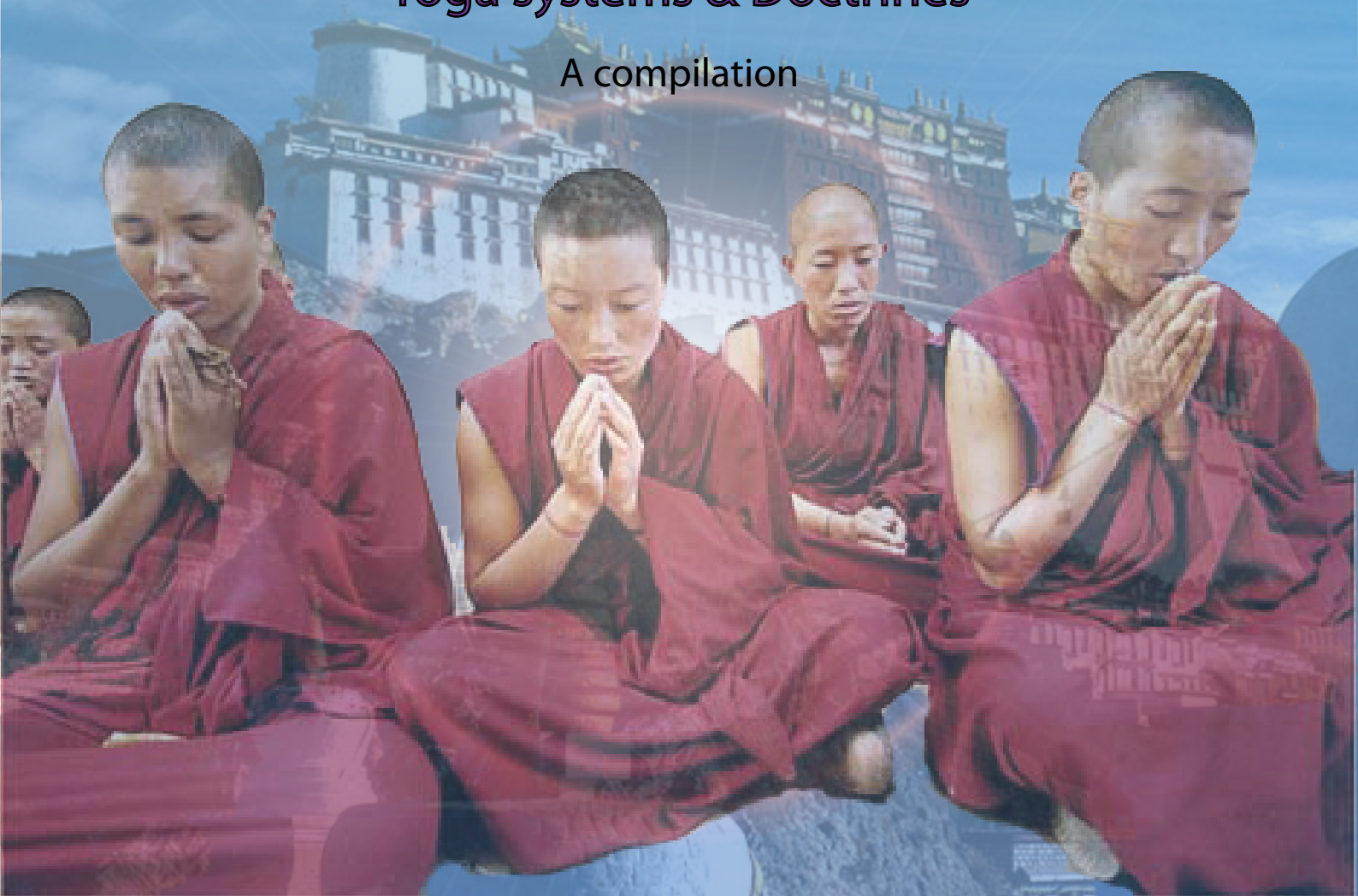


Oriental Schools and lineages

ESOTERIC AND EXOTERIC
Yoga systems & Doctrines

A compilation



Academy of Wisdom Teaching Eu

Universalis - hallmark and true expression of the spiritual life



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A compilation on Esoteric & Exoteric

Philosophies
Doctrines
Yoga systems
Lineages

Nyingma

Kagyu
Sakya
Gelug

Mahāyāna
Vajrayāna

Note:

This compilation is not a complete overview of all the available surveys done by scholars of oriental studies.

