideas made their way into Tibet through trade routes. The influence of Buddhism in India made Tibetans orientate their old beliefs based on folk religion (Bön) toward Buddhism. The success of the Gyalwa Karmapa as a reincarnated emanation of a *Bodhisattva* in the Kagyu sect results from a matrix of ideas based around reincarnation that became rooted in the Tibetan tradition and is still important to this day.

2.1 The Origin and Development of the Reincarnation Concept

2.1.1 Bonism

In Tibet, in the ancient times, the people called themselves Pö, or Bö⁸ and their religion was called Bön. Bös was a name used for inhabitants who lived around on the Tibetan plateau. And the term ‘Tibet’ comes from Mongolian word *Thubet* meaning the land of snow (Powers, 1995: 119).

The Böns’ religion was a form of nature worship, which mixed animism and shamanism (ibid., 1995: 431). Animism involves cults of local spirits, such as rocks, mountains, trees, rivers, the sun, moon, fire, etc., in which Gods are everywhere (in nature and in houses). The Bös also practiced ancestor rituals, for they believed in life after death and that the spirit of a dead person lived in the ancestors world until reborn in the human world again.

Furthermore, Tibetan Böns would kill animals and sometimes humans (a child or a man only) in ceremonies of God worship (Bansal, 1999: 44). They believed that the best offering for a god was blood or life and that God would give something back in return to fulfil their wishes.

⁸ The earliest Mongols called Tibetans as Bugyel, later called Pö or Böd because of their religion.

Bonism was a non-Buddhist religious element in Tibet that existed before Buddhism was introduced. However, it later assumed a lot of Buddhist aspects.

A brief summary of Bön beliefs can be given as follows:

Bön received its cosmology from ancient Iran. They devised the world into three spheres—heaven, earth, and the underworld (ibid., 1999: 42).

Heaven: In the Bön idea of heaven, there are thirteen states. Their kings were gods who came down from the sky to protect Tibet and Tibetans in the form of a man. The governance of Tibet and Tibetans was thus under a king-god and the king was treated as a living deity (ibid., 1999: 43).

Spirit and Mind: The influence of animism supports the idea of a living soul or spirit in nature and the mind of sentient beings. For death rites, a dead person will live in the death world before being reborn again so he/she must use objects, eat food, and drink the same as those living in the human world. Bös had elaborate rituals for taking care of the dead through ceremonies intended to ensure their safe journey to the after-life (Powers, 1995:432), which often involved sacrificing animals and making offerings of food and drink in funerary rites.

Sacrifice and Worship: This involved offerings in the form of killing an animal and offering objects to God in the hopes of having their wishes fulfilled (Bansal, 1999: 44).

Bön has creation myths sung by bards. Their songs and riddles involved questions and answers about the creation of the world, human beings, and divine genealogies (ibid., 1999: 37).

Spirit Trap: The spirit trap is a tool or method for catching bad/evil spirits (ibid., 1999: 44) which will come in insect or spider form.

After the 8th century C.E., shamans were renamed as Bonpo and took over religious power in *Yarlung* valley and monopolized ceremonies in the *Nyatri Tsenpo* palace⁹.

⁹ *Nyatri Tsenpo* was the first king of the *Yarlung* Dynasty, the earliest ruling power of Tibet (Powers, 1995: 123).

2.1.2 Buddhism

About the 6th century B.C.E., Buddhism was established in India by Prince *Siddhārtha* (ibid., 1999: 107). His teachings did not agree with many Brahmanical concepts, especially the theory of class and sacrifice. But his main stress was a path of ethical insight, a philosophy concerning a path to salvation. After Buddhism had settled down, temples and universities flourished in the northern part of India.

In the following period, Buddhism developed quickly and travelled widely. The Emperor *Ashoka* (Powers, 1995: 124), who made Buddhism the predominant religion in northern India, sent Buddhist missionaries from India to central Asia and beyond (Bell, 1998: 24) to Kashmir, Gilgit, and Baltistan¹⁰. Moreover, Buddhism travelled across the Pamir Mountains to China and passed to the north and south of the Taklamakan desert. However, with the coming of Muslims to India in the 13th century, Buddhism in India gradually disappeared.

In Tibet, in 367 C.E., in the time of King *To-to-ri Nyentsen*¹¹, there were five Kashmiri Buddhist missionaries, who crossed from Nepal to Tibet to introduce Buddhism (Khosla, 1972: 152), but Tibetans showed no interest because they strongly believed in Bonism. After that, again in 570 C.E., in the time of *Namrison Tsang*—the king of the *Gompo* royal period—Buddhism came into Tibet (Medhankar, 1997: 101) and again Tibetans were not interested for the same reason.

The successful transmission of Buddhism into Tibet occurred during 629 C.E. in the time of *Tsrong Tsang Gambo*¹², who was the great emperor of the Tibetan empire (the 30th king of the *Gompo* royal period). The traditional reason for this is that he married two Buddhist princesses: a Nepali princess named “*Bhṛkuti*”¹³ who was a Tantra *Mahāyāna* Buddhist and a Chinese princess named “*Wen-ch’eng*”¹⁴ who was a Chinese *Mahāyāna* Buddhist (Powers, 1995: 127). Both queens brought Buddhist texts and statues into Tibet. Under the influence of the Buddhism of his wives, the Bhot

¹⁰ The area of Baltistan is now known as the northern part of India: Ladakh, Kashmir, and Pakistan.

¹¹ Some books called the King *Hlatori* or *Bho-tho-Renyem-Sheye*.

¹² The son of King *Namrison Tsang* (Medhankar, 1997: 101).

¹³ She was a daughter of *Amshuvarman*, the king of the Nepal valley. Tibetans called her *Belsa* or *Tritsun* (Powers, 1995: 127).

¹⁴ She was a daughter of *T’ai-Tsung*, the Chinese emperor. Tibetans called her as *Gyasa* (ibid., 1995: 127).

king is said to have become a Buddhist and established Buddhist monasteries. The royal court thus introduced Buddhist civilization to Tibetans.

During the early Buddhist period in Tibet, Buddhism had an encounter with Bonism. Tibetan Buddhism refers to a mythical person called *Padmasambhava*¹⁵, who came to Tibet in 747 C.E. by the invitation of King *Khri-Sron-Ide-Btsan*, or *Trisong Detsen* (Bansal, 1999: 126). *Padmasambhava* was an Indian master, “a strange holy man and sorcerer from India” (Samuel, 1993: 11), who is said to have subjugated the power of Bön shamans. This Indian savant was proficient in various subjects and later shamans themselves changed their form to be Buddhist monks. In this king’s era, Buddhism was successfully established in Tibet by building the first Tantric monastery at *Samye Monastery*¹⁶ and by translating Buddhist texts from India, China, and Kashmir into Tibetan. *Padmasambhava* also established the first monastic institution (Risley, 1928: 245) later called the “*Kadampa* school/line” to teach Buddhism based on Indian Tantrism. From that period on, Buddhism settled down in Tibet. Other Indian masters also travelled to Tibet, such as *Atīśa* in 1042 C.E (Powers, 1995: 137) to spread his teaching, which were based on yogin *tantric* practices.

Later on, many Indian yogis entered Tibet to spread their teachings and at the same time Tibetan lamas went to neighbouring countries such as India, Nepal, China, and Kashmir to learn philosophy and Dharma practice, and brought these teachings back to Tibet, including art and writing, textbooks of grammar, reincarnation teachings, and *Tantric* Yoga (Bansal, 1999: 118).

In the 11th to 12th centuries C.E., Buddhism in Tibet had a revival (Powers, 1995: 313) and four major sects arose —Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Geluk. Each school had a lineage linked to a particular Indian master and had distinctive *tantric* practices (ibid., 1995: 315).

2.1.3 Hinduism

Hinduism in India today represents an evolution of the Brahmanism of Aryan people, who arrived in North India in approximately the second millennium the B.C.E. The teachings in the Vedas of Brahmans were considered to be divine and to be

¹⁵ *Padmasambhava* (Tib. *Pedma Jungne*) meaning born in the lotus (Risley, 1928: 244).

¹⁶ This Monastery was the mixture of three architectural traditions, cultural styles of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan Buddhism.

the speech of God. Reincarnation was one of the most important teachings in the Brahmanas, *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad Gita* (Vikram, 2004: 36). The Brahmanas and the *Upanishads* were the first writings to elaborate the idea of a second death from the heavenly realm (ibid., 2004: 31). Moreover, “The *Bhagavad Gita* was part of the *Mahābhārata* epic, in which reincarnation is clearly stated as a natural process of life that has to be followed by all mortal beings” (ibid., 2004: 34).

In Hinduism, God can incarnate himself in the form of emanations, whether animal, human, king, queen, god, goddess or other forms. The significance of God’s emanation, or reincarnation was to help sentient beings. For example, the god *Viṣṇu* had ten emanations (*Avatār*) such as: *Matsya* (fish), *Kurma* (tortoise), *Varāha* (boar), *Narasimha* (man-lion), *Vāmana* (dwarf), *Parashurāma* (warrior with an axe), *Pashu Rām* (a man), *Kriṣṇa*, Buddha, and *Kalki* (a man on a white horse, and Hindus believe that this avatar will come at the time of *Pralaya*) (Kanitkar, 2003: 25).

Reincarnation is also done by humans and other sentient beings but this involves transmigration of their soul (*Atman* or *Purusha*) to another body (Vikram, 2004: 6). Human beings are reincarnated under the influence of their merit and sin (Karma). Sentient beings must be reborn again and again in the cycle of rebirth. Sometimes, the soul of a spiritually developed person can be united with God (the Lord of God or universe) or enter *Moksha* (liberation—freedom from the cycle of rebirth).

Shaivism was a sect of Hinduism, which worships *Śhiva*. *Śhiva* was a *Mahadeva* or Great God, who protects the universe (Kanitkar, 2003: 28). *Shaivites* believe that *Śhiva* and his consort, *Parvati*, were the creators of the universe.

Between 500 C.E. and 1200 C.E., when Buddhism flourished in India, *Shaivism* and *Vishnuism*, and the cult of the *Mata Goddess*¹⁷ (*Sakti*) also flourished in the middle and northern part of India (ibid., 2003: 39). The main feature of *Śhiva* worship was the *lingam*—a symbol of creation. *Viṣṇu*, the preserver of the universe, was famed for his ten emanations that he emitted to destroy evil and to teach human beings how to enter *Moksha*.

¹⁷ The consort of the God such as: *Sitā-Rāma*, *Lakshmi-Narayana*, *Radha-Kriṣṇa*, *Uma-Mahesha*, etc. (Kanitkar, 2003: 39).

From the 1st century B.C.E. to the 4th century C.E. (Samuel, 1993: 388), *Mahāyāna* Buddhism had its origins and founded schools also in northern India. *Mahāyāna* Buddhist Schools developed side-by-side with Hindu movements, and the *Mahāyāna* schools adapted the Hindu notion of *avatār* into a Buddhist context by putting forward the idea of Buddha and *Bodhisattva* emanations (ibid., 1993: 390). The practice and ritual of Hindu Tantra also had an influence on *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

During the 11th to 12th centuries C.E., Buddhism flourished in Tibet. Tibetan Buddhists travelled to study *Mahāyāna* Tantric philosophy and Indian Yoga in the northern part of India (ibid., 1993: 409). Finally, Tantric Buddhism took root firmly within Tibet. Tantric *Mahāyāna* practices became fundamental to the training of high lamas, or *Tulkus* (*Tülku*) in Tibet for controlling mind/consciousness to take rebirth as Buddha and *Bodhisattva avatār*, or emanations.

2.2 The Theory of Reincarnation

The theory of reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism derives from *Mahāyāna* Buddhist concepts formed in India. While concepts of *Bodhisattva* and *Nirvāṇa* developed differently in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism in comparison to *Theravāda Buddhism*, the idea of *Saṃsarā* is fundamentally the same in *Mahāyāna* and *Theravāda* Buddhism, and is key to understanding the idea of reincarnation and rebirth. The focus of the Buddha's teachings is based upon the Four Noble Truths¹⁸, which was the truth that the Buddha recognized with existential clarity on the night of his enlightenment. In addition, the Buddha was also able to see his past lives and the past lives of others. This concept of continuous rebirth is central to the Buddha's view that *Saṃsarā* is full of suffering (Skt. *Duhkha*).

2.2.1 *Saṃsarā*¹⁹

Saṃsarā is a cycle of life involving a ceaseless round of rebirth with attendant suffering (Risley, 1928: 266). It primarily illustrates an understanding of the working of mind/consciousness (*Citta*), depicting the various realms of cyclic

¹⁸ There are: 1) the truth of suffering 2) the truth of the origin of suffering 3) the truth of the cessation of suffering and 4) the truth of the eightfold path which overcomes suffering (Powers, 1995:56).

¹⁹ Data sources of explanation taken from Landow, 1993: 30-36.

existence and beings inhabiting these realms. The cause of all suffering is rooted in the delusions, which obscure the essentially pure nature of mind/consciousness, which can be eradicated completely in order to achieve liberation from *Saṃsāra*.



In Tibetan Buddhism, a common image of *Saṃsāra* is a wheel of life diagram, which is an intricate explication of the mind/consciousness rebirth linked to karma. The individual mind/consciousness passes from a plane of existence carrying impressions from former states of being. These karmic agglomerations in the mind/consciousness are taken to the next life and result in a causally-determined state of being.

Shinje chho gyal, or *Yama* is the Lord of Death, who clasps the *Bhava Chakra* or *Sipai Khorlo* (the cycle of life) with his claws and legs. The three animal pictures in the centre of the diagram are a pig, a bird, and a snake meaning the three root evils (mental poisons) responsible for all suffering and dissatisfaction (ibid.,

1928: 267). The destructive effects of desirous attachment and fearful anger both arise from a fundamental ignorance of the way in which things actually exist.

Moving out from the center, the next big circle is the division of six realms of existence through which all living beings pass until liberation (Tib. *Nyangan-de*, Skt. *Nirvāṇa*). Each realm is made up of two paths: the higher and the lower. Through the pervasive influence of fundamental ignorance, one is born either as a god, demigod, human being, animal, hungry spirit or hell-being, (ibid., 1928: 269). These realms are brought into existence not by a creator god, but through the ripening of potentialities previously generated by our own wholesome (good-karma, good actions, merits) or unwholesome qualities (bad-karma, bad actions, sin). Since all such actions of body, speech and mind are initiated by mental intentions. Ultimately these six realms are all creations of our own mind/consciousness (Landow, 1993: 30). These six states of existence can also be understood as states of consciousness in human experience even now as inhabitants of the human realm, as when encountering extremes of mental or physical pleasure and pain.

At the bottom of the wheel are the hell realms (Skt. *naraka*). It is intensification of suffering presided over by the *Yama*²⁰. The *Yama* holds this realm in his right hand, a stick which he uses as a pointer, and in his left hand a mirror. Before him kneels a recently deceased person, to be understood as oneself, and the various wholesome (merit) and unwholesome (sin) deeds of the life just finished are reflected in *Yama*'s mirror and weighed in the scales of the demon standing before him (ibid.). If unwholesome activities exceed the wholesome, the unfortunate being is led away to experience the heat, cold, confinement, piercing pain and other torments characteristic of this agonizing state of existence.

It is important to remember that despite what is so vividly and dramatically depicted here, the painful experiences of this and the other realms are not punishments inflicted from without. Nor should these realms be thought of as pre-existing places of imprisonment to which the suffering being has been banished by some outside force (ibid). In the case of hellish suffering, the predominant causes for experiencing such misery are our own uncontrolled mind's poisonous delusion of fearful anger and the extremely harmful action, such as murder, that we engage in while motivated by such

²⁰ In Tibetan Buddhism, the *Yama* means the lord of death.

a powerful delusion. Even in the human realms we may experience a measure of this hellish suffering, as when we are boiling with rage or imprisoned in fearful paranoia.

The realm of the hungry spirits (Tib. *Yidak*, Skt. *Preta*) is based on wrath and aggression (Dummer, 1998: 29). The primary delusion leading one to be reborn here and experience the miseries is shown as miserliness. As a result of negative actions motivated by this delusion, *Pretas* suffer mainly from insatiable hunger and thirst. They are described as having thin necks which are often tied in knots, and large stomachs. They also experience many other hindrances in their quest for food and drink.

Rebirth in the realm of animals (Skt. *Tirjak*, Tib. *Dundo*) is caused by slavishly and stupidly following one's sensory desires, and although experiences within this realm vary enormously, animals in general suffer from limited intelligence. In addition, they must endure being chased and eaten by other animals, hunted, and used for heavy labor by humans, exposed to heat and cold and plagued by continual hunger and thirst.

The three higher realms of existence contain less obvious suffering. Yet even in these higher realms there is great disappointment and dissatisfaction to be experienced.

At the top and the right side are the interrelated *Devas* (Tib. *Lha*) and *Asuras* (Tib. *Lhamayin*). *Asuras* are so consumed by jealousy for the superior *Devas* that, instead of enjoying what they have they engage in continual warfare with those above them. As for the *Devas* themselves, while some of them are engaged in defending themselves from attacks by the inferior *Asuras*, others live a life of uninterrupted sensory indulgence. Still others, in higher planes, spend their extremely long lifetimes in a sleep-like state of meditative absorption, experiencing neither pleasure nor pain but complete blank-mindedness. The *Devas* easily mistake their experiences for true liberation from suffering but since they have not uprooted the fundamental delusion of ignorance from their minds, they are not really liberated at all. Eventually, as is true for all the realms, the causes for experiencing life in that realm are exhausted. Because their store of virtuous energy has been depleted even the most long-lived *Devas* must face death, and what is worse, an inevitable descent to one of the lower realms. This means that the mental anguish of a once fortunate *Deva* is even more excruciating than

the physical torments of the most unfortunate hell-being.

