



H. H. 14. Shamarpa Mipham Tjødji Lodrø, foto: Thule Jug

A brief account of the successive Shamarpa reincarnations

This brief account of the successive Shamarpa reincarnations is extracted from 'The Garland of Moon Water Crystal' authored by Situpa, Chökyi Jungne and Belo Tsewang Künkhyab.

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The tradition of a successive line of reincarnations originated in twelfth century Tibet with the first Karmapa Düsüm Khyenpa. The lineage of the Shamarpa reincarnations dates back to the same century and that lineage is the second line of successive reincarnations in the history of that tradition. The Shamarpa lineage of reincarnation began during the time of Rangjung Dorje, the third Karmapa who presented his principal disciple, Khaydrup Tragpa Senge, with a ruby-red crown while conferring the status Shamarpa which means 'Holder of the Red Crown'. That red crown is a replica of the black crown worn by the Karmapas, and it exemplifies the close relationship that exists between these two lines of reincarnation in that the Karmapas and the Shamarpas are emanations of the same mind-stream and that they are therefore

regarded inseparable. The second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi, said: “Future Karmapas will manifest in two forms”. That statement was later clarified by the fourth Karmapa, Rolpe'i Dorje, when he designated the Shamarpa reincarnates as a second manifestation of himself. The Shamarpas are also known as an emanation of Amitabha, The Buddha of Boundless Light.

Tibetan historical records refer to the Karmapa as ‘Karma Shanagpa’ which means ‘Karmapa, Holder of the Black Crown’ and the Shamarpas as ‘Karma Shamarpa’ which means ‘Karmapa, Holder of the Red Crown’. These designations are found in the historical records authored by several well-known Tibetan Buddhist masters, masters such as Golo Shonnu Pal (1392-1481), Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa (1504-1516), the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lozang Gyamtso (1617-1682) and the eighth Situpa Chökyi Jungnay (1700-1774).

It is important to understand that the crowns are simply symbols of the activity to accomplish the welfare of beings, the crowns do not denote separate lineages, both, ‘The Black Hat Lama’ and ‘The Red Hat Lama’ are of the Karma Kagyü Lineage.

The First Shamarpa, *Khaydrup Tragpa Senge*, (1284-1349)

was the principal disciple of the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. He is known as an accomplished master both in terms of scholastic achievements and meditation.

The Second Shamarpa, *Kachö Wangpo*, (1350-1405)

was recognized by the fourth Karmapa, Rölpe'i Dorje. He was Rölpe'i Dorje's main student and he was learned as well as accomplished in meditation. Kachö Wangpo recognized the 5th Karmapa, Deshin Shegpa, and he was his principal Lama. He is well-known for having furthered the Kagyü teachings to a great extent and he authored many treatises that elucidate the teachings of the Kagyü lineage.

The Third Shamarpa, *Chöpal Yeshe*, (1406-1452)

was identified by the fifth Karmapa, Deshin Shegpa, and he became his disciple. Chöpal Yeshe is renowned for having constructed several monasteries and retreat-centers. He was also able to abolish the practice of animal sacrifice in the regions of Tibet where that custom had continued.

The Fourth Shamarpa, *Chökyi Tragpa Pal Yeshe*, (1453 -1526)

was recognized by the seventh Karmapa, Chödrak Gyamtso, who became his Lama. Chökyi Tragpa Pal Yeshe is known for having embraced, without bias, the different approaches in Buddhism. The famous Tibetan monastery Ga Mamo Tashi Rabten was founded by him. He also established many smaller monasteries. During his travels outside Tibet, Chökyi Tragpa built many monasteries, among others there are four monasteries in Bhutan and he was the first of the Shamar reincarnates to visit Nepal where he built a

small monastery in Swayambhunath, one of the country's most sacred places. Upon returning to his homeland, he acted as the king of Tibet for a period of twelve years and he ruled the country on the basis of strict adherence to Buddhist principles. His scholarly achievements include his fourteen compositions which interpret the meanings of various Sutras and Tantras.