Oriental studies is the academic field of study that embraces Near Eastern and Far Eastern societies and cultures, languages, peoples, history and archaeology; in recent years the subject has often been turned into the newer terms of Asian studies and Middle Eastern studies. European study of the region, formerly known as "the Orient", had primarily religious origins, which has remained an important motivation until recent times. Learning from Arabic medicine and philosophy, and the Arabic translations from Greek, was an important factor in the Middle Ages. Linguistic knowledge preceded a wider study of cultures and history, and as Europe began to encroach upon the region, political and economic factors encouraged growth in academic study. From the late 18th century archaeology became a link from the discipline to a wide European public, as treasures brought back filled new European museums. The modern study was influenced both by Imperialist attitudes and interests, and also the sometimes naive fascination of the exotic East for Mediterranean and European writers and thinkers, captured in images by artists, that is embodied in a repeatedly-surfacing theme in the history of ideas in the West, called "Orientalism". In the last century, scholars from the region itself have participated on equal terms in the discipline.

Contents I

- 1 Early lineage and traditions
- 2 History
 - 2.1 Geographical dissemination of Buddhism into the Tibetan plateau
 - 2.2 Origins
- 3 Chinese influence
 - 3.1 25 disciples
 - 3.2 Early period
 - 3.3 Political ethos
 - 3.4 Rise of scholasticism and monasticism
- 4 Distinguishing features of the Nyingma lineage
 - 4.1 Nine Yana
 - 4.2 Philosophy and doctrinal tenets
- 5 Tantra and Dzogchen texts and praxis in the Nyingma tradition
 - 5.1 Mahayoga
 - 5.2 "Eighteen" Texts of the Mind Division (Semde)
 - 5.3 Yidam practice & protectors
- 6 Termas and tertons
 - 6.1 Terma
 - 6.2 Tertons
- 7 Various traditions and important historical figures
 - 7.1 Longchenpa (1308-1363)
 - 7.2 Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798) and the Longchen Nyingthig
 - 7.3 Rinchen Terdzod
 - 7.4 Jamgon Ju Mipham Gyatso (1846–1912)
 - 7.5 Six mother monasteries
- 8 Contemporary lineage teachers
- 9 See also
- 10 Notes
- 11 References
- 12 Further reading

Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug schools

The Nyingma tradition is the oldest of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism (the other three being the Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug). "Nyingma" literally means "ancient," and is often referred to as the "school of the ancient translations" or the "old school" because it is founded on the first translations of Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Tibetan, in the eighth century. The Tibetan script and grammar was actually created for this endeavour. In modern times the Nyingma lineage has been centered in Kham in eastern Tibet.

1 Early lineage and traditions

The Nyingma tradition actually comprises several distinct lineages that all trace their origins to the Indian master Padmasambhava, who is lauded in the popular canon as the founder of Tibetan Buddhism and is still propitiated in the discipline of reciprocity that is guru yoga sadhana, the staple of the tradition(s).