Finally, the realm of human beings, as Prince *Siddhārtha* so painfully realized, is filled with the sufferings of birth, sickness, old age and death, as well as uncertainty, dissatisfaction, frustration, boredom and the like. Furthermore, the pleasures available here are ephemeral and can easily turn sour, as when over-indulgent eating leads to indigestion. Despite their wishes to experience happiness and avoid suffering, humans are continually misled by their ignorance and must encounter unwanted miseries again and again (ibid).

However, the human being realm (Skt. *Manusha*, Tib. *Mi*) is considered the most fortunate realm of all. This is because human beings enjoy an amount of freedom that neither the lower realm beings (who are preoccupied with pain) nor the higher gods (who are intoxicated by pleasure) possess. Motivated by the suffering and dissatisfaction they experience and endowed with varying degrees of discriminative intelligence, human beings are particularly well-placed to do something of consequence with their lives (ibid.). Specifically, they can learn how to cultivate the moral self-control, concentration and insightful wisdom necessary to uproot the causes of suffering and gain freedom from repeated rebirth in the realms of cyclic existence.

Death is not the final extinction. It merely marks the transition between one life and next. The mind itself is a beginningless continuum that moves from life to life and from body to body the way a traveller moves from one house to another. And as we can move up and down within one lifetime—experiencing alternating pleasure and pain according to changing conditions—so too do we move up and down from one life to the next, depending upon the ripening of imprints left on our mind by the positive and negative actions we have committed (ibid.).

The *Bardo* state is like a dream state between death and rebirth. In the wheel of life picture, six *Bardo* beings are shown. Thus on the left are depicted future human beings, *Asuras*, and *Devas* going upwards towards the higher realms. While on the right are future animals, *Pretas*, and hell beings had shown descending to the lower realms.

The precise mechanism whereby beings are compelled by their ignorance to move up and down from one realm to the next is illustrated in the outer rim of the cycle. This rim is divided into the twelve causes of Interdependent Origination and

each one corresponds to a link in the chain of dependent arising. Starting at the top right these twelve symbolic images are in the table as follows:

Symbolizes	Picture	Tib.	Skt.
1. Ignorance	A blind man groping	<i>Ma-rig</i>	<i>Avidyā</i>
2. Predispositions	A potter molding clay according to set patterns	<i>Du-byed</i>	<i>Samskāra</i>
3. The working of Mind/Consciousness	A monkey climbing up and down a tree	<i>Nam-ses</i>	<i>Viñjāna</i>
4. Name and Form	Two men rowing a boat	<i>Ming-gzugs</i>	<i>Nāmarūpa</i>
5. Six Senses ²¹	A house with six (or five) windows	<i>Khy-ched</i>	<i>Ṣaḍāyatana</i>
6. Contact	A pair of lovers embracing	<i>Reg-pa</i>	<i>Sparśa</i>
7. Feeling	An arrow piercing a man's eye and causing pain	<i>Tshor-ba</i>	<i>Vedanā</i>
8. Attachment	A man drinking alcohol	<i>Sred-pa</i>	<i>Truṣhnā</i>
9. Grasping	A woman plucking fruits	<i>Len-pa</i>	<i>Upādāna</i>
10. Existence	A couple making love	<i>Srid-pa</i>	<i>Bhava</i>
11. Birth	A woman in labor	<i>Kye-ba</i>	<i>Jāi</i>
12. Death and Aging	A man carrying a corpse	<i>Rgas-si</i>	<i>Jarā-Maraṇa</i>

The brief explanation of the twelve links is couched in terms of taking a human rebirth in *Saṃsāra*. In this process, the primary factor is ignorance. In a past life, while under the pervasive influence of ignorance like a blind man, a sentient being is driven to preserve and defend his/her supposedly self-existent ego-identity. He/She therefore engages in a wide variety of positive and negative, compositional actions, thereby planting numerous impressions or seeds of karmic instinct upon our mind/consciousness. Some of these actions are sufficiently constructive or virtuous to leave the seeds of a future human rebirth. As life approaches its end, we experience great insecurity and an intense fear of dying (ibid.). With our ego-identity facing the threat of annihilation, we crave and grasp both for the body we are leaving behind as well as for a new body to replace the one we are being forced to relinquish. Through the force of this craving and grasping at the time of death, certain imprints are placed on our consciousness—in this case those for rebirth as a human being, which are selectively ripened, and this ripening process eventually culminates in existence.

As death occurs, our consciousness grows more and more subtle and eventually departs from the body, whereupon it enters the *Bardo*. Our mind

²¹ There are: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind (Powers, 1995: 62).

experiences various dream-like visions of repulsion and attraction until it eventually encounters a human couple having the necessary connection as our parents. Our stream of consciousness again grows more and more subtle and eventually comes into contact with the joining sperm and egg of our future parents (ibid.). Conception marks our birth (a baby being born) into the human realm, as well as the start of our embryonic development beginning with name and form (a man rowing a boat). While still in the womb there developing the six sense-bases (an empty house with six windows) the six senses faculties, leading to contact (a man and woman embracing) with the appropriate sense objects. This eventually elicits our first feelings (a man shot in the eye with an arrow) of pleasure, pain and indifference in relation to these objects as a ripening effect of past positive, negative and neutral actions.

From the moment after conception we begin to grow older, undergoing the various changes and suffering common to the human condition as we experience aging and death (a man carrying a corpse). While our future death will mark the end of one complete chain of twelve links we have in the meantime begun forging innumerable new chains by continuing throughout our life to implant additional impressions on our mind/consciousness (a monkey climbing up and down a tree) by engaging in further actions (a potter making pots) motivated by ignorance (a blind person). In this way we remain bound to the cycle of recurring, unsatisfactory existence known as *Saṃsāra*.

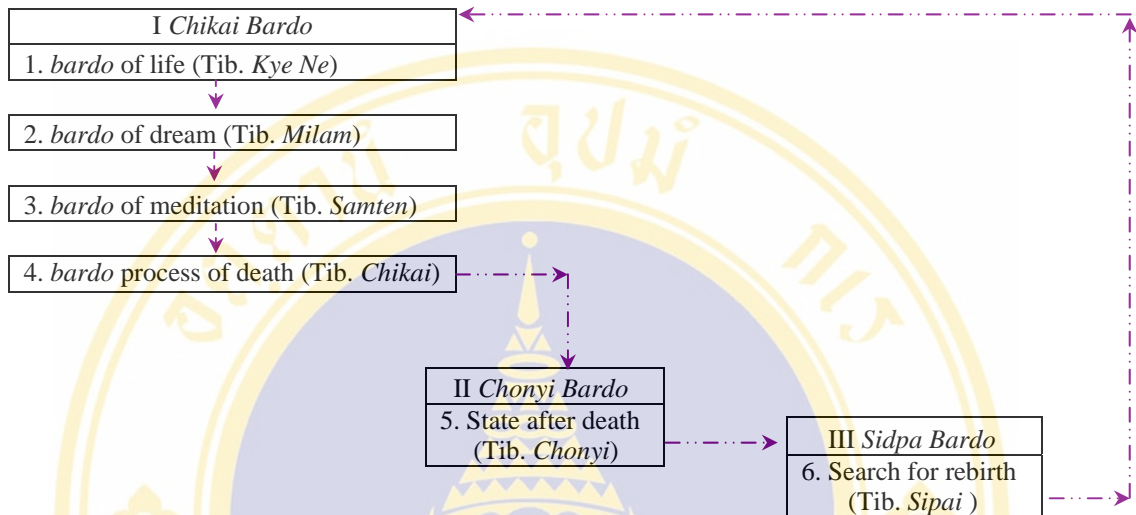
Until we have eradicated ignorance through the development of penetrating wisdom, we will condemn ourselves to migrate ceaselessly from one unsatisfactory realm of existence to the next. It is this recurring cycle of death and perpetual dissatisfaction that has been called *Saṃsāra*.

2.2.2 *Bardos* (Skt. *Antarabhava*)

Bardo means an interval between two things such as sunrise or sunset as the interval between day and night. It also is an interval or intermediate period of experience between death and rebirth (Coleman, 1997: 283). *Bardo* is explained in terms of a six or fourfold division. The cycle of mind existence is divided into the following phases: *Chikai Bardo* (*Bardo* of living), *Chonyi Bardo* (*Bardo* of the death

world), *Sidpa Bardo*²²(*Bardo* of the realm between the death world to rebirth in the human world) (Lama Lodo, 1982:2).

The six different kinds of mind/consciousness traveling in *bardos* cycles are²³:



1. The *bardo* of life is the *bardo* between birth and death. It is the state of human normal waking experience, from the moment of birth until death (Powers, 1995: 359).

2. The *bardo* of dream is the state of time between being asleep and awakening.

3. The *bardo* of meditation is a state of reality. It is the time of unconsciousness that people experience when the mind is overwhelmed by death (ibid., 1995: 360). Because in this state the mind is thrown into its own nature, ordinary beings are so confused that they tend to escape into unconsciousness rather than confront it directly.

4. The *bardo* process of death. It is the state of death and dying. The five elements in the body dissolve and the mind/conscious goes out from the old body into the death world.

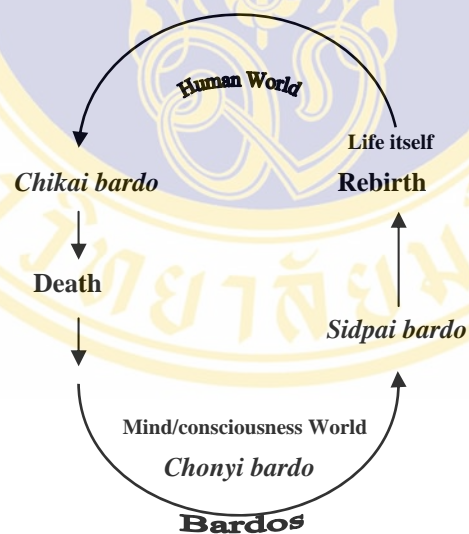
²² In each *Bardo* state one can reach enlightenment, if one can meditate and understand the nature of one's mind and what one can achieve.

²³ Lama Lodo, 1982: 2-3.

5. The *bardo* state in the death world. The mind/consciousness is travelling to find the mother door. In this state, mind/consciousness finds out something about the results of its sins and merits.

6. The state of *bardo* for searching in order to take rebirth. It is the process of entering the mother's womb, entering the mother door, and then waiting nine months to go out from the mother womb again as the success of rebirth.

The first to the fourth *bardo* states happens in the human world when a being is alive. The fifth *bardo* is the life after death when the mind/consciousness comes down into the *bardo* of death, or the death world or mind world. The sixth *bardo* is very important for a *Tulku* taking rebirth at the end of the *bardo* process. It is when the *bardo* being enters the mother's womb and starts a new life (Powers, 1995: 304). The desired reincarnation will be successful if the *Tulku* can control his mind/consciousness in the *Sipai Bardo* (*Bardo* meditation) and can direct one's rebirth.



2.3 Theory of Reincarnation of the Highest Lama

2.3.1 *Bodhisattva* and *Nirvāṇa*

The absolute truth of Buddhism is *Nirvāṇa*. *Nirvāṇa* is an insight into emptiness (Williams, 1996: 68). *Nirvāṇa* results from seeing the true nature of things as it really is and going beyond the conceptualizing activities of mind/consciousness in

terms of viewing the world as having inherent existence as called enlightenment or *Bodhicitta*.

The liberation of sentient beings via enlightenment is liberation from suffering. This is the goal of a person who is a *Bodhisattva* and wishes to be a buddha. The development of the will to be a *Bodhisattva* involves creating *Bodhicitta* (an enlightened mind).

The *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* are scriptures explaining the compassion and wisdom of perfected *Bodhisattvas*. A *Bodhisattva* cultivates spiritual and other practices in order to develop various psychic and mundane abilities which one can use in various ways to help sentient beings both materially and spiritually (ibid, 1996: 51). It is the development of skill in means (*Upāya*) and ability to adapt oneself and one's teachings to the level of one's listeners without attachment to any particular doctrine or formula as being necessarily applicable in all cases.

A *Bodhisattva* is deeply moved by the suffering of sentient beings. A *bodhisattva's* spiritual path goes beyond that of an *arahant* and culminates in the enlightenment of a Buddha. In his/her spiritual career, a *Bodhisattva* develops good qualities, most importantly, the ten perfections as detailed below (Powers, 1995: 98-116).

<i>Ten Pāramitā</i> ²⁴ (Skt.)	Ten Perfections ²⁵	The Ten Bodhisattva- <i>Bhūmi</i> (Level) ²⁶
1. <i>Dāna</i>	1. Generosity	1. Very Joyous
2. <i>Śīla</i>	2. Virtue	2. Stainless
3. <i>Kṣānti</i>	3. Patience	3. Luminous
4. <i>Vīrya</i>	4. Effort	4. Radiant
5. <i>Dhyāna (Samādhi)</i>	5. Concentration	5. Difficult to Cultivate
6. <i>Prajñā</i>	6. Wisdom	6. Manifest
7. <i>Upāya</i>	7. Skill in Means	7. Gone Afar
8. <i>Prañidhāna</i>	8. Aspiration	8. Immovable
9. <i>Bala</i>	9. Power	9. Good Intelligence
10. <i>Jñāna</i>	10 Exalted Wisdom	10. Cloud of Doctrine
		Buddha Land (<i>Sukhavatī</i>)

²⁴ The Ten *Pāramitā* training intends to culminate in enlightenment as a Buddha (Powers, 1995: 98).

²⁵ Ten Perfections are correlated in some *Mahāyāna* texts with the ten *bodhisattva* levels (ibid.).

²⁶ A *Bodhisattva* Level/*Bhūmi* is an achievement progressively greater each step of the *Bodhisattva* Path progresses through to enlightenment (ibid.).

1. The perfection of Generosity (*Dāna Pāramitā*). Generosity (*Dāna*) is the training in overcoming attachment to material things and giving purely (Powers, 1995: 98). The Generosity of a *Bodhisattva* is to give without feeling any sense of loss, without expecting any recompense, or praise, and sharing the teachings with others heartily.

2. The perfection of Morality (*Śīla Pāramitā*). *Śīla*, or virtue is a basic prerequisite for the Buddhist path. The *Bodhisattva* trains in abstaining from negative actions, which will return in the form of suffering, and obstacles, and strives to diminish desires.

3. The perfection of Patience (*Kṣānti Pāramitā*). The perfection of Patience (*Kṣānti*) involves an unshakeable equanimity and abstention from anger (ibid., 1995: 101). The training in Patience helps to develop good qualities in the mind/consciousness.

4. The perfection of Effort (*Vīrya Pāramitā*). The perfection of Effort (*Vīrya*) is necessary in order to maintain continued enthusiasm for the path (ibid., 1995:102). It involves tirelessly pursuing religious activities and the practices of the *Bodhisattva* path in order to help sentient beings.

5. The perfection of Concentration (*Dhyāna Pāramitā*) Concentration is the perfection of meditation (*Samādhi*).

6. The perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñā Pāramitā*). The perfection of wisdom (*Prajñā*) is the sixth level of the *Bodhisattva* (ibid., 1995: 103). It is the training for the *bodhisattva* to clearly perceive the working of dependent arising and directly understands impermanence. This accumulation refers to the ability and experience of the *Bodhisattva* to see material things and phenomena as arising from causes and that everything is empty.

7. The perfection of Skill in Means (*Upāya Pāramitā*). The perfection of Skill in Means (*Upāya*) is the ability to teach sentient beings as well as the methodology to teach them (ibid., 1995: 108). Skill in Means also is the skilfulness in the choice or adaptation of means for conversion (succour) and teaching tactics to individual proclivities and the needs one's audience.

8. The perfection of Aspiration (*Prañidhāna Pāramitā*). The perfection of Aspiration (*Prañidhāna* or vow) is the resolute determination to undertake and to fulfil various vows.

9. The perfection of Power, or Strength (*Bala Pāramitā*). The perfection of Power (*Bala*) is the mastery of knowledge of four analytical means, including doctrines, meanings, grammar, and exposition (ibid., 1995: 109). Because of this, the *Bodhisattva* has eloquence and skill in presenting doctrinal teachings.

10. The perfection of Exalted Wisdom (*Jñāna Pāramitā*). The perfection of Exalted Wisdom (knowledge) (*Jñāna*) is the last level of the *bodhisattva* path. On this level, the *bodhisattva* receives a form of empowerment from innumerable buddhas as rays of light (*Bodhicitta*) (ibid., 1995: 111). At this level, the *Bodhisattva*'s mind has attained a level of total omniscience and reaches the pure Buddha land (*Sukhavati*).

2.3.2 *Trikāya*

In *Cittamātra* texts, such as the *Sūtrālaṅkāra* and *Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha* (Williams, 1996:175), there are frequent references to the three bodies of the Buddha: the *Dharmakāya*, the *Sambhogakāya*, and *Nirmāṇakāya*.

In the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, the three bodies are said to indicate the incarnation of perfect wisdom and compassion, the two definitive constituents of Buddhahood (ibid., 1996: 168).