The Fifth Shamarpa, Könchog Yenlag, (1526-1583)

was identified by the eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje. The eighth Karmapa stated that the Karmapa reincarnations and the Shamarpa reincarnations are, in fact, of the same mind-stream, that they are inseparable. Könchog Yenlag was a scholar and a meditation master. Among his written works are seven well-known texts on Buddhist meditation. He also recognized and became the Lama of the ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje.

The Sixth Shamarpa, Chökyi Wangchuk, (1584-1629)

was recognized by the ninth Karmapa who was his main Lama. He also received teachings from many other masters and is famed for his deep insight. By the age of seventeen he had already memorized fifty volumes of the Sutras and the Tantras and he had developed great skills in the art of debate. Thus he became known as 'the Pandita of the North, the Omniscient Shamarpa in Whom the Great Manjushri Delights'. Chökyi Wangchuk became the Lama of the then ruler of Tibet, Desi Tsangpa and he taught extensively throughout the country. During his travels in East Tibet he recognized and became the Lama of the tenth Karmapa, Chöying Dorje. At the time, as there was unrest in that part of the country, Chökyi Wangchuk mediated and he was able to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict. His travels also took him to Nepal where he taught Buddhism in Sanskrit to King Laxman Naran Singh (**Lakshminarasimha Mala**) as well as to others who showed interest and devotion. Chökyi Wangchuk passed away in the mountains of Helampur in Nepal in the vicinity of a cave where Tibet's great yogi, Milarepa, had stayed. His written works include ten treatises where he elucidated the meanings of both the Sutras and the Tantras.

The Seventh Shamarpa, Palden Yeshe Nyinpo, (1631-1694)

was recognized by the 10th Karmapa, Chöying Dorje, and he became the Karmapa's disciple. Palden Yeshe Nyingpo devoted his life to the practice of meditation. He recognized the 11th Karmapa, Yeshe Dorje, according to the instructions that the tenth Karmapa had left behind.

The Eighth Shamarpa, Palchen Chökyi Döndrub, (1695-1732)

was born in Helampur, Nepal to a Nepalese family. The 11th Karmapa, Yeshe Dorje, sent a representative from Tibet to Nepal with the instructions as to the whereabouts of the Shamarpa reincarnation. At the age of seven, Shamar Palchen Chökyi Döndrub was brought to Tibet and he was enthroned by the 11th Karmapa who took charge of his training. Palchen Chökyi Döndrub, in turn, identified the 12th Karmapa, Changchub Dorje and he became his Lama. Both travelled to Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, India and

China where they taught extensively. Both, the 12th Karmapa and the 8th Shamarpa passed away in China with just one day between their deaths (1732).

The Ninth Shamarpa, Könchog Geway Jungnay, (1733-1741)

was discovered by the 13th Karmapa, Dūdül Dorje. However, Shamar Könchong Geway Jungnay lived just for nine years, therefore the historical records of his life are very brief.

The Tenth Shamarpa, Mipam Chödrub Gyatso, (1742-1793)

was recognized by the thirteenth Karmapa, Dūdül Dorje, who was his Lama. Mipam Chödrub Gyatso became a scholar and a meditation master. In his forties he travelled to Nepal where he attracted and taught many followers. He also restored the great stupa of Swayambhunath, one of Nepal's great Buddhist monuments. He passed away in the vicinity of the Boudhanath Stupa, another well-known Buddhist pilgrimage spot in Nepal.

The Eleventh Shamarpa

During the eighteenth century, due to an outbreak of sectarian disputes, the Tibetan government, prohibited the official recognition of the Shamarpas. Because of this, most biographical material concerning the eleventh Shamarpa is unavailable. However, it is known that he became a physician and that he lived in and cared for people in the northern part of Tibet.

The Twelfth Shamarpa, Jamyang Rinpoche,

was the son of the 15th Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje. Because the Shamarpas were banned officially the precise dates of his birth and death are not known. However, it is recorded that he taught and practiced Buddhism as a layman.

(There was yet another incarnation, that is not mentioned in this text, before the present 14th Shamarpa, Mipham Chögyi Lodrö)