Historically, Nyingmapa^[1] are categorised into Red Sangha and White Sangha. Red Sangha denotes a celibate, monastic practitioner; whereas White Sangha denotes a non-celibate practitioner who abstains from vows of celibacy. At different times in one's life due to changing circumstances and proclivities, individuals historically moved between these two Sanghas. Rarely was either determination of Red or White for the duration of one's life. Nyingma maintains the earliest tantric teachings which have been given the popular nomenclature of Vajrayana. Early Vajrayana that was transmitted from India to Tibet may be differentiated by the specific term 'Mantrayana' (Wylie: *sngags kyi theg pa*)^[2]. 'Mantrayana' is the Sanskrit of what became rendered in Tibetan as "Secret Mantra" (Wylie: *gsang sngags*): *gsang sngags* is the self-identifying term employed in the earliest literature, whereas Nyingma became associated in differentiation from the "New Schools" Sarma.

2 History

2.1 Geographical dissemination of Buddhism into the Tibetan plateau

Dargyay (1998: p. 5) provides a sound case^[1] that:

...at least in Eastern Tibet, there existed during and after the time of Lha-tho-tho-ri [Fl.173(?)–300(?) CE] a solid knowledge of Buddhism and that the upper classes of the people were faithfully devoted to it. But the border regions in the north and west probably had also come into contact with Buddhism long before the time of Srong-btsan-sgam-po. Buddhist teachings reached China via a route along the western and northern borders of the Tibetan culture and language zone; the same route was travelled by Indian Pandits and Chinese pilgrims in their endeavour to bring this Indian religion to China. There used to be contacts with the Tibetan population in these border regions. It is possible that the knowledge gained from these encounters was spread by merchants over large areas of Tibet. Thus, when Srong-btsan-sgam-po succeeded to the throne of Tibet in the year 627, the country was ready for a systematic missionary drive under royal patronage.^[3]

2.2 Origins

Germano (2002: unpaginated) states: While Buddhist figures and movements surely were active on the Tibetan plateau long before, Tibetan religious histories concentrate on events in the latter half of the eighth century as marking a watershed during which Buddhism definitively established itself within Tibetan culture. With the official sponsorship of the emperor Trisong Detsen (*khri srong lde btsan*), the first major monastery was established at Samye (*bsam yas*), a broad scale translation project of the Buddhist canon into a newly minted Tibetan literary language was initiated, and a variety of lineages began to take hold. The explosive developments were interrupted in the mid-ninth century as the Empire began

to disintegrate, leading to a century-long interim of civil war and decentralization about which we know relatively little.^[4]

Around 760, King Trisong Detsen invited Padmasambhava and the Nalanda University abbot Śāntarakṣita (Tibetan *Shiwatso*) to Tibet to introduce Buddhism in the "Land of Snows." King Trisong Detsen ordered the translation of all Buddhist Dharma Texts into Tibetan.

Padmasambhava, Shantarakshita, 108 translators, and 25 of Padmasambhava's nearest disciples worked for many years in a gigantic translation-project. The translations from this period formed the base for the large scriptural transmission of Dharma teachings into Tibet. Padmasambhava supervised mainly the translation of Tantra; Shantarakshita concentrated on the Sutra-teachings. Padmasambhava and Shantarakshita also founded the first Buddhist monastery Samye on Tibetan ground. It was the main center for dharma transmission in Tibet during this age.

3 Chinese influence

Chinese Ch'an Buddhism was introduced during the Eighth Century to the Nyingmapa or 'Ancient School' of Tibetan Buddhism in three principal streams of teachings. The lineages concerned were: Master Kim, Kim Ho-shang, (Chin ho shang) transmitted by *Sang Shi* who later became an abbot of Samye Monastery in c750 CE; the lineage of Master Wu Chu, 無住 of the Pao T'ang School was transmitted within Tibet by *Ye shes dbang po*; and the teachings from Mo Ho Yen, (Tibetan: *Hwa shang Mahayana*) that were a synthesis of the Northern School of Ch'an and the Pao T'ang School.^[5]

The Tibetan Dharma King Trisong Detsen (Tibetan: *Khri srong lde btsan*) hosted a famous two-year dharma debate, called *Council of Lhasa*, from 792-794CE, known in Western scholarship as the "Council of Lhasa" (although it took place at Samye) outside the capital.^[6]