The first body is the *Dharmakāya* (Tib. *Choku*). It is the Essence or Essential Body of the Buddha (ibid.) as the basis for the other bodies in the *Mahāyāna* concept. The word 'Dharma' in *Dharmakāya* refers to ultimate reality. The *Dharmakāya* also is the Buddha's bodily collection of pure elements possessed in the fullest degree by a Buddha²⁷, as put in the complex technical terminology of the *Cittamātra* tradition (ibid.). The *Dharmakāya* is the dependent aspect; pure, immaculate, and characterized as being the basis for the other two bodies. Moreover, the *Dharmakāya* is the Buddha's consciousness, the primeval Buddha (*Ādibuddha*), or the Buddha's collection of pure elements, which provides the origins for the radical metaphysics of

²⁷ There are: pure physical matter, sensations, conceptions, further mental contents, and consciousness (Williams, 1996: 171).

Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is also the fundamental dimension of the cosmos. The *Dharma-Kāya* also means the *Tathagata* or the Lord Buddha in the form of Dharma teachings and doctrines (ibid., 1996: 172).

The second is *Sam̐bhogakāya* (Tib. *Longku*). It is the body of complete enjoyment (ibid., 1966: 177). It is an impermanent body, which is in fact the glorified body of the Buddha for the benefit of others. Adorned with thirty-two and eighty marks, the *Sam̐bhogakāya* appears seated on a lotus throne in the pure land. It manifests itself in different ways and in different places according to the needs of sentient beings. The *Mahāyāna* Sutras are actually the result of the enjoyment body of the Buddha *Śākyamuni*, who appeared not in a lotus throne in the pure land but on earth as a human, so-called '*Bodhisattva*.' The *Bodhisattva* is the actual Buddha in a supramundane form.

And the last body is the *Nirmāṇakaya* (Tib. *Tulku*). It is the Buddha's transformation bodies used to teach sentient beings, in compassionate and skillful means. The transformation bodies are corporeal in form and are linked to the renunciation, enlightenment, and death of *Siddhārtha Gautama* (ibid.). *Nirmāṇakaya*, or in Tibetan '*Tulkus (Tülku)*' can attain the state of buddhahood because it is manifested in the form of an enjoyment body in a suitable form at a particular time and place. Moreover, a Buddha can manifest infinite transformational bodies of different types of *Bodhisattvas* at any one time. Thus, the two Buddha bodies (*Sam̐bhogakāya* and *Nirmāṇakaya*) in the *Cittamātra* schema encompass the *Mahāyāna* devotion to the all-compassionate Lord Buddha.

2.3.3 *Tulku*

The concept of a *Tulku* is based on the idea that all sentient beings are constantly reborn (Powers, 1995: 162). It is an extension of the rebirth and karma teaching system of spiritual development. In *Saṃsāra*, every sentient being is reborn over and over again in a beginningless cycle. For this reason, some beings can remember their past lives. Some groups of beings can train their mind/consciousness from lifetime to lifetime and then develop their ability to consciously choose a higher realm of rebirth.

Tulku in Tibetan Buddhism is a reincarnation of a lama (Samuel, 1993: 32) In Tibet, they believe that, since people have a compassionate mind/consciousness working for the benefit of others, it stands to reason that they will reincarnate themselves in a particular place to acquire their goal. Therefore, Tibetans accept that one is the reincarnation of previous teachers /lamas or spiritual leaders.

The procedure for selecting and testing *Tulkus* arose first in the Kagyu sect. The process of finding the *Tulku* Gyalwa Karmapa used the traditional writing down of detailed instructions concerning where he will be reborn, his family name, name of parents, and time of birth (Powers, 1995: 163).

In Tibetan Buddhism, a *tulku* is often an emanation of a celestial *Bodhisattva*, or *Nirmāṇakāya* of a Buddha.

2.4 Tradition

According to Tibetan Buddhism, a person devoted to the Buddhist path must make bodily and mental preparations called *Ngöndro* (Williams, 1996: 124), before entering the strict training of the student.

The preliminary traditional practices are: Taking Refuge (*Saraṇāgamana*)

1. Prostration (*Abhivandana*)
2. *Vajrasattva* Meditation (*Bhāvanā*)
3. *Maṇḍala*²⁸ Offering (*Dāna*)
4. *Guru*²⁹ Yoga (*Yoga*) (Powers, 1995: 256)

1. Taking Refuge is a necessary precondition before entering into tantric practice. This practice is common to all schools and behind it is the idea that people who are dissatisfied with their present circumstances should consider the causes of dissatisfaction and evaluate possible solutions (ibid., 1995: 256). The root of suffering in Buddhism is the three kinds of ignorance in *Saṃsāra*. However, take refuge is the promise of salvation for Buddhist followers, who declare their belief in Buddhism, and so it is customary to recite “the refuge vows to take refuge in the three jewels of the

²⁸ *Maṇḍala* is the symbolic representation of the universe as all of Buddhist cosmology, which is created from rice and materials of silver or gold.

²⁹ Tibetans call a teacher in religious practices a *Guru*, as well as, a spiritual leader.

Buddha, Dharma, Sangha (Somala Somjaj, Gyaltsen, an expert in Tibetan Buddhism in Rumtek).” This must be done at least 100,000 times.

2. Prostrations are a crucial preparatory daily activity for meditation. A prostration beings in the standing position; the practitioner’s hands are held together. The folded hands are raised above the head, and with them the practitioner touches three of the body parts: the head, throat, and heart. This touching is the symbol of one’s wish to attain the body, speech, and aim of actualizing the mind of a Buddha (Powers, 1995: 261). It is customary to perform 100,000 prostrations.

3. *Vajrasattva* is a mental purification. The student must recite the long *Vajrasattva* mantra 100,000 times and the short *Vajrasattva* mantra “*Om Vajra Sattva Hum*” at least 600,000 times (ibid.).

4. A *Maṇḍala* is a symbol of Mount *Meru*, the center of the universe in traditional Buddhist cosmology. It is made from rice or stones in a silver or gold vessel about six inches wide (ibid.). The *Maṇḍala* Offering is the practitioner’s offering (worship) to a Buddha and *Bodhisattva* as well as a Guru/teacher. It is a way of generating merit and overcoming attachment to material things. It is customary to perform this at least 100,000 times.

5. *Guru Yoga* is the mergence of *Guru* and deities into the student (a meditator) through the aperture of the crown of the head and descending into the central channel of energy into the heart.

Tibetans do not need to know about the details of *Tantric* meditation, because each school has its own teachers, who can guide them in the process of spiritual practices. A quality teacher is necessary for success on the path and actualizing the highest levels of mediation. The *Guru* Lineage is also very important as a guarantee of the authenticity of the teachings. During the practice, a *Guru* is a guide, who warns the student of dangers, corrects their errors, and helps them to actualize their potential for buddhahood. Moreover, the significance of a *Guru* is the heart of *Tantric* practice and training. In the Tibetan tradition, a person cannot succeed on the path of *Tantric* training and practice without a *Guru* (spiritual leader).

After a student practices and passes the preliminary practices at the second step the student promises to take the *Bodhisattva* vows and start training together with the

Guru. By tradition, the *Guru* is the spiritual leader of the student's religious practice and a guide in life.

2.5 The Doctrines of Reincarnation in the Black Crown Sect

2.5.1 The *Vajradhara* Buddha and the Five Yogis

Vajradhara Buddha³⁰ is the divine Buddha of the Kagyu sect, who transmitted teachings to *Siddha Tilopa*, the first Indian yogi of the Kagyu tradition. So the word, 'Kagyu' means the transmission of teachings or 'The Oral Traditional' (Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1982: 24). Its followers believe in a succession of precepts handed down through generations of teachers.

The Kagyu tradition says that *Vajradhara*'s teachings were transmitted to *Siddha Tilopa* around the 10th century. *Siddha Tilopa* was born in a Brahmin family in Catighavo city (Chittagong), East Bengal, the eastern part of India (Douglas, 1976: 7). He said that he received the *Mahāmudrā* teaching directly from *Vajradhara* Buddha by *Dakinis*³¹ giving the scriptures to him (ibid., 1976: 6). He also received the four precious doctrines and the three esoteric teachings of *Norbu Korsen*. He brought them all together and consolidated them into the Indian *Tantric* system. Later, he became a high yogi and had disciples, a great one was *Naropa*.

The second Kagyu yogi was *Naropa*. He was the crown prince of the royal family of Bengal. At the age of eight, he traveled to Kashmir to study Buddhism. He returned to Kashmir again at twenty-eight years of age and traveled with four great Buddhist teachers to teach at *Nalanda* University. He later became the abbot of this university (ibid., 1976: 11). Next, he traveled to the east of India and met *Tiropa* at *Tiropa*'s school. *Tiropa* revealed the lineage teachings, the higher *Tantras* and the *Mahāmudrā* perfection to *Naropa*. *Naropa* had a great disciple called *Marpa*, who traveled from Tibet to study Buddhism in India.

The third yogi, *Marpa* was born in the south of Tibet around the 11th century C.E. (Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1982: 24). At the age of sixteen, he visited India to study extensively the *Tantric* texts with a number of eminent teachers there. On his return to Tibet, he met *Naropa* and received his initiations and teachings,

³⁰ *Vajradhara* Buddha is an enjoyment body of the *Śākyamuni* Buddha emanation.

³¹ The angel or *Deva* is a messenger and protector of the Buddha's family.

and founded the Kagyu School in Tibet on the basis of *Naropa's* teachings. *Marpa* was a translator of manuscripts on *Tantric* teachings. He firmly established the beginning of the Kagyu School in Tibet at eighty-six years of age (Douglas, 1976: 15). His foremost disciple was *Jutsun Milarepa*, who received his teachings of mystic heat, clear light teaching, and thunderbolt-scepter (Tibetan calls a *Dorje*).

The fourth yogi was *Milarepa*, born in Gungthang, western Tibet, which is close to the Nepal border. He was the disciple of *Marpa*, and received the teachings of the yogic mystic songs and of heat and the "cotton-clad"³² (ibid., 1976: 19). He had an important disciple named *Je Gompopa*.

The fifth yogi, *Gompopa* was born in *Nyal*, eastern Tibet. He was well versed in many *tantras* and traditional treatments. When he was twenty- six years old, he received ordination as a monk. He met *Milarepa* at the age of thirty-two. *Gompopa* blended basic doctrines, traditional *tantric* yogic practices (ibid., 1976: 23), and consolidated the tradition into a system of monasticism (Powers, 1995: 350). *Gompopa* combined the yogic practices and devotional techniques of the early Kagyu teachers with the monastic structures of Kadampa (the old school of *Atiśa*). As a result he could transmit the teachings of his predecessors and preserve them within a monastic framework.



2.5.2 The Training

The Kagyu sect generally follows four *Tantras*: *Kriyātantra*, *Caryātantra*, *Yogatantra*, and *Anuttarat Tantra* (Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1982: 30).

Training in the Kagyu tradition is based upon good the qualities of spiritual leaders to help humans pass beyond suffering. The theory of the reincarnation of the highest Lama is that the lama has developed his/her mind/consciousness to an

³² Cotton-clad is the solitary meditation (retreat), which is a secret teaching of *Naropa*, as well as, the training of a yogi in a cave.

exceptional degree. In addition, a three year retreat (solitary meditation) is a very important training for a teacher, which severely tests one's fortitude and will.

The way of development in the Kagyu order is the ten perfections, and the *Mahāmudrā Sūtra*, which describes the *Bodhisattva's* path and basic tantric practices. Anyone who wishes to become a teacher must have done this. A spiritual leader must have experience as a monastic and in solitary retreats, and be able to transmit teachings and practices to successive generations of students. The central texts in the Kagyu tradition are the Six Yogas of *Naropa* and the *Mahāmudrā Sūtra*.

The Six Yogas of *Naropa* are *Tumo* (Heart-Yoga), *Gyulu* (*Maya*-body), *Milam* (Dream), *Odsel* (Radiant Clarity), *Bardo* (Intermediate stages between death and rebirth), and *Phowa* (Transference) (Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1982: 30). It is a technique and system of meditation practice to control the mind and body.

1. Heat (Tib. *Gtum mo*), the first of these yogas, involves developing the ability to increase and channel inner heat through visualizing fire and the sun in various parts of the body. Through meditation, the yogi controls the wind/energy traveling into the channels of the body to harness the manipulation of physical energies.

2. Illusory Body (Tib. *Sgyulus*) is the technique of *Maya* body (imagine body) beginning with the insight that the phenomena of cyclic existence are mental creations. This yoga is imbued with the ten perfections and eventually becomes transformed into the *Vajra* body (symbolizing supreme buddhahood). It is a powerful tool for quickly transforming one's ordinary mind into the mind of an enlightened being.

3. Dream (Tib. *Rmilam*) is the yoga of taking control of dreams, determining their contents, and using this practice to influence the activities of the mind. The yogin/meditator learns how to control dreams by manipulating the vital energies that operate during sleep.

4. Clear Light (Tib. *Od gsal*) is the mind/consciousness seen as both an unwavering radiance that is untouched by the apparent negativities of mental afflictions and a pure, vibratory sound that encompasses all other sounds as radiant

emptiness. It is an emptiness from which images and concepts arise, and encourages an awareness of the nature of pure bliss (*Bodhicitta*).

5. Intermediate State (Tib. *Bardo*) is learning how to control mind/consciousness when in the six *Bardo*.

6. Transference of consciousness (Tib. *Phowa*) is the practice to achieve a good rebirth. The purpose of this practice is to be ready to die and avoid being reborn in an unfavourable situation. This yoga is used at the time of death to transfer one's consciousness into the process of three transformative levels of yoga.

The first level is to transform the luminosity of one's mind. It involves manifesting one's consciousness in the generation stage, which consists of visualizing oneself as a deity.

The second level is to realize the divine nature and accomplish the illusory body.

The last level is to transfer one's mind-body into the wisdom-mind of a Buddha. This supreme level involves transferring consciousness into the realm of clear light as the basic nature of the mind with the rainbow body of Buddhahood.

The Six Yogas are meditation techniques, which enhance the practice of *Mahāmudrā* (Tib. *Phyag rgya chen po*) at certain points and under special conditions. The *Mahāmudrā* is the essential teaching of the *Ādibuddha*, and is seen as a primary sutra as well as a great seal (Powers, 1995: 362). The *Mahāmudrā* is a direct personal realization of truth, the ultimate nature of mind. The *Mahāmudrā* is divided into three aspects: basic, path, and fruit (ibid., 1995: 364). The basic is the correct understanding of the mind to begin a process of disengagement from habitual deluded tendencies. The path involves meditation on the nature of mind. And the fruit is the culmination of the potential for buddhahood inherent in the nature of mind.

2.5.3 Kagyu School

The Kagyu School refers to the lineage of yogis who received the lineage of the Six Yogas and the *Mahāmudrā* from *Vajradhara* Buddha. In the Kagyu School, spiritual leaders are selected by the principle of reincarnated lamas. There are four major sub-sects and eight minor sub-sects as in the table below (ibid., 1995: 349).

Major Sect		Miner Sub-sect			
1.	Karma Kagyu ³³	1.	Drikung Kagyu	5.	Mar Kagyu
2.	Tseipa Kagyu ³⁴	2.	Taklung Kagyu	6.	Yerpa Kagyu
3.	Barom Kagyu ³⁵	3.	Tropu Kagyu	7.	Shuksep Kagyu
4.	Pakmo Kagyu ³⁶	4.	Drukpa Kagyu	8.	Yamsang Kagyu

2.5.4 The Karmapas

In the 12th century C.E, *Dusum Kyenpa*, the first of *Gompopa*'s disciples, was recognized as the first of the Gyalwa Karmapa series in the Karma-Kagyu order (Samuel, 1993: 494).

Dusum Khenpa built monasteries at *Karma Lha-Lding* and built *Tshur-phu* to be the Kagyu center in Tibet. And at the age of seventy-four, *Dusum Khyenpa* also established the *Karma Gon* monastery in *Leh* village, which was the first school for learning Buddhism (Douglas, 1976: 35).

A Karmapa reincarnation is traditionally predicted by a letter, which the Karmapa himself writes to indicate his new rebirth (Samuel, 1993: 493). In all of his reincarnations, a Karmapa is never born in a low class family or domestic family or agricultural family. A Karmapa is always born in a high class family, and born around Tibet. Since 1110 C.E. to 2007 C.E., the Kagyu order had seventeen Karmapa reincarnations. In 2007 C.E., the seventeenth reincarnation of a Gyalwa Karmapa was given the name 'Trinley Thaye Dorje.'

The Karmapas Lineage³⁷

	His Holiness	During	Place of Birth
1st	DUSUM KHYENPA	1110 – 1193 (83 years)	Ratag village, east Tibet
2nd	KARMA PAKSHI	1204 - 1283 (79 years)	Drilung Wonthod, Tibet
3rd	RANGJUNG DORJE	1284 - 1339 (55years)	Tingri Langkor southern, Tibet
4th	ROLPE DORJE	1340 - 1383 (43years)	A-la Rong of Kongpo Province, Tibet
5th	DEBZHIN SHEGPA	1384 – 1415 (31 years)	The region of Nyang Dam in southern, Tibet
6th	TONGWA DONDEN	1416 – 1453 (37 years)	Ngamtod She Kyong, Tibet
7th	CHOS TRAG GYAMTZO	1454 - 1506 (52 years)	Kyi Lha, northern, Tibet

³³ Or Karma Kamtsang, founded by *Dusum Khyenpa*.