As part of this debate Trisong Detsen invited the Ch'an master Mo-ho-yen (whose name consists of the same Chinese characters used to transliterate "Mahayana") to debate with Kamalashila. Mo-ho-yen had been disseminating Dharma in the Tun-huang locale at the time. Moheyan lost the important philosophical debate on the nature of emptiness to the Indian master Kamalashila, and the king declared that Kamalashila's philosophy should form the basis for Tibetan Buddhism.^[7] As a result, the Mahayana tradition of Tibetan Buddhism has primarily been founded on the madhyamaka philosophy introduced by Kamalashila from India. In Tibet this is generally combined with the Vajrayana practice path introduced by Padmasambhava, also during the Eighth Century.

However, a Chinese source states that Hwashang won the debate, and some scholars have concluded that the entire episode is fictitious.^[8] Pioneering Buddhologist Giuseppe Tucci has speculated that Hwashang's ideas were preserved by the Nyingmapas in the form of the Dzogchen teachings.^[9] John Myrdhin Reynolds holds a very different point of view stating "Except for a brief flirtation with Ch'an in the early days of Buddhism in Tibet in the eighth century, the Tibetans exhibited almost no interest at all in Chinese Buddhism, except for translating a few Sutras from Chinese for which they did not possess Indian originals."^[10]

3.1 25 disciples

The miracle-powers of the 25 disciples of Padmasambhava are widely accepted among Tibetan Buddhists. These disciples were: King Trisong Detsen, Namkhai Nyingpo, Nub Chen Sangye Yeshe, Gyalwa Choyang, the princess of Karchen Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal, Palgyi Yeshe, Palgyi Senge, the great translator Vairotsana, Nyak Jnanakumara, Gyalmo Yudra Nyingpo, Nanam Dorje Dudjom, Yeshe Yang, Sokpo Lhapal, Nanam Zhang Yeshe De, Palgyi Wangchuk, Denma Tsémang, Kawa Paltsek, Shupu Palgyi Senge, Dré Gyalwe Lodro, Drokben Khyenchung Lotsawa, Otren Palgyi Wangchuk, Ma Rinchen Chok, Lhalung Palgyi Dorje, Langdro Konchog Jungné and Lasum Gyalwa Changchup.

3.2 Early period

From this basis, Tantric Buddhism was established in its entirety in Tibet. From the 8th until the 11th century, the Nyingma was the only school of Buddhism in Tibet. With the reign of King Langdarma (836–842) a time of political instability ensued which continued over the next 300 years, during which time Buddhism was persecuted and largely forced underground. From the 11th century onwards, the Nyingma tradition flourished along with the newer Sarma schools, and it was at that time that Nyingmapas began to see themselves as a distinct group and the term "Nyingma" came into usage.

3.3 Political ethos

Historically, the Nyingma tradition is unique amongst the four schools in that its supporters never held political power, and therefore it stood at a greater remove from the political machinations of Tibet. Indeed, the Nyingma traditionally had no centralized authority and drew significant power from not having one. Only since the Tibetan diaspora following the Chinese annexure of Tibet have the Nyingma had a head of the Tradition and this seat was only invested at the polite request of the Dalai Lama. Even so, the Nyingma tradition is still politically decentralized and often decisions are made in an oligarchy or community of the senior sangha within a given jurisdiction or locale. Nyingmapa are also historically characterized and distinguished by decentralization and by their general wider political disinterest, with a lesser emphasis on monasticism relative to the other schools, with a correspondingly greater preponderance of ngakpas, uncelibate householders and yogins. There was never a single "head of the lineage" in the manner of either the Ganden Tripa or Dalai Lama of the Gelugpa, the Karmapa of the Karma Kagyu, or the Sakya Trizin of the Sakya. It was only recently in exile in India that this role was created at the request of the Tibetan Government in Exile, and it is largely administrative. Nevertheless, the lamas who have served in this role are among the most universally highly regarded. They are:

- Dudjom Rinpoche (c. 1904–1987), served from the 1960s until his death.
- Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (c. 1910–1991), served from 1987 until his death.
- Penor (Pema Norbu) Rinpoche (1932-2009) served from 1991 until retirement in 2003.
- Mindroling Trichen Rinpoche (c. 1930–2008), served from 2003 until his death.
- Trulshik Rinpoche (1923-) served from 2010-present. Selected after Chatral Rinpoche declined the position.^[11]

3.4 Rise of scholasticism and monasticism

In 1848, Dzogchen Shri Sengha (rdzogs chen srwi sengha) was founded by a charismatic teacher, Zhanphan Thaye (gzhan phan mtha' yas, 1800-), in association with the active participation of Do Kyentse (rndo mkhyen rtse). As scholar Georges Dreyfuss reports, The purpose of this school was not . . . the study of the great Indian treatises . . . but the development of Nyingma monasticism in Kham, a particularly important task at that time. Up to then, the Nyingma tradition had mostly relied on non-ordained tantric practitioners to transmit its teachings through authorized lineages. The move toward monasticism changed this situation, putting a greater emphasis on the respect of exoteric moral norms of behaviour as a sign of spiritual authority. This move participated in the logic animating the nonsectarian movement, the revitalization of non-Geluk traditions so that they could compete with the dominant Geluk school. Since the Geluk hegemony was based on a widespread monastic practice, it was important for the other schools to develop their own monasticism to rival the dominant Geluk tradition. This seems to have been one the goals of Zhanphan Thaye in creating the Dzokchen commentarial school. A further and equally important step was taken a few decades later with the transformation by [Khenpo] Zhenga of this institution into a center devoted to the study of the exoteric tradition. This step was decisive in creating a

scholastic model that could provide an alternative to the dominant model of the Geluk seats and could train scholars who could hold their own against the intellectual firing power of Geluk scholars.^[12]

For Zhenga and his followers, the way to return to this past was the exegetical study of commentaries, the proper object of scholarship. By downplaying the role of debate emphasized by the Geluk monastic seats and stressing exegetical skills, they accentuated the differences between these two traditions and provided a clear articulation of a non-Geluk scholastic tradition. In this way, they started the process of reversal of the damage inflicted on the non-Geluk scholarly traditions and created an alternative to the dominance of Geluk scholasticism, which had often tended to present itself in Tibet as the sole inheritor and legitimate interpreter of the classical Indian Buddhist tradition.^[13]

This scholastic movement led by Khenpo Shenga came on the heels of the work of Mipham, who "completely revolutionised Nyingmapa scholasticism in the late 19th century, raising its status after many centuries as a comparative intellectual backwater, to arguably the most dynamic and expansive of philosophical traditions in all of Tibetan Buddhism, with an influence and impact far beyond the Nyingmapa themselves."^[14]

4 Distinguishing features of the Nyingma lineage

4.1 Nine Yana

The doxography employed by the Nyingma tradition to categorize the whole of the Buddhist path is unique. Nyingmapas divide the Buddhist path into "nine yanas," as follows:

Causal Vehicle

- Shravakayana (Hinayana)
- Pratyekabuddhayana (Hinayana)
- Bodhisattvayana (Mahayana)

Outer tantra

- Kriya
- Caryā or Ubhaya
- Yogatantra

Inner tantra

- Mahayoga
- Anuyoga
- Atiyoga/Dzogchen (The "Great Perfection")

In the later schools the inner tantric teachings are known as *Anuttarayogatantra*, which corresponds to Mahayoga in the Nyingma system, while the Mahamudra teachings of the later schools are said to lead to similar results as the Dzogchen teachings.