³⁴ Founded by *Shang Tselpa*.

³⁵ Founded by *Darma Wangchuk*.

³⁶ Founded by *Pakmodrupa Dorje Gyelpo*.

³⁷ Data Sources taken from Douglas, 1976.

8th	MIKYO DORJE	1507 – 1554 (47 years)	Province of Dam Chu, eastern Tibet
9th	WANGCHUK DORJE	1556 - 1603 (47 years)	The region of Treshod in eastern, Tibet
10th	CHO YING DORJE	1604 - 1674 (70 years)	Golok Khansi Tang, the extreme, north-east, Tibet
11th	YESHE DORJE	1676 - 1702 (26 years)	Meshuk, eastern, Tibet
12th	CHANGCHUB DORJE	1703 - 1732 (29 years)	Litsa Tok in the Derge province, eastern Tibet
13th	DU DUL DORJE	1733 – 1797 (64 years)	Chawa Drong, Nyen Chowa Province, Tibet
14th	THEG CHOG DORJE	1798 – 1868 (70 years)	Danang village of Zalmo Gang, the Do Khams region, eastern, Tibet
15th	KHAKHYAB DORJE	1871 – 1922 (51 years)	Shelkar village of Tsong Province, western Tibet
16th	RANGJUNG RIGPE DORJE	1924 - 1981 (57 years)	Denkhok on the banks of the Dri Chu river, Derge, eastern Tibet
17th	TRINLEY THAYE DORJE	1983 -	Bakor area in Lhasa, Tibet

The Karmapa lineage appears to have introduced the idea of succession through reincarnation. The Kagyu School gave rise to the Sakya Sect, with a Sharmapa as its leader (ibid.). Thus, the relationship between the Karmapa and Sharmapa is like a father and a son, or the moon and the sun. A Karmapa identifies the reincarnation of a Sharmapa, and a Sharmapa identifies the reincarnation of a Karmapa. According to tradition, *Śākyamuni* Buddha predicted that Sharmapa is an emanation of *Amitābha* and Karmapa is an emanation of *Avalokiteśvara*” (His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje).

2.8 *Avalokiteśvara*

In 1110 C.E., the 1st Karmapa lama was seen as a reincarnated form of *Avalokiteśvara*. According to tradition, the 1st Gyalwa Karmapa was predicted by *Śākyamuni* Buddha in the *Do-Ting-Chin-Gyal-Po Sūtra*³⁸ thus:

“Approximately, sixteen hundred years after his own passing there would be born a man of great spiritual attainment and infinite compassion. This man would spread the Buddhist Dharma for many successive incarnations and would be known as the Karmapa” (Douglas, 1976: 34).

Moreover, the *Mani Kabum* text also mentions a king who is described as the human emanation, or incarnation of *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* (Samuel, 1993: 482).

³⁸ The Buddha’s prediction in a scripture.

Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is perhaps the most popular of all *Bodhisattvas* in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

The Lotus *Sūtra* is a very early source and teaches about *Avalokiteśvara* (Williams, 1996: 231). And in Tibetan tales, *Avalokiteśvara* appears in manifold different forms such as a householder, a monk, a girl, a cuckoo, etc. *Avalokiteśvara* is depicted as a compassionate saviour of the universe, constantly and tirelessly acting with all the powers of the ten levels of a *Bodhisattva* for the benefit of all sentient beings without discrimination.

The Indian text the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is entirely devoted to recounting and praising the miraculous deeds of the *Bodhisattva* (ibid., 1996: 232). *Avalokiteśvara* descends into hell to help hell beings. Because of *Avalokiteśvara*, hell becomes cool, lotuses appear, and the torture cauldrons burst asunder. Moreover, this text describes *Avalokiteśvara* as the creator of the world and also incarnates as Hindu gods. It said that, from his eyes arise the moon and sun, from his forehead *Maheśvara* (*Śhiva*), from his shoulders *Brahmā*, from his heart *Nārāyaṇa*, from his teeth *Sarasvatī*, from his mouth wind, from his feet the earth, and from his belly *Varuṇa* (ibid., 1996: 233).

In western Tibet, Buddhists show particular devotion to *Tārā*, who is associated with *Avalokiteśvara*. From the sixth century, *Tārā* first appears in Indian art together with *Avalokiteśvara*. In the *Tantra* said that, *Tārā* is the mother of all Buddhas (ibid., 1966: 237). She also is an important in *Tantric* meditations and rituals. She has twenty-one forms. The most common forms are Green *Tārā* and White *Tārā*.

In the Kagyu tradition, the Karmapa also is an emanation of *Avalokiteśvara* (Four-Armed), who closer-relationship with *Tārā*. The Karmapa has compassion to teach and lead people to be free from suffering. The Karmapa also protected the kingdom and Buddhism as a king of religion.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the method and the research plan of this thesis, whereas the tools and procedures for analysing the findings are explained in Chapter IV.

3.1 Research Approach

This thesis is a qualitative social research study to analyze the significance of lama leader reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism by focusing on His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the highest leader of lamas in the Black Crown (Kagyü) Sect. The aim herein is to analyze the religious reasons for creating a spiritual leader in a reincarnated form.

This thesis employs a descriptive style. The main data for this research are qualitative data derived from documentary sources and fieldwork research. Formal interviews, informal interviews and participant observations will be used as tools in the data collection process.

3.2 Area: India

The scope of this research is based on Buddhism in Tibet. In 1960 C.E., Tibet was occupied by the Chinese Government and became part of China. Most Tibetans and lamas were forced to escape towards India due to political conflict. In 1959 C.E., His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa *Ranjung Rigpe Dorje* arrived in the Rumtek, an area of west Sikkim, India. In 1963 C.E., His Holiness gradually constructed a root Monastery, Rumtek Monastery, also known as the Dharma Chakra Center. It was completed in 1967 C.E. This Monastery was the main Buddhist center of the 16th Karmapa and traditional Kagyü education (*Shedrup Chokhor Ling*). But nowadays, in Kalimpong town in Darjeeling District, West Bengal State (south of Sikkim), there is the present educational center of the Kagyü tradition and also the 17th Gyalwa

Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje's residence at 11th Mile Road (Karmapa Gomba). After the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje completed his education in Buddhist Philosophy from the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute (KIBI)³⁹ in New Delhi, he moved to Kalimpong town for further special studies and practice. His Holiness Trinley Thaye Dorje spends most of the year in his residence in Kalimpong town. This area is also the place of residence of key informants in this study.

Kalimpong town in Darjeeling District, West Bengal, is the location for the field research of this thesis through participant observation by recordings, photographs and interviews. Conducting research in this area requires direct contact with participants in their natural settings. Rapport between the researcher and the research participants is vital to achieve understanding and allow the researcher to probe their opinions on current public affairs issues.

The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in New Delhi, India, is an important location for documentary work because of the lack of Tibetan Buddhist sources and research work in Thailand. So for this study the researcher looked outside of Thailand to find information at the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute, India, by receiving the permission of Khenpo *Chodrak Tenpeal* Rinpoche, the principal of KIBI in New Delhi. The institute houses a library of Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts and also serves as an education center of the Kagyu sect. Another educational center is the Dharma Chakra Center at Rumtek in Sikkim. So the KIBI in New Delhi is a suitable place for the researcher to study for documentary sources on Tibetan Buddhism for Chapter II.

3.3 People: Tibetan

Through purposeful sampling, I pinpointed Tibetan Buddhists and lamas who live in Kalimpong town in Sikkim, Kalimpong, and Rumtek, the regions of the Kagyu sect which has the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa as its ruler.

³⁹ KIBI is the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute at New Delhi, which H.H. the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa built for H.H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa of the Karma-Kagyu sect.

3.4 Key Informants



1. His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje: His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje is the head of the Kagyu sect or the Black Crown Sect. He was born in Tibet, and is now twenty two years old. He can speak Tibetan and English well. He spoke English for this interview. He is the most important of the key informants for this study, since this research focuses on the significance of his reincarnated spiritual leadership. He explains and answers questions about the reincarnation doctrine, scriptures and social activities.



2. Professor *Sempa Dorje*: He is a Ladakhi (person from Ladak), now sixty-five years old. In the past Professor *Sempa Doje* was a professor of Buddhism at the university level. He left from there to be a special mentor to the *Tulku* boy Karmapa at the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in New Delhi when His Holiness was a boy lama. He has much knowledge of Buddhism. To the present day, he is still the

private master teacher of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje at Kalimpong Town. He teaches Buddhist Philosophy and special meditation practices.



3. Lama *Tsultrim Namgyal*: He is a Tibetan lama who came to Sikkim along with the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa in 1950 C.E. He was a close attendant of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. In fact the Black Crown Hat of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa was in the custody of Lama *Tsultrim*. He protected it after the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa left Tibet and until the Karmapa's death. At present, he serves the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje. He travels with His Holiness everywhere. He also teaches Buddhist Philosophy and a special meditation practices in Kalimpong town.



4. Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen (Yap Jigmela): He is fifty-five years old, and lives in Rumtek, Sikkim. He is the owner of the Shambhala Hotel and Mountain Resort. He is a trustee of the Karmapa Charitable Trust. The Karmapa Charitable Trust is the private office of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje. After the death of his father Kazi T.S. Gyaltshen, a trustee of the 16th and 17th Gyalwa

Karmapas charitable trust, his son Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen (Yap Jigmela) became a trustee as stipulated in the trust deed of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa registered in 1961 C.E. For the past seventeen years he has remained a strong devotee and follower of Karmapa Dharma activities.

3.5 Samples

a. Interview

A formal interview with key informants was done for data collection. Key questions were provided in advance to all key informants in order to help them have enough time to search the related historical data and religious scriptures. During the interview, extra questions would also be posed according to the framework set by the key questions.

In-depth interviews were done with Tibetan Buddhists and Lamas whom the researcher found and who felt comfortable to be interviewees.

The first key informant of this research was His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the head of the Black Crown Sect. His Holiness is a rich provider of important data. The formal interview asked questions related to: the qualifications of the leader himself and his reincarnation, viewpoints on religion, society, politics, social work, specific religious activities, understanding of his role and status, and issues regarding himself as a basis of the theory and concept of reincarnation in the Kagyu sect, as well as in the Tibetan tradition as a whole. The key questions were provided in a letter which is attached in the last page of this Chapter. Attached also is His Holiness's permission letter to conduct this research work on himself.

The second key informant was Professor *Sempa Doje*, a personal special teacher of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje. Questions were made available to him regarding Buddhist scriptures and reincarnation culture in order to extract in-depth knowledge related to doctrines, meditation, culture, and the traditional reincarnation history of the Black Crown Sect.

The third key informant was Lama *Tsultrim Namgyal*, who provided information on personal data of His Holiness Trinley Thaye Dorje, regarding his work, routines, daily activities and special jobs, both daily and during the year.

The last key informant was Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen (Yap Jigmela), who is a trustee of the Karmapa Charitable Trust. He provided the researcher with data related to social work activities and administration of the Karmapa Charitable Trust of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje.

b. Observation

The researcher made direct contact with Tibetan Buddhists who respect the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa in Sikkim state and Kalimpong town, Darjeeling District, West Bengal, India. The researcher also acted as a participant observer by living in a home-stay with the Gyaltshen family in Rumtek District, Sikkim State, India for six months. Making good relationships with local people is strongly needed since it can help the researcher easily gain data appropriate for understanding the processes and continually changing relationships between targeted Tibetan people and the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, who is a key informant of this research.

Observation involved the participant of the observer in the context of data analysis. Observation was planned by the researcher to obtain first-hand experiential knowledge and to document the Tibetans, lamas, and Gyalwa Karmapa both on video and in photographs. During field research, the researcher went to Kalimpong town, West Bengal, India and lived for six months with the Gyaltshen family which is a Sikkim Buddhist family, and Mr. Jigme is a trustee of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje. The specific location was in Rumtek district, Sikkim state far from the Kalimpong town, approximately 25 km.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The main data for this research is qualitative data derived from fieldwork. All the data of the Interviews and Observations are analyzed by content analysis in Chapter IV.

1. Data Collection Methods of Documents

The researcher consulted books and videocassettes from the library of the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute (KIBI), in New Delhi, India. The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute is an educational college for international students learning about Tibetan Buddhism. The researcher received permission from Khenpo *Chodrak Tenphel*, who is the principal of KIBI to use the library. Sources are from

books, articles, newspapers, and documents written by academics concerning reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism.

For the literature review and field research, the researcher collected all data from India. This data was brought back to Thailand for analysis, to interpret and make conclusions related to the culture, tradition and religious beliefs of reincarnation among Tibetans.

2. Data Collection Methods of the Interviews

Interviews of key informants were performed in a semi-structured context. The answers received from key informants were prepared for analysis to explore the significance of spiritual leadership by reincarnation in the Kagyu sect.

The key questions of the interview were given to Tibetans and lamas who live in Kalimpong town and Rumtek, Sikkim. These key questions offered a framework for analyzing the significance of spiritual leadership in the Tibetan tradition and culture. The key questions were:

1. What is the meaning of reincarnation in your opinion?
2. What is the significance of reincarnation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition?
3. What is the significance of the Karmapa as your spiritual leader?
4. Is it necessary or not that you must have a spiritual leader through reincarnation?
5. If you did not have a Karmapa as your spiritual leader, how would you respond?

As a guide for the interview of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the researcher received the help of Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen, a trustee of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa and Mrs. Soma Somjaj Gyaltzen, his wife. Before the day of the interview, the researcher had handed over to Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen a special list of questions in a formal letter for His Holiness.

The key questions listed in numbers 1 and 5 are based on an understanding about the meaning, significance, scriptures and spiritual leadership of reincarnation in Buddhism. Numbers 6 to 11 are about his own opinions about Karmapa and about reincarnation. Number 12 regards the importance of the protector, *Mahakala*. Number 13 involves a comparison between reincarnation in Buddhism and other religions.

Numbers 14 to 15 are about the Karmapa's routine. Numbers 15 -28 are based on his spiritual leadership, tasks, viewpoints, opinions and ideas on his status, politics, social and religious leadership. All of the answers of His Holiness from this interview are important sources of field research for analyzing spiritual leadership in Chapter IV and in the conclusion in Chapter V.

3. Data Collection Methods of the Participant Observation

Observation was done of Tibetan Buddhists and lamas, who live in Rumtek and Kalimpong through a semi-structured interview of five key questions. The researcher received help from Mr. *Tsewang Topdhen* who lives at the *Nedo Rinpoche Monastery* in Rumtek and acted as an interpreter. He asked the five questions, one by one, and the researcher recorded by voice recorder the answers of 20 people between the ages of 15-45. An ongoing gathering of opinions from lamas and Tibetans continued for a month. The gathering of their opinions and ideas provided the data for Chapter IV.

3.7 Data Analysis

Ongoing qualitative data analysis was required in this research. Qualitative data was immediately transcribed and analyzed when the fieldwork started. During the fieldwork, data was preliminarily processed and analyzed using coding and a memo technique. The themes of analysis were developed by identifying the patterns in the relationships of the collected data. This enabled the researcher to assess the adequacy of the data and the ability to analyze the given data. After fieldwork, all sets of data were managed by data filing. Finally, thematic content analysis was done.

This research was analyzed from an historical perspective within a Tibetan context. The historical perspective gained was compared with the data that the researcher received from the interviews, informal talking, or semi-structured conversations. The results summarize the religious ideas of Tibetan Buddhism that underpin the significance of the reincarnation tradition of spiritual leaders such as His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje in accordance with the objectives of this thesis.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND ARGUMENTS

This study focuses on the relationship between reincarnation and spiritual leadership in the case of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the highest lama of the Black Crown sect.

4.1 The Reincarnation of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the Highest of Black Crown Lamas

4.1.1 Biographical Background⁴⁰

His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje was born in Tibet in 1983 C.E.⁴¹, in the *Bakor* area in *Lhasa*. His Holiness is the first son of the 3rd *Mipham Rinpoche* and *Dechen Wangmo* and has one brother.

His father, *Mipham Rinpoche*, is a descendant of a traditional medicine doctor. He is a head master of thirteen monasteries in *Kham*, Tibet, belonging to the Nyingma School of Buddhism. His mother, *Dechen Wangmo*, is the daughter of a noble family said to be descended from King *Gaesar of Ling* (His Holiness the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa, 1999: 1).

At the age of two and half, His Holiness started to tell people that he was the Karmapa. A lady, who was a sister of the late 16th Karmapa once met him in Tibet, and the boy (His Holiness) told her that, before she died, she would meet him again. She was convinced that he was the Karmapa because of the exceptional behavior of the boy (*ibid.*).

In 1985 C.E., *Ngorpa Lagen*, an old Sakya lama, was circumambulating the Jokhang monastery at Lhasa. He noticed the gleaming white face of a little boy

⁴⁰ Data Source: From the report of the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa, September, 1999. The Formal Interviews of Professor Sempa Dorje, Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen (Yab Jigmela), Mrs. Somjaj Gyaltshen, and Lama Tsultrim Namgyal. In-Formal Interviews of Lama Samten and Mr. Karsang Bhutia

⁴¹ In the Tibetan calendar it was the year of the pig.

peering out of the window of a house. He walked to the window. Suddenly, a boy appeared before him, saying that he was the Karmapa. He replied to the boy that, if he was then he should give a blessing. The boy stretched out his arm and touched his head. A few days later, Lama *Ngorpa Lagen* and a group of pilgrims went to the residence of *Mipham Rinpoche*. There he saw the boy who had given him the blessing playing in a corner. *Mipham Rinpoche* asked the group of visitors how many families had come to visit. They answered, seven. Suddenly, the boy ran out from the corner, saying eight. All of them were obliged to count again when they realized that the boy was right (ibid.).