Dzogchen Rinpoche (2007: p. 89) holds that:

When we study and practice the so-called lower and higher yanās, we might hear that the most sublime, or the pinnacle of all teachings are those of dzogchen, and this is true. The "lower" yanās of the shravaka and bodhisattva paths, the "higher" paths of the tantras, and the "pinnacle" path of dzogchen are distinguished from one another in this way. This gradation shows the various ways in which it is appropriate for beings of differing propensities to proceed upon the path. Ideally, a practitioner proceeds from the lower levels of practice to the higher levels, and then to the summit. This does not mean that the lower levels of practice are to be disparaged or ignored. We should not focus on the higher paths at the expense of the lower paths...^[15]

4.2 Philosophy and doctrinal tenets

Capriles (2003: p. 100) elucidates the Nyingma Dzogchenpa view which qualifies the doctrinal position of the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa (Prasangika and Svatantrika) in relation to the 'absence of self-nature' (Sanskrit: *swabhava shunyata*):

Though the teachings of the Nyingmapa agree that all phenomena lack a self-nature and a substance, according to many Nyingma teachings reducing voidness to a mere absence would be an instance of nihilism, and identifying absolute truth with such an absence would imply that this truth cannot account for the manifestation of Awakening, or even for the manifestation of phenomena; therefore, they explain voidness as lying in the recognition of the absence of mental constructs that is inherent in the essence of mind in which space and awareness are indivisible, and define absolute truth as consisting in the indivisibility of emptiness and appearances, or of emptiness and awareness.^[16]

The following sentence is from Mipham's famed exegesis of Shantarakshita's *Madhyamakalamkara* and it foregrounds the relationship between the absence of the 'four extremes' (mtha' bzhi) and the nondual or 'indivisible Two Truths' (bden pa dbyer med), the Wylie is a transcription from Doctor (2004: p.126), the first English rendering is by Doctor (2004: p.127) and the second is by Blankleder and Fletcher of the Padmakara Translation Group (2005: p.137):

"The learned and accomplished [masters] of the Early Translations considered this simplicity beyond the four extremes, this abiding way in which the two truths are indivisible, as their own immaculate way" (Doctor, 2004: p.127).^[17]

de lta bu'i mtha' bzhi'i spros bral bden pa dbyer med kyi gnas lugs 'di la snga 'gyur gyi mkhas grub mams kyis rang lugs dri ma med par bzung nas (Doctor, 2004: p.126).^[18]

"The learned and accomplished masters of the Old Translation school take as their stainless view the freedom from all conceptual constructs of the four extremes, the ultimate reality of the two truths inseparably united" (Padmakara Translation Group, 2005: p.137).^[19]

5 Tantra and Dzogchen texts and praxis in the Nyingma tradition

With the advent of the transmission of Sarma traditions into Tibet, various proponents of the new systems cast aspersions on the Indic origins of much of the Nyingma esoteric corpus. Indic origin was an important component of perceived legitimacy at the time. As a result, much of the Nyingma esoteric corpus was excluded from the Tengyur, a compilation of texts by Buton Rinchen Drub that became the established canon for the Sarma traditions.

In response, the Nyingmapas organized their esoteric corpus, comprising mostly Mahayoga, Atiyoga (Dzogchen) Mind class Semde and Space Class (Longde) texts, into an alternate collection, called the *Nyingma Gyubum* (the Hundred Thousand Tantras of the Ancient School, Wylie: *rnying ma rgyud 'bum*).^[8] Generally, the Gyubum contains Kahma (Wylie: *bka' ma*) and very little terma (Wylie: *gter ma*). The third class of Atiyoga, the Secret Oral Instructions (Menngagde), are mostly terma texts.

Various editions of the Gyubum are extant, but one typical version is the thirty-six Tibetan-language folio volumes published by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche in New Delhi, 1974. It contains:

- 10 volumes of Ati Yoga (Dzogchen)
- 3 volumes of Anu Yoga
- 6 volumes of the tantra Section of Mahayoga

- 13 volumes of the sadhana Section of Mahayoga
- 1 volume of protector tantras
- 3 volumes of catalogues and historical background

5.1 Mahayoga

There are 'eighteen great tantras' (Wylie: *bshad pa dang cha mthun gyi rgyud tantra sde bco brgyad*) at the heart of the 'Mahayoga' (Wylie: *rnal 'byor chen po*) tradition, grouped into 'five root tantras' (Wylie: *rtsa ba sku gsung thugs yon tan phrin las kyi rgyud chen po lnga*), 'five practice tantras' (Wylie: *sgrub pa lag len du bstan pa rol pa' rgyud chen po lnga*), and 'five activity tantras' (Wylie: *spyod pa'i yan lag tu 'gro ba'i rgyud chen po lnga*), and the 'two supplementary tantras' (Wylie: *ma tshang kha bskong ba'i rgyud chen po gnyis*). Together they are known as the *Māyājāla*. The "Guhyagarbha Tantra" (Wylie: *rDo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba; gSang ba snying po*) is the foremost of all of these and it abridges the content of the seventeen others.

5.2 "Eighteen" Texts of the Mind Division (Semde)

Main article: Semde

The mind class (semde) of Dzogchen was also said to comprise eighteen tantras, although the formulation eventually came to include slightly more. The Kunjed Gyalpo (Sanskrit: *Kulayarāja Tantra*; The All-Creating King) Tantras is the most significant of the group and is taken to be the primary or root tantra of the Mind Series. The first five are the "Five Earlier Translated Tantras", translated by Vairotsana. The next thirteen were translated primarily by Vimalamitra.

5.3 Yidam practice & protectors

The foremost deities practiced by the Nyingma masters are Vajrakīla (Tib. *Dorje Phurba*) and Vajra Heruka (also *Vishuddha Heruka*; Tib. *Yangdak Tratung*, Wylie: *yang dag khrag 'thung*), the third of the Eight Herukas who closely resembles Śrī Heruka of the Chakrasamvara tantra. The three principle protectors of the Nyingma lineage are said to be Ekajaṭī, Rāhula and Vajrasādhū.

6 Termas and tertons

The appearance of *terma* ("hidden treasures") is of particular significance to the Nyingma tradition. Although there have been a few Kagyupa "tertons" (treasure revealers) and the practice is endemic to the Bönpo as well, the vast majority of Tibetan Buddhist tertons have been Nyingmapas. It is held that past masters, principally Padmasambhava, secreted objects and hid teachings for discovery by later tertons at appropriate and auspicious times such that the teaching would be beneficial. These teachings may be physically discovered, often in rocks and caves, or they may be "mind terma," appearing directly within the mindstream of the terton.

6.1 Terma

Padmasambhava and his main disciples hid hundreds of scriptures, ritual objects and relics in secret places to protect Buddhism during the time of decline under King Langdarma. These termas were later rediscovered and special terma lineages were established throughout Tibet. Out of this activity developed, especially within the Nyingma tradition, two ways of dharma transmission: the so called "long" oral transmission from teacher to student in unbroken lineages and the "short" transmission of "hidden treasures". The foremost revealers of these termas were the five terton kings and the eight Lingpas.

The terma tradition had antecedents in India; Nagarjuna, for example, rediscovered the last part of the "Prajnaparamita-Sutra in one hundred thousand verses" in the realm of Naga, where it had been kept since the time of Buddha Shakyamuni.

6.2 Tertons

According to Nyingma tradition, tertons are often mindstream emanations of the 25 main disciples of Padmasambhava. A vast system of transmission lineages developed through the ages. Nyingma scriptures were updated when the time was appropriate. Terma teachings guided many Buddhist practitioners to realisation and enlightenment.