In late 1985 C.E., Lama *Ngorpa Lagen* went to Kathmandu, Nepal. He talked to *Sherab Rinpoche*, a disciple of the 16th Karmapa, about the boy. After this, they went to see the boy at *Mipham Rinpoche*'s residence. When they arrived, they saw the boy sitting next to his father and smiling at them. They asked for his mother, and *Mipham Rinpoche* told them that his mother was doing a *Chakrasambhava* retreat at *Khailash* Mountain. During the course of their conversation, Lama *Sherab Rinpoche* of the Sakya Sect analyzed the young boy and his behaviors and came to the conclusion that he was the reincarnation of the Karmapa (ibid.).

In October 1986 C.E., *Chobie Tri Rinpoche* of the Sakya Sect reported to the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa that the boy's picture was indeed the reincarnated Karmapa (ibid.). The head of the Sakya Sect, a Sharmapa, is also regarded as the second highest lama of the Kagyu Sect.

In 1987 C.E., *Sherab Rinpoche* sent a report about the same boy from Lhasa to the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa again (ibid.).

In 1988 C.E., the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa sent lamas to Lhasa to investigate the boy more directly. After he received the investigation report and his picture, he went on retreat again before confirming the boy as the seventeen reincarnation of the Karmapa (ibid.).

In 1991 C.E., the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa identified the boy as the 17th Karmapa (ibid.). In the same year, the 14th Kunzig Shamapa announced to lamas at Pokara, the new Kagyu monastery in Nepal that the boy in Lhasa, Tibet was the seventeenth Karmapa reincarnation and gave him the name of *Thaye Dorje* (ibid.).

In 1992 C.E., the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa reported the findings of the seventeenth reincarnation of the Karmapa and sent the documented information regarding the identification to the Bhutanese royal family⁴² at the Bhutanese palace.

In 1993 C.E., “His Holiness and family moved to Nepal because of political problems in Tibet, and then relocated again to Bhutan where they received help from the royal court of the King of Bhutan” (Jigme Tenzin Gyaltzen).

In March, 1994 C.E., the little Tulku Gyalwa Karmapa and his family left Bhutan to cross the border to stay in India at Kalimpong. Later, they departed from West Bengal to the capital city of India, New Delhi. On 16th March, at night, the boy and his family reached the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute smoothly and safely. In the morning of the next day⁴³, the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa and the Kagyu officers gave a welcoming ceremony for the Tulku Gyalwa Karmapa boy (His Holiness) to be the seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa by using the name of Trinley Thaye Dorje, and established him on the throne, thus confirming him as the 17th Karmapa of the Kagyu Sect/Black Crown, at the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in New Delhi, India (Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen).

Since 1994 C.E., at the age of eleven, His Holiness lived at the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in New Delhi, India with Kagyu officers and KIBI⁴⁴ officers (His Holiness the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa, 1999).

In the same year, His Holiness started to study at KIBI with Professors *Sempa Dorje*, *Khenpo Chodrag Tenphel Rinpoche*, *Topga Rinpoche*, and Lama *Tsultrim Namgyal*. The Tulku Karmapa boy began to study Buddhism, Buddhist philosophy, Kagyu traditional rites and also others subjects such as English, History, Science, Math, and traditional art with private teachers (Interview of Lama *Tsultrim Namgyal* & Professor *Sempa Dorje*).

During his studies at KIBI, His Holiness also gave blessings to guests or visitors. On March 31, 1996 C.E., His Holiness received the first *Chenresig* empowerment and *Bodhisattva*-vows and in December he went to Bodh Gaya to cut

⁴² The Bhutanese Royal family and Bhutanese people are Buddhists of the Kagyu Sect, and hold the Karmapa of the Kagyu Sect as their spiritual leader (*Guru*) according to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

⁴³ 17th March, 1992 C.E.

⁴⁴ The center/monastery of the Kagyu sect is in New Delhi, which serves as the higher learning center of the Kagyu School.

his hair and pledge vows in front of the Buddha statue at the *stupa* (Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen).

In 1997 C.E., His Holiness finished his studies at KIBI. The officers and teachers offered him thanksgiving ceremonies before His Holiness moved on to self-study and to commence his tasks as a spiritual teacher at Kalimpong. “Since then until May 2002 C.E., His Holiness was in retreat in France at *Dhagpo Kundreul Ling* (Karmapa center in France) and did a retreat again in 2005 C.E in the same place (*Lama Tsultrim Namgyal*).”

“In 1999 C.E., His Holiness visited the Karmapa center by invitation. And in 2004 C.E., His Holiness performed a Dharma tour to spread Buddhism and give his blessings to his students in European countries and the USA (Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gyaltshen).” Now His Holiness is well-known in the east and west as a spiritual leader in the Kagyu lineage, or as the 17th Karmapa of the Black Crown Sect.

**Biography of His Holiness
The seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje**

First Nationality	Tibetan	
Second Nationality	Bhutanese	
Third Nationality	Indian	
Birth Place	Bakor area in Lhasa, Tibet	
Year of Birth	1983 C.E., 24 years old (in 2007 C.E)	
Father	Mipham Rinpoche	from Kham, eastern part of Tibet
Mother	Dechen Wangmo	from Kham, eastern part of Tibet
Brother	1	
Status in India	Buddhist Missionary of Indian Government. Highest Leader of Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana). Principle of Kagyu Head Office and Karmapa Charitable Trust.	
Education	1994 C.E Diploma of Buddhist Philosophy from the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute, New Delhi, India. Finished B.A. with a major in Buddhism in the summer of 1997 C.E.	

4.1.2 Confirmation and Recognition⁴⁵

The traditional Kagyu testing procedure is to identify carefully the real Tulku boy, who is the new incarnation of a Gyalwa Karmapa. In the historical

⁴⁵ Data Sources taken from a report of the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa, which was written in September, 1999.

tradition, one method of finding the Tulku Gyalwa Karmapa is through prediction (Powers, 1995: 163).

The traditional way of recognizing a Tulku Gyalwa Karmapa boy is only done by the head of the Sakya order (Red Hat), the Sharmapa. This is because of the relationship of the two schools in history. (See the lineage diagram in the Appendix.) According to their teachings “the Sharmapa is the emanation of *Amitābha* and the Karmapa is the emanation of *Avalokiteśvara*” (His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje). However, for the seventeenth incarnation, the confirmation of the boy to be the Tulku Gyalwa Karmapa involved two sources of confirmation and textual predictions as follows:

The first, the *Treasures of Yogi Zilnon Lingpa*⁴⁶, is a text of the Nyingma School, which was written in 1960 C.E., when a yogi was performing a special *Guru Padmasambhava Puja* at Kalimpong. This text had the following prediction about the Karmapa reincarnations:

1. The prediction of Lama *Dugpa Tsarchod*: “Karmapa will be reincarnated 21 times only and he gave the name of each rebirth.”
2. The prediction of the 5th Karmapa, “My lineage weakens, at the time of sixteenth or seventeenth.”
3. The prediction of *Karma Paksh* is that “the name of Thaye Dorje is the eighteenth reincarnation.”

The second prediction recorded since 1960 C.E. by *Dudjom Rinpoche* at a special *Guru Padmasambhava Puja* at Kalimpong was given to the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa. Its details are:

Tibetan:

“DZA YI DU

LHAMO NORBU DZIN PE

KHAILASH YI CHUD LY

THAYE DORJE

KI YI DRONG KHYER NA

SER NGAL DU

YONG SMIN PE

DROWE PAL DU SHAR”

Translated into English:

⁴⁶ *Zilnon Lingpa* meaning a school in the Nyingma order.

“The area of Dza	The town Ki
Goddess Devi, Norbu Dzinma	Golden womb
By nourishment of Kailash	Fully, ripen
Thaye Dorje	Welfare of living beings”

(From the 14th Kunzig Sharmapa report)

The significance of such a poem is that it provides a prediction about: where he will be reborn, including such information as family name of parents, and time of birth (Powers, 1995: 163). The meaning of this poem was a prearranged message to confirm the accurate details of the boy who is the correct reincarnation.

The first verse: the terms ‘*Dza*’ and ‘*Ki*’ are the birth place of the father (*Mipham Rinpoche*) and mother (*Dechen Wangmo*).

The second verse: **Goddess Devi, Norbu Dzinma**. The Golden womb means the womb of the wife of Norbu (Rinpoche).

The third verse: By nourishment of ‘*Kailash*’ Fully ripened, ‘*Kailash*’ is Mount *Kailāsh*, which is the place of his mother’s residence. She is the owner of the nexus of birth (womb)⁴⁷. At that time, *Dechen Wangmo* was staying at Mt. *Kailāsh* for a *Chakrasamvara* retreat.

The fourth verse: ‘Thaye Dorje Welfare of living beings’ ‘Thaye Dorje’ is the name of one, who is successfully living in the mother’s womb and is ready to be born in order to help sentient beings attain welfare.

4.1.3 Routines⁴⁸

In 2005-2007 C.E., the daily routine of His Holiness was not fixed. It changed from time to time, especially because of travelling (His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje). But in general, in the early morning, His Holiness woke up for doing a short practice of White *Tārā*. Every week His Holiness had regular Dharma studies and had time for blessing visitors. He also gave answers to students’ questions. His Holiness normally had vegetarian meals, and before noon took

⁴⁷ It is the gateway or a door to rebirth, when a Tulku’s consciousness searches for the entrance to the mother’s womb in the *Bardo* of rebirth.

⁴⁸ Sources: The Formal Interview of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, from the answer to question number 14.

his meal. After lunch he had some rest before more practice and study.

The His Holiness' Daily Routines⁴⁹

Time	Activities
5.30- 6.00 am.	Wake up, short practice of White <i>Tārā Puja</i>
6.00-7.30 am.	Meditation
8.00-8.30 am.	Vegetarian Breakfast
8.30-11.00 am.	Dharma Study Class
11.00-11.30 am.	Give Blessings/Answer Students' Questions
12.30-13.00 pm.	Vegetarian Lunch
13.00-14.00 pm.	Rest
14.00-16.00 pm.	Dharma Study again
16.00-18.00 pm.	Self Study/Practice
18.00- 19.00 pm.	<i>Mahakala Puja</i>
19.00-19.30 pm.	Vegetarian Dinner
19.30-10.00 pm.	Rest
10.00pm-5.30am.	Go to bed

4.2 The Reincarnation and Spiritual Leadership of Gyalwa Karmapa⁵⁰

The results of the interviewer's five key questions, which were given to Tibetan Buddhists and lamas in Kalimpong town and Rumtek, can be summarized as below.

4.2.1 The Meaning

Most Tibetan Buddhists understand very well that reincarnation is of two kinds: reborn again in a new family as a general human being and incarnation for *Bodhisattvas*.

Professor *Sempa Dorje* explained two kinds of birth: "the birth of general human beings is not fixed and not sure whether it will be happen or not. It depends on their Karmic actions. And the birth and death of sentient beings will appear in one time only in a life." But the incarnation of *Bodhisattva* is a type of rebirth program. He will be reborn again and again to fulfill his levels (The Ten *Paramitā*) and then will enter the state of enlightenment to become a Buddha.

⁴⁹ Sources: taken from field research, the participant observations and in-formal interviews in the Karmapa's resident at Kalimpong, Darjeeling, West Bengal, India with Mr. Nire, the cook; Mr. Bhaman, the security guard; Lama Samten, the secretary.

⁵⁰ Data Sources: taken from the answers of His Holiness in the Formal Interview, the conclusion of his answers to key questions in the In-formal Interview, and observation from field work.

For Tibetans, His Holiness is an ultimate human being, who can train himself to develop his levels to be reborn in the higher realms until liberated from *Saṃsāra*. So His Holiness is a symbol of the true way to enlightenment.

For His Holiness, he explains the meaning of reincarnation as follows: “There are two causes for reincarnation. In the Dharma sense all sentient beings reincarnated due to their karmic actions. It is not by their freedom or choice. It’s sort of whatever they have accumulated, the result of continuous ripening, and therefore they will take all kinds of – how to say – rebirth, or one can call it, maybe, reincarnation. So it doesn’t necessarily mean that we will always... regular sentient beings will not always be guaranteed that they will be born, that they will be reincarnated as human beings or higher beings. So, one can have rebirth in lower realms ...depending on their actions.

And the second one is then... it’s by choice. This is, sort of, not done by our karmic actions but by our will, one can say. And that’s the reincarnation that all the *Bodhisattvas* take. And of course when we talk about *Bodhisattvas*, there are lots of different levels of *Bodhisattvas*. I mean, for example, when we receive an empowerment, or whatever we practice in the *Vajrayāna*, we have to – how to say – generate ourselves in *Bodhicitta*, that we try to become *Bodhisattvas*. So, in that way, all of us can be called *Bodhisattvas*, but in that moment it’s just a beginner. So, of course for the beginners they don’t have all the abilities of a – how to say – experienced *Bodhisattva*, let’s say. And so, therefore, *Bodhisattvas* who have reached their *Bhūmis*, meaning that those who are free from *Saṃsāra*, they can choose their rebirth and by their wish. And obviously their wish is to help sentient beings. And so, therefore, wherever their help is needed, they will be born there according to the circumstances. And so – how to say – the reincarnations that have been so far known – how to say – in Asia, especially in Tibet, such as we call it *Tulkus*. Actually, normally it is supposed to be the form of reincarnation of *Bodhisattvas*.⁵¹

Reincarnation and rebirth provide the reasons for starting to do good actions and to hope to gain good results. Believing and understanding in the teachings produce faith and devotion in the cult of *Bodhisattva* reincarnation. Tibetan Buddhists believe in the Karmapa as the highest symbol of Buddhism, or the original master of

⁵¹ Taken from the answer to question number 1.

Buddhism. For this reason, a spiritual leader is a person, who has the ultimate experience of life derived from religious practices in the past. He can control his actions towards making merits and thus produce a good birth.

For Tibetan Buddhists, a reincarnated spiritual leader is a *Guru*, who guides his devotees to practice the Buddhist path.

4.2.2 The Tradition

The significance of reincarnation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is “something very normal that everyone understands (His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje).” For Tibetan Buddhists, it keeps alive the transmission of their master’s role as a Buddha so as to give teachings directly to one’s students. Most Tibetans and lamas believe that this old tradition protects the Kagyu tradition or sect. Moreover, some think that reincarnation involves developing the practice of the *Bodhisattva* path.

4.2.3. The Need

Most Tibetans need to have a reincarnated leader because it creates a religious leader. Spiritual leaders who are linked to a Buddha look trustworthy. With the basic teaching about death and rebirth, it helps them develop their practice through the guidance of a tutor. Tibetans believe that their rebirths are influenced by the help of Buddhas to benefit others. And with the love and compassion of a *Bodhisattva*-leader they can be led out of suffering.

Lay Buddhists, who do not have training in Dharma, especially need a Dharma guide. For all the above reasons, spiritual leaders guide their mind/consciousness to do Dharma activities such as religious ceremonies, religious practices, teachings, and so on.

In the case of some people, who have experience in the Dharma they can read the Buddha’s teachings from textbooks and practice from Dharma guide books, but in most cases people cannot do this. In fact, lay people have social work to do and have social problems in life. So, studying the Dharma for lay people is more difficult. Sometimes they cannot understand the teachings clearly, so they need a teacher to teach and guide them.

4.2.4 The Response

From the last question of the interview, the results indicate that Tibetans

relate to their spiritual leader in a direct way. Since the ancient times until the present, the Gyalwa Karmapa has been a spiritual leader, like a King of the Kagyu kingdom.

Moreover, the Gyalwa Karmapa is not only the leader in religious practices, or meditation only. In the lay society, a Gyalwa Karmapa also is a spiritual leader. So, he is a *Guru* both in Dharma and in the world (*Loukiya*). Most Tibetans say that it is impossible for Buddhism to exist without a Karmapa as their spiritual leader. This is because of the belief in Buddhism that the Gyalwa Karmapa is a *Bodhisattva* emanation as well as the Lord Buddha, who always incarnates to teach the true Dharma for sentient beings.

4.2.5 Doctrine

Regarding doctrine, Tibetans accept rebirth and reincarnation as an important theory in Buddhism, which cannot be seen, touched, or directly proven. But doctrine is the key, or handbook of humans, which is used for happiness in life. Spiritual leaders are the guide of life, such as how to one's control body and mind, how to control one's speech, and how to practice.

4.3 The Role of Spiritual Leadership of the Gyalwa Karmapa in Tibetan Society

4.3.1 The Past

In the past, the spiritual leaders of the Tibetan tribes were *Deva* kings. Tibetans believed that all of them came from heaven to protect the Tibetan kingdom. Tibetan Buddhists also believe that a Karmapa is an emanation of *Avalokiteśvara*, who lives in *Sukhavati* (a pure land).

Most of these activities took place in Tibet and in neighboring countries. During the late Karmapa period (the 16th Karmapa), Tibetan Buddhism spread widely toward the west. And after China occupied Tibet in 1960 C.E., the 16th Karmapa of the Kagyu sect was already very famous and popular in the Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim, India, because the 16th Karmapa left Tibet several years before the Chinese occupation. Many people from European countries and the USA came to be members of his communities (*Sangha*). Lay Europeans and Americans changed their beliefs and became Buddhists. Some decided to practice the *Tantric* foundation taught by the Karmapa.

For the present Karmapa, His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje started his Dharma activities when he was two and half years old. At the age of 11, His Holiness started his works at KIBI in New Delhi, a new center established after the situation in Tibet in 1960 C.E. and disputation about the Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim. The Karmapa conducted his activities outside of Tibet because of political instability. In 1996 C.E., His Holiness received the full ordination of *Bodhisattva* Vows at Bodh Gaya. And in 1997 C.E., His Holiness started to spread Buddhism to Asia and the West, and to visit his centers and give speeches around the world in both Asia and Europe.

4.3.2 The Present Day

At present, all Karmapa centers, around the world, are under the leadership of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa. The Buddha's teachings have been translated into many languages such as English, Spanish, French, etc. Moreover, many Tibetan *Khenpos* (teacher) and lamas of the Kagyu School, who live in, and around these centers also help Buddhism by translating and explaining the ideas of the *Tantric* tradition to westerners. Most importantly, the Karmapa has influenced Westerners to take vows as monks and nuns.

4.3.3 The Future Plan

For the future plan, because Karmapas are spiritual leaders, people will become interested in studying and practicing Buddhism. Because of this, it is the aim that *Tantric* Buddhism and culture will become diffused throughout the world. Although, Tibetans do not have their own homeland, *Tantric* Buddhism is well known throughout the world.

In brief, the significance of the Spiritual Leadership of His Holiness in Tibetan Society provides the scope for his Dharma work. Accordingly, most activities rely on the invitation of the Kagyu *sanghas*/centers around the world. In each program, there is included: speeches, Dharma talks, discussions, and giving blessings to students and devotees. Sometimes, he cuts the hair of people⁵², who wish to change their beliefs to become Buddhists. In some conferences, he joins with other religious leaders, local leaders and politicians.

Briefly, His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje has

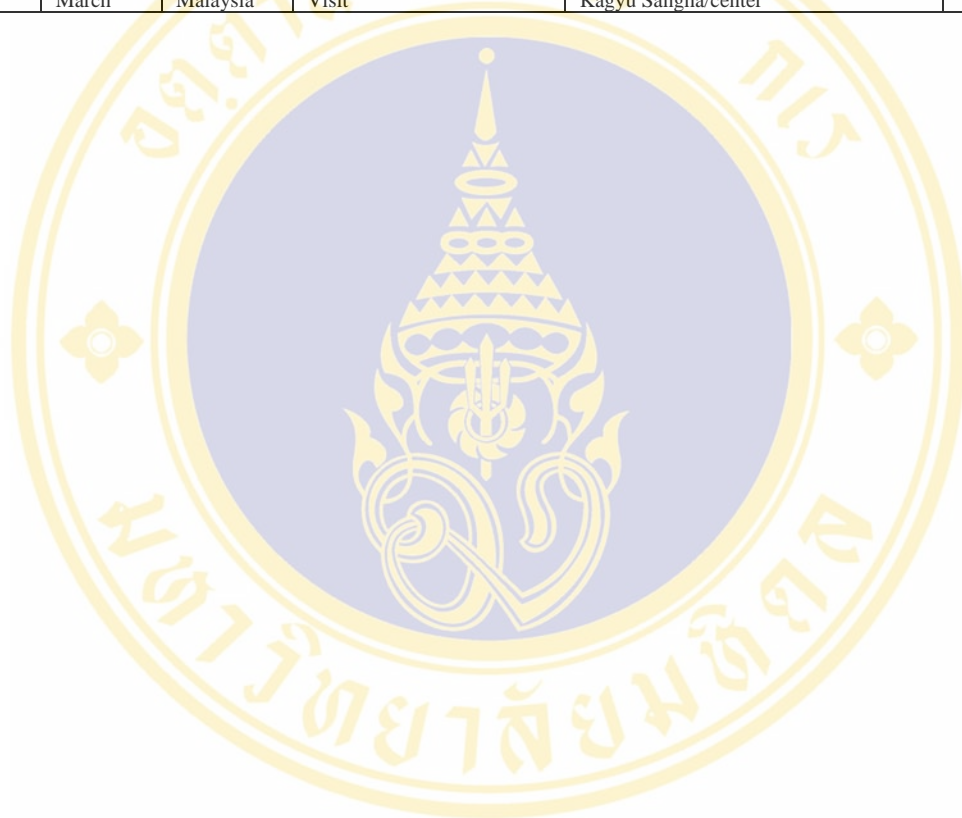
⁵² It signifies promising to practice the Buddhist path.

programs in India and others countries, which between 1994 C.E to 2007 C.E. ⁵³ can be seen in the table below.

1994	March	India	Welcoming Ceremony	The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute	New Delhi
1995	March	India	Losar Ceremony	The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute	New Delhi
	March	India	First gradation of KIBI-students	The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute	New Delhi
1996	March	India	First Chenresig Empowerment	The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute	New Delhi
	December	India	Kagyü Monlam	Stupa	Bodh Gaya
1997	December	Bhutan	The Cremation Ceremonies of Tobga Rinpoche	Thimphu	Thimphu
1998	December	India	Kagyü Rites	Karmapa's Office at Kalimpong	Darjeeling
1999	October	Singapore	Visit	Kagyü Sangha/center	
	November	Taiwan	Visit	Kagyü Sangha/center	
		Malaysia	Visit	Kagyü Sangha/center	
2002	February	India	Tibetan New Year	Kagyü Office at Kalimpong	Darjeeling
	May	France	Beginning of Retreat	Kagyü Sangha/center	
2003	January	France	Visit	Kagyü Sangha/center	
	June	USA	Visit	California Center	
	October	Bhutan	Visit	Kagyü Sangha/center	
	December	India	Vajradhara Ceremony	The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute	New Delhi
2004	May	Spain	Inauguration of the new Karmapa	Karma Guen,	Andalusia
	June	Germany	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Passau
		Switzerland	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Zurich
		Denmark	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Rodby
		Czech	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Prag
		Austria	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Vienna
		France	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Paris
		Spain	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Galena
	July	France	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Cerence
		Switzerland	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Geneva
		France	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Montchardon
		Italy	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Brescia
		Poland	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Kuchary
		Germany	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Kassel
December	India	Kagyü Rites	Kagyü Office	Kalimpong	
December	India	Attending the Kagyü Monlam	Stupa	Bodh Gaya	
2005	April	India	The First International Conference	Conference	Mumbai
		France	Initiations for the practitioners in the three months retreats	Dhagpo Kundreal Ling	
2006	March	Mexico	Inauguration of a Stupa in Valle de Bravo	Kagyü Sangha/center	Mexico City
		India	Teaching and initiations	The Karmapa International Buddhist Institute	New Delhi
	April	India	Kagyü Rites	Karmapa's office at Kalimpong	Darjeeling
	July	Germany	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Kassel
	August	Ukraine	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	Kiev
		England	Dharma Program	Kagyü Sangha/center	London

⁵³ Data Sources taken from the report of Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gyaltsen (Yab Jigmela), the Karmapa Charitable trust, Gangtok, Lama Tsultrim Namgyal, Lama Samten, and Mr.Karsang Bhutia.

		Slovakia	Dharma Program	Kagy Sangha/center	Bratislava
		Hungary	Dharma Program	Dhagpo Kagyu Ling	Beskce
		France	Dharma Program	Kagy Sangha/center	
		Austria	Dharma Program	Kagy Sangha/center	Vienna
		Greece	Dharma Program	Kagy Sangha/center	Athens
	September	France	Dharma Program	Karma Euzer Ling	
	October	Southeast Asia	Dharma Program	Kagy Sangha/ center	
	November	India	Dharma Program	Kagy Sangha/ center	Mumbai
	December	Philippines	Dharma Program	Kagy Sangha/ center	
	2007	February	Malaysia	Dharma Program	Kagy Sangha/ center
March		Spain	Visit	Karma Gune	
March		Malaysia	Visit	Kagy Sangha/center	



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter explains the concluding results of this research study. The aim of this study was to analyze lama leader reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism through a case study of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the highest leader of lamas in the Black Crown (Kagyü) Sect. This study can be summarized as follows.

5.1 Conclusion

A. Documentary Study

Primitive Tibet was based on the faith and ritual of the Bön religion. Buddhism came to Tibet in the 7th century onwards in the form of two *Mahāyāna* traditions. They were *Mahāyāna* (*Ch'an/Zen*) of China and *Tantric Mahāyāna* of India. This Indian tradition was influenced by the incarnation teachings and the *Tantric* practices of the Hindu tradition as found in the north of India. In *Tantric Mahāyāna* Buddhism, the highest form of practice was called *Anuttarayoga* and this was given a principle place in Tibetan Buddhism.

The concern of *Tantric* Buddhism is largely with ritual and meditative practices. Therefore, the cult of Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* is the cognitive basis and volition for spiritual growth. The goal of *Bodhisattvas* is to reach liberation, to fulfill Buddhahood, and to act out of compassion for others. By cultivating an “enlightened-mind” (*Bodhicitta*), a *Bodhisattva* takes a vow to benefit all sentient beings to help them to complete perfect Buddhahood. The *Bodhisattva* path gives importance primarily to full enlightenment and the compassionate ability to serve others.

The main theory of reincarnation is based on the law of karma and rebirth. The traditional meditative practices, the *Bodhisattva* path, and the teachings of the qualities of Buddhas revolve around making merit, developing mental and karmic results so as to be reborn in a higher realm. The reincarnation of the highest lama is

also concerned with *Saṃsāra*, as the highest lama after death and while in the *bardo* state chooses to return to the *saṃsāric* realm in order to help others. Upon rebirth the highest lama enters the cycle of life on a higher level yet with karma again.

The traditional role of a spiritual leader in Tibet is as a teacher, guide, social leader, and protector of Buddhism. It is largely a task to protect society peacefully. Moreover, the spiritual leaders themselves also wish to attain enlightenment and to remove suffering of all sentient beings.

The first documentation of the rebirth phenomenon of a lama teacher arose in the Sakya Sect. “There was an elderly lama named ‘*Sakya Pandita*,’ and after his death, his students and devotees believed that he was reborn again somewhere. The populace had faith that their teacher had been reborn again. Later, students and lamas of the Sakya School called the rebirth of a famous teacher a ‘*Sakya Kunga*.’ This person became the leader of the Sakya Sect (Professor *Sempa Dorje*).” Over the centuries a new position arose, known as the Sharmapa, which superseded the *Sakya Kunga* as the leader of the Sakya Sect.

The second documentation of the rebirth phenomenon, yet a reincarnation phenomenon involving the manifestation of *Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva* arose first in the Kagyu Sect, specifically in the sub-sect known as the Karma-Kagyū Sect. It involved the manifestation of *Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva* and occurred in the thirteenth century. The Karma-Kagyū school promoted *Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva* as the form of a head leader, called ‘*Gyalwa Karmapa*,’ who was both the head of the *Tshurpu* monastery (Karma-Kagyū center in Tibet) and master (*guru*) of the Karma-Kagyū School. Subsequently, this idea became popular in Tibet and was linked to the important role of a spiritual leader, a Gyalwa Karmapa, authorizing and guiding *Tantric* practices for practitioners.

For the Gyalwa Karmapa himself, his life is the same as sentient beings, as he is under the law of karma and *saṃsāra*. His aim is to follow the *Bodhisattva* path. The Ten Perfections and the Six Yogas of *Naropa* are important tools and methods of the Kagyu tradition for a spiritual leader’s training. However, the spiritual leader is considered to be the same as the Lord Buddha himself (Three- Bodies). Therefore the Karmapa is believed to have supernatural powers.

One reason for combining, the cult of the Buddha and the *Bodhisattva* with spiritual leadership is to inspire faith. So the lay people followed the tradition. Eventually doctrines were written to describe the phenomena. It created a strong power relationship between the monastic arena and society. It thereby allowed the spiritual leader to have more control in politics.

However, this political role must also be balanced by understanding the spiritual significance of the position of the Gyalwa Karmapa as one who leads human beings and society toward peace. In this way, spiritual leadership acts as a tool for general human cultivation and the protection of Buddhism.

B. Field Research

Field research studies on the relationship between reincarnation doctrines and the spiritual leadership of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, the highest Black Crown Lama in Sikkim and Kalimpong showed that an understanding of Tibetan traditional teachings and culture are closely intertwined with relying on a spiritual leader for guidance. Thus, Tibetans are students, and His Holiness is the teacher in both Dharma activities and religious ceremonies.

The spiritual leadership of His Holiness himself upholds an important moral and traditional role in Tibetan culture. However, while His Holiness is considered to be an exceptional human being, he applies very intelligent skills and means in his life, as he considers himself to be a normal human being.

Although, he is now young, age twenty-three, the Gyalwa Karmapa looks very strong, stable and mature. He can think and decide about monastic issues, activities, plans, and the Karmapa charitable trust. Moreover, he can continue the fundamental role that spiritual leadership plays in promoting Buddhism and bringing peace to society.

In addition, the Karmapa of the Kagyu School was the first sect of Tibetan Buddhism to have a reincarnated lama as *Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva* the highest leader, and thus the origin of the phenomena may be traced in the main teachings of the Kagyu tradition.

In the history of Tibetan Buddhism there is a tradition which confirms each leader of the four sects and the process for confirming the various reincarnations of the highest leaders is as follows.

A team of lamas of the Geluk sect confirms the reincarnation of the leader of the Geluk sect as a Dalai Lama. The leader of the Geluk sect, a Dalai Lama, confirms the reincarnated teachers of the Nyingma sect, i.e. Tulkus and Rinpoches.

The leader of the Sakya sect, a Sharmapa, confirms the reincarnation of the Karmapa, the leader of the Kagyu Sect. Last, the leader of the Kagyu sect, a Karmapa, confirms the leader of the Sakya Sect, a Sharmapa.

Tibetan Buddhist Sects, leaders and reincarnation confirmation process.

Sect	Leader/Confirmation	Hat
1. Geluk	Dalai Lama /1,2	Yellow Hat
2. Nyingma	Dalai Lama /2	-
	Dalai Lama King of 1234	
3. Sakya	Sharmapa /3,4	Red Crown Hat
4. Kagyu	Karmapa /4,3	Black Crown Hat

In summary, religion became a tool of some human groups to gain power and property. Thus, in the modern day, reincarnation in the Tibetan tradition has become problematic. The reincarnation of a high lama which is explained in doctrines and religious theories cannot be proved by scientific theories of heredity or genes. So, there have been cases in which a reincarnation such as the Gyalwa Karmapa has been claimed more than once.

In the case of the reincarnation of the 17th Karmapa, the Highest Lama of the Black Crown Hat, three young boys were chosen. Two boys in Tibet and a boy in Nepal were identified as possible reincarnates. The boy who lived in Nepal finally was not recognized as the karmapa, but simply as a lama. However, both of the boys from Tibet became famous karmapas in deferent sects (the Kagyu and the Sakya Sect) and now live in India.

In specific, when the 16th Karmapa of the Black Hat died in 1981. He died in Chicago, America. At that time, there was turmoil in Tibet. The process of identifying the reincarnate took about 6 years. The Sharmapa of the Sakya, Red Hat Sect identified a boy. Yet, he did not confirm. The Sharmapa was invited to Europe to teach Dharma. He let it be known that when he returned from Europe he would confirm the boy. Meanwhile, the second-highest ranking lama of the Sakya, Red Hat Sect, *Situ Rinpoche* identified another Tibetan boy, and as the Sharmapa was away, *Situ Rinpoche* took the boy to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of the Geluk Sect for confirmation as the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa of the Red Hat. This was unique historically, as it crossed the tradition of confirmation. Traditionally, the Sakya Sect, the Red Hat Sect, confirms the reincarnate of the Karmapa of the Black Hat Sect. So, as time passed there was contention as to who is the true reincarnate of the Karmapa of the Black Hat.

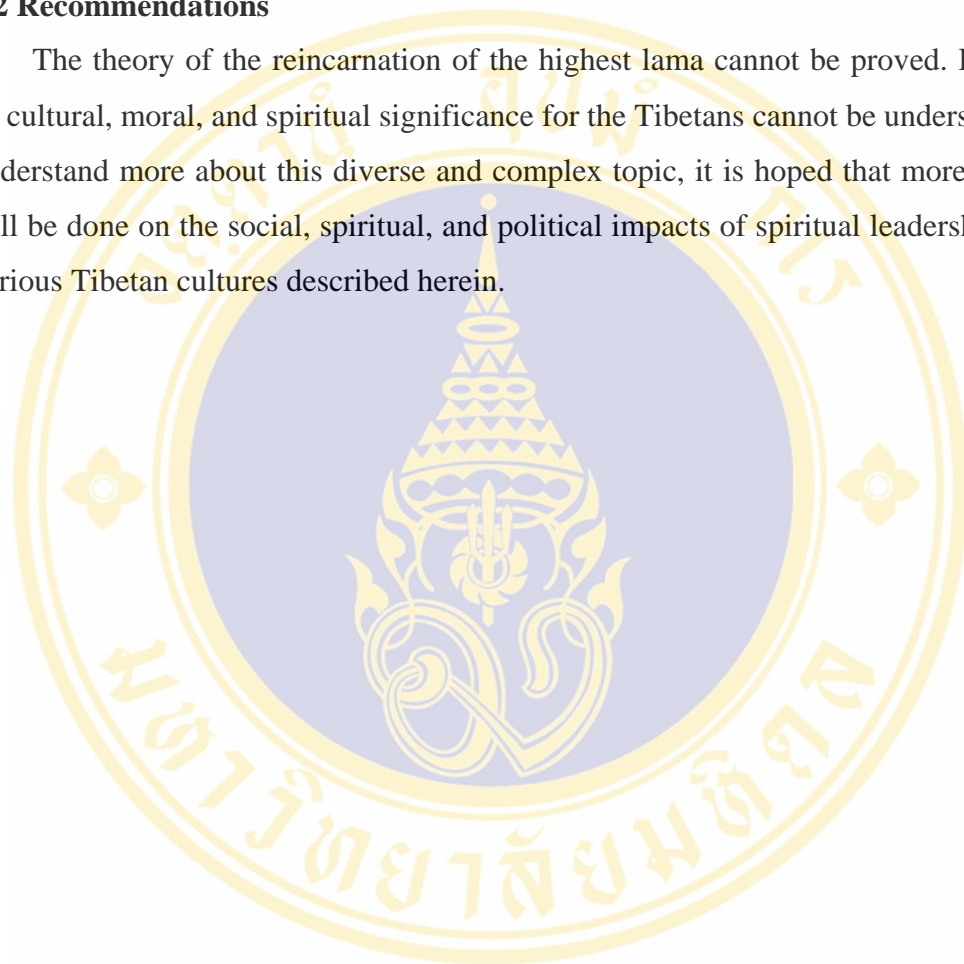
The Sharmapa of the Sakya/Red Hat Sect, claimed to have the reincarnated boy and thus jurisdiction over the 16th Karmapa's monastery in Rumtek. Likewise, *Situ Rinpoche*, the second highest of the Sakya, Red Hat Sect claimed to have the reincarnated boy and thus jurisdiction over the monastery under the Sakya and Geluk Sects. Thus, both the Sharmapa and *Situ Rinpoche* approached the Indian Government to claim jurisdiction over the monastery. This eventually led to the Indian Government taking over Rumtek Monastery, and guarding it until this time. The Indian Government law has no such tradition or process of deciding, so now neither of the claimed reincarnates is now in residence there.

The concern of the Kagyu sect has been the reason for such a confirmation, because they want to preserve their tradition of spiritual lineage of their teachers. In fact, in the Sakya school the reincarnation of their highest leader is as a Sharmapa reincarnate, and other high reincarnates are as *Sakya Kungkas* who are believed to simply be the rebirth of lama teachers. The Kagyu sect arose before the Sakya sect, and in the history traditional of confirming, the third Karmapa confirmed the first Sharmapa of the Sakya sect. Thus, the Sakya Sect was an offshoot of the Kaygu lineage. The two lineages protected and reaffirmed each other for centuries. Thus, a question remains as to why a confirmation was made across sects to the Geluk Sect.

Also there is the question of sacredness and the reincarnation of *Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva*, as only the Kagyu Sect and the Geluk Sect claim to have such reincarnations.

5.2 Recommendations

The theory of the reincarnation of the highest lama cannot be proved. However, its cultural, moral, and spiritual significance for the Tibetans cannot be understated. To understand more about this diverse and complex topic, it is hoped that more research will be done on the social, spiritual, and political impacts of spiritual leadership in the various Tibetan cultures described herein.



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Mahidol University
Social Science and Humanities, Salaya, Nakhonpathom, Thailand

February 22, 2006.

To: His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje.

Topic: Interview for researching a thesis for Master Degree for Mahidol University in Thailand.

My name is Srichan, Namthip, Thai nationality, a graduate student for a Master Degree in Social Sciences and Humanities Faculty at Mahidol University, Nakhonpathom, Thailand. I study Comparative Religion with a major in Buddhism.

After I finished my required courses, I was interested in Tibetan Buddhism. In Thailand, we are Theravadins and have a common heritage with Tibetan Buddhism. So in my research study, I would like to focus on the spiritual leadership from reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism.

My topic thesis is “Reincarnation and Spiritual Leadership: A case study of H.H. the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, the Highest Black Crown Lama in Tibetan Buddhism”. The thesis objectives are to study the significance of reincarnation and spiritual leadership in Tibetan traditional Buddhism, focusing on His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje.

I would like to request Your Holiness to be interviewed for this thesis. Please explain and answer these following questions;

1. What is the meaning of reincarnation?
2. What is the significance of reincarnation in religions?
3. Which scripture in Buddhism informs about reincarnation?

4. Which scripture in Buddhism informs about the reincarnation of Karmapas, Please explain in detail.
5. Please explain the meaning and significance of spiritual leadership?
6. What is the meaning of Karmapa in your opinion?
7. What is the reason for the Karmapa's reincarnation?
8. Why does the Karmapa reincarnate 21 times only, why not continually?
9. If Karmapa becomes Buddha, what would be the name of the Buddha?
10. Is there any scripture or Buddhist document available to support this statement?
11. Why do Tibetans believe in the reincarnation of spiritual leaders and what percentage of people believe in your reincarnation?
12. Who is Mahakala?
13. What is the difference of reincarnation among Hindus and Christians when compared with the reincarnation of a Karmapa?
14. What is the daily routine the Karmapa?
15. How many vows does the Karmapa take?
16. Does the Karmapa emanate from the Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, or Lord Buddha Vajradhara Buddha?
17. What are the specific characteristics of the Karmapa?
18. What is the significance of Karmapa in Buddhist religion, society, and politics?
19. What is the difference between reincarnation in religion and reincarnation in politics?
20. Why is the Karmapa not interested in political posts in government?
21. What is your idea on the significance and influence of Karmapa in the spiritual leadership status of Tibetan Buddhists?
22. How do Buddhists in the world acknowledge you as the reincarnation of Karmapa?
23. As the Karmapa, what special status and privilege do you have compared with others?
24. What is your nationality?
25. Where do you spend most of your time during the year?

26. How do you feel being a Karmapa is different from being a normal human being?

27. What does the Karmapa offer religions, societies, and politics, and what do religions and societies offer His Holiness?

28. As a reincarnation of Karmapa, what is your present plan and future program towards the progress and spread of the Dharma?

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to His Holiness for your kindness in giving precious time to me for answering the above questions. I realize that my thesis disseminated in Thailand later will be beneficial for Thai people as they will understand more regarding the reincarnation of the Karmapa of the Black Crown Sect in Tibetan Buddhism. I would be grateful if His Holiness could kindly give me permission to conduct this research in the form of a letter to attach to this thesis.

Respectively yours,

Yours in Dharma,



Srichan, Namthip

A Thai Graduate student of Master Degree,
Mahidol University, Thailand.

The Transcription of Interview: HIS HOLINESS THE 17th GYALWA KARMAPA
TRINLEY THAYE DORJE

Address: The Karmapa's room at the Karmapa Residence, Bhuja Ratna Kothi, 11th
Miles Rd., Kalimpong, Darjeeling, West Bengal, India.

Date: February 22, 2006.

Local India Time: 10.45-12.00 pm.



February 22, 2006. During the interview His Holiness.
Left: The Researcher, Middle: His Holiness, and Right: Mr. Jigme Tenzin Gayltshen (Yab Jigmela)

1. What is the meaning of reincarnation?

Karmapa: There are two causes for reincarnation. In the Dharma sense all sentient beings reincarnate due to their karmic action. It is not by their freedom or choice. It's sort of whatever they have accumulated, the result of continuous ripening, and therefore they will take all kinds of – how to say – rebirth, or one can call it, maybe, reincarnation. So it doesn't necessarily mean that we will always... regular sentient

beings will not always be guaranteed that they will be born, that they will be reincarnated as human beings or higher beings. So one can have rebirth in lower realms ...depending on their actions.

And the second one is then... it's by choice. This is, sort of, not done by our karmic actions but by our will, one can say. And that's the reincarnation that all the Bodhisattvas take. And of course when we talk about Bodhisattvas, there are lots of different levels of Bodhisattava. I mean, for example, when we receive an empowerment, or whatever we practice in the Vajrayana, we have to – how to say – generate ourselves in Bodhicitta, that we try to become Bodhisattvas. So, in that way, all of us can be called Bodhisattvas, but in that moment it's just a beginner. So, of course for the beginners they don't have all the abilities of a – how to say – experienced Bodhisattva, let's say. And so, therefore, Bodhisattvas who have reached their Bhumis, meaning that those who are free from Samsara, they can choose their rebirth and by their wish. And obviously their wish is to help sentient beings. And so, therefore, wherever their help is needed, they will be born there according to the circumstances. And so – how to say – the reincarnations that have been so far known – how to say – in Asia, especially in Tibet, such as we call it Tullkus. Actually, normally it is supposed to be the form of reincarnation of Bodhisattvas.

2. What is the significance of reincarnation in religions?

Karmapa: When you say religions, you mean in all religions? Or just particularly in Buddhism?

Interviewer: All religions.

Karmapa: I am not sure because I really don't know but I'm sure probably in some other religions maybe they have their own significance and – how to say – their own reasons why there are reincarnations. But in Buddhism, as I was saying before, the reasons why there are reincarnations are actually those two reasons, those two causes.

3. Which scripture in Buddhism informs about reincarnation?

Karmapa: Normally, I think, in Buddhism.... I was sort of like surprised to know that actually.... Even in the Theravada....That there is nothing about reincarnation, right?

[Interviewer: 'No.'] Because that... I was a little bit surprised, because actually in Buddhism reincarnation is something very general. Something very normal that everyone understands. So, from my understanding, it's not only the Vajrayana but in all the Yanas that reincarnation is sort of like accepted. So it's hard for me to say which scripture.

Interviewer: Is there tantra... You call tantra or something like that? This is scripture, isn't it, na?

Karmapa: Yes of course there is scriptures. I mean...

Interviewer: You call tantra...Tantra or something...

Karmapa: Not exactly tantra. How to say. At the moment I can't really pinpoint one scripture. But what I know is that reincarnation is something very normal.

4. Which scripture in Buddhism informs about the reincarnation of Karmapas. Please explain in detail.

Karmapa: I don't exactly know here at the moment, you know. I'm not a historian. But I think it was one of... Do you know about Kanjur and Tenjur? I think probably it was... General... The first is actually the old teachings of Buddha himself, the biggest volume. And the second biggest volume is that of the commentary of his teachings. The Buddha himself had actually given the – how do you call it – prophecy about the activities of Karmapa.

5. Please explain the meaning and significance of spiritual leadership?

Karmapa: All spiritual leaders, I think, generally have an idea of – how to say – creating something positive, something good, let's say for society and maybe not just society but maybe even bigger than that – globally. For all others, say, mankind, say, and in Buddhism it will be all sentient beings. So, with that idea, one has to be an example and one has to lead a very dignified life, a life that everyone can look up to. Trying to show a path that, no matter who we are, we can achieve those positive goals.

6. What is the meaning of Karmapa in your opinion?

Karmapa: It's a Sanskrit word, and for me to translate it into English, it's 'the holder of activity', or 'the one who performs activity'. It means something like that. Karma

means action. In this case it's not just karmic action but, more than that, the action of Buddhas.

7. What is the reason for the Karmapa's reincarnation?

Karmapa: The importance of the organization of Karmapa is just like all the other same incarnations of Bodhisattvas, same goal.

8. Why does the Karmapa reincarnate for 21 times only, why not continually?

Karmapa: I think it is... sort of like... officially announced that they reach 21. And I think it seems that probably, after 21 incarnations, the situation in the world itself would be in too much confusion and it will be too chaotic and people won't have time to practice Dharma. It will be simply out of their hands. Therefore I'm saying there's no need... there's no importance whether there is a Karmapa or not officially. So, therefore the activities of Karmapa will continue passively.

The sixth Buddha is a long way. We still have the fifth to come. If we count human lives, there are still lots and lots of lives to go. So there can still be lots and lots of reincarnations where one accumulates becoming a Buddha.

9. If Karmapa becomes Buddha, what would be the name of the Buddha?

Karmapa: The Sixth Buddha. After Maitreya. I think in Tibetan it is called Singheda. Singha means lion. Da means sort of the sound of lion, or one can say roar. The lion's roar.

10. Is there any scripture or Buddhist document available to support this statement?

Karmapa: Yes. I think there are. I don't know that well. So I think we would have better information if you also ask him, Lama Tsultrim.

11. Why do Tibetans believe in the reincarnation of spiritual leaders and what percentage of people believe in your reincarnation?

Karmapa: The idea of reincarnation is not something that only Tibetans believe and it's not just a belief as well. It's just something that is commonly known in the

teachings of Buddha. So meaning that maybe we think that only Tibetans believe in and the rest don't. Probably it's because Vajrayana developed only in Tibet. Probably that's the reason. But the thing is that actually in the teaching of... how to say... in Dharma or in Buddhism, reincarnation is accepted by all. No matter the different Yanas, all accept that. Probably in Theravada.... probably they do not accept that because they do not understand the functions or the activities of Bodhisattvas. Yes. So that's why for themselves they have no real reincarnations as Bodhisattvas but generally they must understand that there is the reincarnation of samsaric beings. So I think in Theravada only one type of reincarnation is taught, otherwise it doesn't make sense. Because as long as we are Buddhist, and as long as we are practicing Dhamma, we have to understand that there is reincarnation, otherwise it's just sort of this life, then it's too short of a time.

12. Who is Mahakala?

Karmapa: Mahakala is normally a wrathful form. A wrathful aspect of Buddha actually. Its true essence is like that of a Buddha. But its outer form is like a demon almost, you know. And of course it has also very like – how to say – like aggressive actions like you will see in the thangka. Even when we read, Mahakala is something very wrathful, so much fury. And of course all of those actions are taught in a very – how to say – a very metaphorical sense, I think. Because in Mahakala activities you would often hear of him killing or destroying negative enemies or demons. But of course the real demons are our negative emotions and it's all, sort of like, dealt with by a very wrathful form. That's all it is. Otherwise there is no difference between a Buddha and a Mahakala. According to Kagyu tradition, he appears to be in that form and he is there not as a heathen but as a Dharma protector.

13. What is the difference of reincarnation among Hindus and Christians when compared with the reincarnation of a Karmapa?

Karmapa: Hindus do believe in reincarnation, just almost exactly as Buddhists do. I mean the whole understanding of reincarnation also, in our time, came about from them. But not exactly Hindus. In those days they were not called Hindus. But now Hindu is a very general name. In India actually there are more than 300- 400 different

types of sects of religions, you know. But even Buddha himself sort of based his teachings on that. Because these old religions, of Hindu let's say, were actually one of the oldest religions, even far older than, let's say, well... I don't remember their names but it seems that they are one of the oldest ones, one of the most ancient ones. And therefore they themselves would actually, sort of, ... with their abilities they would be able to reach certain levels of meditation. So they could see far into the future and that is how they could gain very high levels of wisdom and so even take rebirth in even higher realms. This is what we call the celestial realm and there are two higher realms above this. And they would also enter into those realms. In order to enter these realms, they will need a very high level of concentration of meditation, and also a realization of Shamatha and so therefore they were able to achieve those.

In the Buddha's time, even he himself learned those practices of meditation from actually one of those main teachers actually. But of course that's not the ultimate way but otherwise they are very similar, yes. Actually they are almost the same thing. They just do not – how to say – combine Shamatha with Prajna, with wisdom. That's all. That's the only difference.

In Christianity it's something totally different, I think. Their idea of reincarnation is a little bit different, I think.

14. What is the daily routine of the Karmapa?

Karmapa: It changes from time to time. Yes. Especially in traveling, it is a little bit different. But otherwise, in the morning, as I get up, normally I would be doing a short practice of White Tara. And then, after that, on my week days I have my regular studies, my Dharma studies. And then I have some time for visitors. And of course the normal meals and after that then some more practices, some more study. And yes I think actually that the whole day consists of just really study. Except for weekends.

Interviewer: Do you teach?

Karmapa: At the moment I don't. But they have asked me to teach and so when I return I will have to take that responsibility.

15. How many vows does the Karmapa take?

Karmapa: I think it depends on the circumstances. There are no real limits, you know. For the vows of Galong (Sila), there are 250 promises that I could take. But so far, I haven't taken that. At the moment I have only taken two different kinds of vows, I think. There is no such thing as how much one should take.

Bodhisattva Vows one must take definitely. The Bodhisattva vow is a must. That one should take. Other than the Bodhisattva vow, it depends. It's not a must.

16. Does the Karmapa emanate from the Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, or Lord Buddha Vajradhara Buddha?

Karmapa: Emanation? Normally we understand Karmapa is the emanation of Avalokiteshvara and the Sharmapa is the emanation of Amitabha. But of course, when it comes to emanation, there is no limit. It seems that as long as there is a sentient being, who has the potential, or how should I say, the activity of Avalokiteshvara, then they are themselves the emanation of Avalokiteshvara.

Interviewer: Thousand-Armed or Four Armed?

Karmapa: That is just a form, you know. Of course there are thousand arms, four arms, two arms. There are lots of forms of Avalokiteshvara. But actually the real essence is just one. It's just that there are different forms for different reasons, for different activities.

Interviewer: Because some books say Karmapa is from Chenrezig and Dalai Lama from the thousand-armed.

Karmapa: It's the same I think. Also I think for the Dalai Lama, back in Tibet, everybody understands the Dalai Lama mostly as the emanation of Avalokiteshvara. But from my understanding, it's not about 4,000, or 1,000, it's just that he also is the emanation of Avalokiteshvara. Yes.

17. What are the specific characteristics of the Karmapa?

Karmapa: I think there is no particular characteristic. It's just that in all the incarnations, when they are born as a human being, of course they would have their own individual character. It is different from one reincarnation to another, depending

on the circumstances how they needed to achieve their activities. But otherwise their real essence is just like all the Bodhisattvas. It has to be the same.

18. What is the significance of Karmapa in Buddhist religion, society, and politics?

Karmapa: Buddhism is not actually a religion, I think. Most of us we understand in the general sense as a religion. Because it's something quite similar. But otherwise it's not a religion but simply a method. Especially in English, the meaning of religion is something very different, I think. It means something about connecting one's soul with the God, right? That's the real meaning of religion. And in Buddhism, it's not about that. It's more like in Buddhism... I am just you know saying out of my own idea... it's not about touching your soul with God but touching yourself, touching your own nature. So it is quite different. But otherwise my take on religions generally – religions, politics, and society, right? Well, they are just forms of – how to say – forms of ways to make everyone bring some happiness, I think. That's all. I think they are all different forms and different ways. It's just that – how to say – there are lots of positive sides, positive aspects. But it's just that because it's simply very Samsaric, it's not something flawless, there's always something wrong.

18. What is the difference between reincarnation in religion and reincarnation in politics?

Karmapa: Well nowadays of course the time is such that everyone takes that part of reincarnation – how to say – they use that as an advantage. So in that way, of course, nowadays it's quite true – how to say – how to believe or how to trust that, actually, whether one is a reincarnation of a particular being, you know, or a particular Bodhisattva? Of course, you know, generally one can say that everyone is an incarnation of course, or a reincarnation, from one sentient being. But of course we don't know actually who is that particular being. So I really don't know whether to say that there is a, you know, a reincarnation of politics or a reincarnation of religion. It's just that because of all the circumstances there is a lot of confusion. Otherwise, incarnations are incarnations. I mean, incarnations are reincarnations. They are just

themselves, you know, as it is. There's no such thing as whether it's religious or, you know, politic.

20. Why is the Karmapa not interested in political posts in the government?

Karmapa: Of course, when we talk about politics, the word politics in English and in Tibetan is a little bit different. In Tibetan the word we use for politics is called 'si'. It's not as – how to say – not as noble as it is in English. In English, politics does not necessarily mean something bad, right? It is a way to develop our society. But in Tibetan it is something different. It is sort of like the opposite of religion. Meaning that it's the way to cut down religion. So in that way it means corruption, mainly. That is the understanding we have in Tibetan when we say politics. So in that way of course nobody wants that, nobody wants corruption. But of course in an English sense I also understand the positive elements politics has to it. So if one can really use that in a positive way, then it has benefits.

21. What is your idea on the significance and influence of Karmapa in the spiritual leadership status of Tibetan Buddhists?

Karmapa: So far, up until the 16th Karmapa, most of the activities of Karmapa have been in Tibet. And of course that's true of all other schools of Tibetan Buddhism or sects in Tibetan Buddhism. They have all contributed to Tibetan Buddhism in those times. But now of course, for all of our schools, our activities have expanded to such an extent that it is not just in Tibet or Asia but all over the world. So, well, we have to take it, we have to deal with it each moment, I guess.

22. How do Buddhists in the world acknowledge you as the reincarnation of Karmapa?

Karmapa: Well, I don't know. [Laughs.] Just generally, I think, people around the world they have more and more exposure to Dharma. Therefore, more and more ideas about incarnations and reincarnations. So when they have a good understanding of it, then maybe they will have a take on how they understand the incarnation of Karmapa. But until then, I think, they won't really have a clear idea of who is Karmapa or what is Karmapa. Only a few.

23. As the Karmapa, what special status and privileges do you have compared with others?

Karmapa: Well, I have all this luxury. [Laughs.]

Interviewer: Why? [Laughs.]

Karmapa: Well, because people are nice.

No. Let me see, about privilege, right? Well the real privilege is, I think, that... Well – how to say – for true Buddhists, or for true Dharma practitioners, they will always wish that they will have an opportunity to help sentient beings but most of them would not be in that position. They would be always sort of somewhat stuck with their own lives. For them sometimes it's too late. Sometimes they do not have the opportunity. So it is only in their dreams or wishes that they can do something. Together with wishes for their next lives.

And for myself, of course, I am sure that even myself, in previous lives, had made the same wishes. And so now of course in this life I also understand that all those wishes came true. So therefore that is the real privilege, I think, to have the opportunity to do something.

24. What is your nationality?

Karmapa: I think there is no real nationality, I think. [Laughs.] Well, I must clearly say that my parents are from Tibet. They're from Kham, eastern part of Tibet.

25. Where do you spend most of your time during the year?

Karmapa: I think in India.

26. How do you feel being a Karmapa is different from being a normal human being?

Karmapa: I guess not much. I feel very normal.... Yes, normal. Nothing particular.

27. What does the Karmapa offer religions, societies, and politics, and what do religions and societies offer His Holiness?

Karmapa: Well, what Karmapa offer, and not just Karmapa, but all Dharma practitioners and all potential Bodhisattvas and true Bodhisattvas, what we all

contribute and offer to society, of course is the development of this religion, of Tibetan Buddhism.... not Tibetan Buddhism, sorry, Buddhism, that's it, Buddhism. To contribute Buddhism so that it can bring some peace, let's say. Let's forget about world peace – that's all in dreams. But some kind of inner place as a human being maybe. I think that's more than one can achieve. So definitely to expand the activity of Buddhism and feel that happy in that job.

28. As a reincarnation of Karmapa, what is your present plan and future program towards the progress and spread of the Dharma?

Karmapa: I think that's more or less answered....Well, so far there's no real plan as such but definitely according to the situation of course we have lots and lots of activities, which I hope will be helpful, not just in India, not just in Tibet, but everywhere.



H. H. The 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje

To,

Ms. Srichan Namthip
Social Science and Humanities Faculty
Mahidol University
Nakhonpathom, Thailand

Dated: 24-02-06

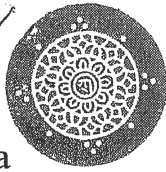
I am pleased to know that you have shown keen interest in doing your thesis for your Master's Degree on 'Reincarnation and Spiritual Leadership: A case study of the Black Crown Lamas of Tibetan Buddhism'.

In this work of your choice, I have no objection to the research being undertaken by you on this selected subject.

I wish you success in your endeavor for the purpose.

With Blessings,


Gyalwa Karmapa



THE PICTURE OF KARMAPAS OF KAGYU/BKACK CROWN HAT I – XVII ⁵⁴



I



II



III



IV



V



VI



VII



VIII



IX

⁵⁴ Pictures Taken from The Karmapa charitable Trust, Gangtok, Sikkim, India and The VIENNA DHARMA PROJECTS.



X



XI



XII



XIII



XIV



XV



XVI



XVII



**HIS HOLINESS THE 17TH GYALWA KARMAPA
TRINLEY THAYE DORJE
THE HIGHEST BLACK CROWN LAMA OF TIBETAN
BUDDHISTISM**

HIS HOLINESS BIOGRAPHY⁵⁵



Left to Right: His Holiness, Mother, Father, Brother (sitting with an old lama)



His Holiness and his brother



Brother, Father, His Holiness

⁵⁵ Pictures taken from the “Karmapa Documentary Project” and the “Venna Dharmma Project.”



His Holiness: The first welcoming, the Black Crown Ceremony, KIBI, New Delhi, India.



His Holiness from a young boy to a young man. His similar face guarantees that he is the original.



His Holiness studying English.



Finished Buddhist Philosophical Studies at KIBI.

ACTIVITIES



Visit Bhutan



© KARMAPA DOCUMENTARY PROJECT



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Giving a Speech, London



Dharma work, the Tibetan New Year, 2007 Ceremony, Kalimpong, Darjeeling, West Bengal, India



Dharma Works



In the European Countries



In Kalimpong, India



Visit Bhopal, Nov. 2005, India

The First International Conference, Mumbai, India



Blessing Student



Blessing Devotees



Karmapa Resident, Kalimpong



His Holiness is the spiritual leader of Taiwan



His Holiness in Taiwan



The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara Four-Armed

**THE KARMA-KARGYUDPA
LINEAGE AND SUBJECTS***

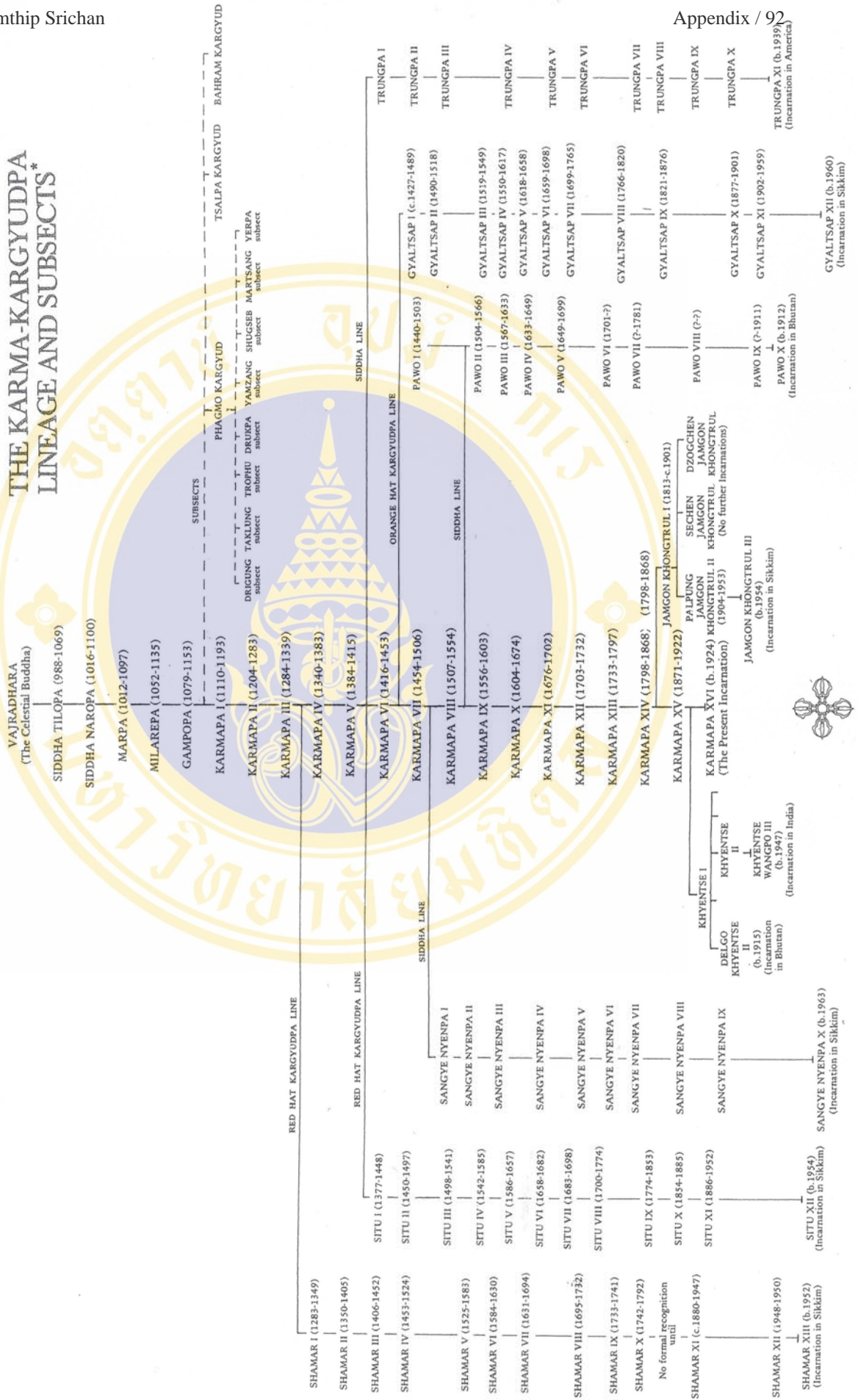
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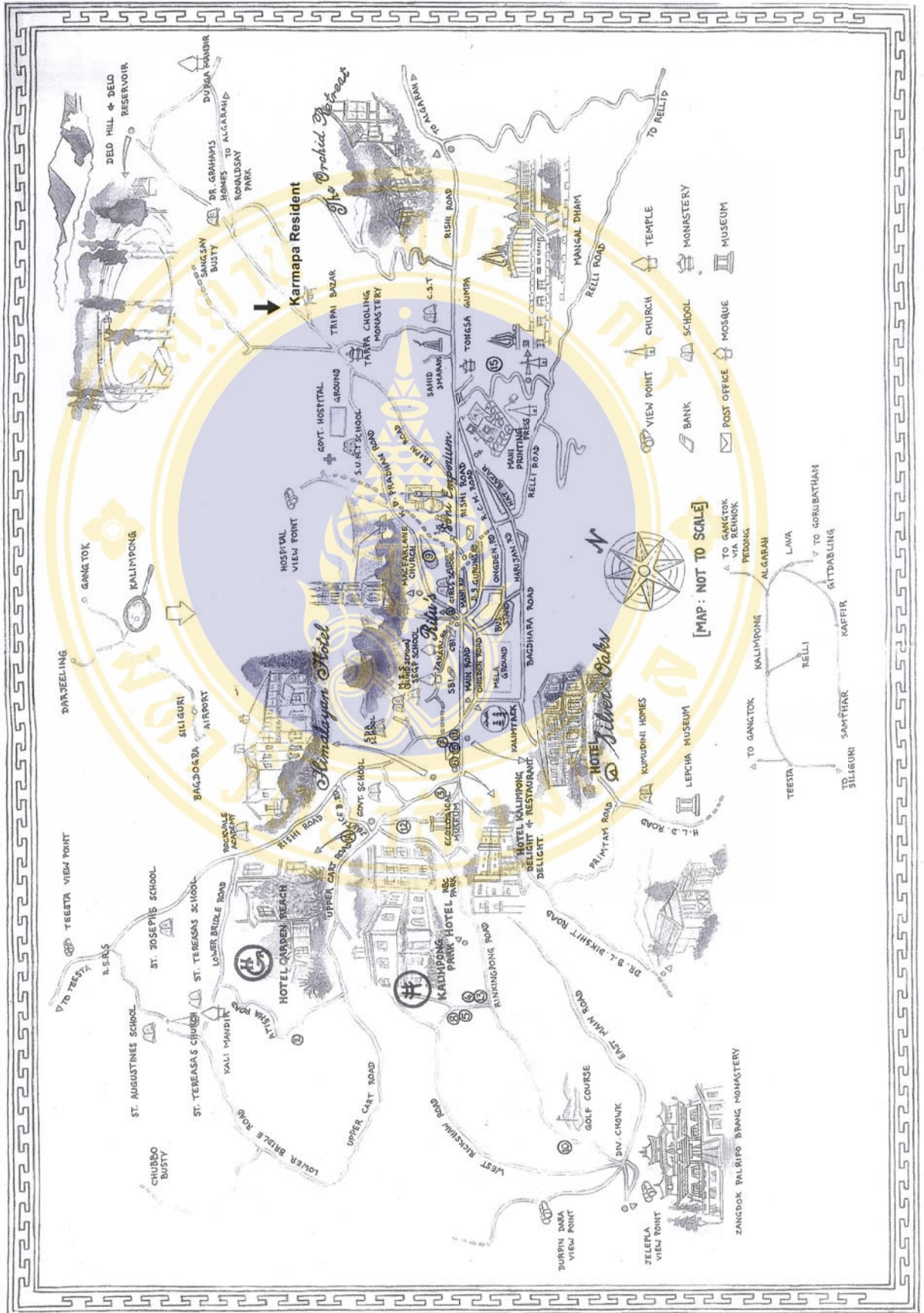
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A.D.





BIOGRAPHY

NAME	Ms. Namthip Srichan
DATE OF BIRTH	February 9, 1966.
PLACE OF BIRTH	Bangkok, Thailand
INSTITUTIONS ATTENDE	Ramkhamhang University 1992: : Bachelor of Arts Thai Traditional Doctor Institute, 2000 : Thai Traditional Medicine Thai Traditional Doctor Institute, 2002 : Thai Traditional Doctor Mahidol University 2007 : Master of Arts (Comparative Religion) Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
POSITION	Pharmacist (Thai Traditional) “ทิพย์สมุนไพรรักษาผึ้ง/ Honey Herb”
HOME ADDRESS	16/206 M. Piboongardenview, Piboonsongkharm Rd., Nonthaburi, Thailand 11000 E-mail: babba1210@hotmail.com www.sawatdeetibet.org Tel. +66-2-5266989
ARICLE	WFB REVIEW: The World Fellowship of Buddhist, Vols. XLI No.4 and XLII no.1 October 2547/2004- March 2548/2005 “A Tullku Born in Sikkim: Tullku Sangye Chophel Rinpoche” www.duangden.com/Religion/Islam-Namtip.html 2003: “อรุณรุ่งของมุสลิม”
SCHOLARSHIP	Assistantship Year 2/2005
RESEARCH GRANTS	This thesis is partially supported by Graduate Studies of Mahidol University Alumni Association, Academic Year 2005. This thesis is supported by Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University, Academic Year 2006.