The rediscovering of terma began with the first terton, Sangye Lama (1000–1080). Tertons of outstanding importance were Nyangral Nyima Oser (1124–1192), Guru Chowang (1212–1270), Rigdzin Godem (1307–1408), Pema Lingpa (1450–1521), Migyur Dorje (1645–1667), Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820–1892) and Orgyen Chokgyur Lingpa (1829–1870). In the 19th century some of the most famous were the Khen Kong Chok Sum referring to Jamyang Khyentse, Jamgon Kongtrul and Chokgyur Lingpa.

7 Various traditions and important historical figures

It is generally agreed that Rongzom Pandita, Longchenpa and Ju Mipham are three of the greatest scholars in the history of the Nyingma lineage. Also important in establishing the modern curriculum was Khenpo Shenga.

7.1 Longchenpa (1308-1363)

During the ages, many great scholars and tantric Masters appeared within the Nyingma lineage. Most famous of all is the master and scholar Longchenpa (Longchen Rabjam), who, along with Rongzom Pandita, and Jigme Lingpa are known as *kun kyen* or "omniscient ones" - a rare title denoting doctrinal infallibility. He wrote many scriptures on the whole Nyingma-dharma. He is especially known for his presentation of the Nyingma philosophical view, that of Dzogchen in particular. His main works are the "seven treasures" (*Dzö dün*), "three cycles of relaxation" (*Ngalso Korsum*), "three cycles of natural liberation" (*Rangdröl Korsum*) and the three "inner essences" (*Yangtig Namsum*). Longchen Rabjam also systematized the transmission of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection, in a collection of texts called "The Four-fold Heart Essence" (*Nyingthig Yabzhi*).

7.2 Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798) and the Longchen Nyingthig

Jigme Lingpa further condensed the *Nyingthig Yabzhi* of Longchenpa into a cycle of termas called the *Longchen Nyingthig*, or "Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse". The *Nyingthig Yabzhi* and the *Longchen Nyingthig* are known, respectively, as the earlier and later "heart essence." The Longchen Nyingthig became both the foundation of the main Dzogchen teachings in the contemporary period and of the Rime movement. Jigme Lingpa's teaching lineage flourished in Kham (eastern Tibet) around Dege, and after his death three incarnations were recognised as being his emanations: Do Khyentse (1800 -1859?), Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, (1820–1892) and Patrul Rinpoche, (1808–1887), all of whom were central to the Rime movement.

7.3 Rinchen Terdzod

The Rinchen Terdzod (Tibetan, Wylie: *rin chen gter mdzod*) is the most important collection of terma treasure to Nyingmapas today. This collection is the assemblage of thousands of the most important terma texts from all across Tibet made by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, at the behest of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo in the 19th century.

7.4 Jamgon Ju Mipham Gyatso (1846–1912)

Jamgon Ju Mipham Gyatso (“Mipham the Great”) was born into an aristocratic family in 1846 in Kham, a province of eastern Tibet. His name, Mipham Gyatso, means “Unconquerable Ocean,” and as a scholar and meditator he was so accomplished that he was enthroned as an emanation of the Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom. As such, he was asked to compose a definitive articulation of the philosophical outlook of the Nyingma lineage. This had never been systematized in the manner of the other four lineages and, as a result, was vulnerable to attack by hostile scholars.

As requested, Mipham Rinpoche composed authoritative works on both the Sutra and Vajrayana teachings as understood in the Nyingma tradition, writing particularly extensively on dzogchen. He is said to have composed these vast works effortlessly. They reinvigorated and revitalized the Nyingma lineage enormously, and he soon became one of the most renowned lamas in Tibet, attracting disciples from all traditions, many of whom became lineage holders. Mipham's works have become the foundation of study for not only the Nyingma lineage, but the Kagyu lineage as well. They hold a central position in all Nyingma monasteries and monastic colleges. Along with Longchenpa, he is considered the source of the Nyingma doctrine.

7.5 Six mother monasteries

Tradition has held that there are six monasteries known as "mother monasteries" of the Nyingma lineage, although there have been slightly different formulations of the six. At one time they included Dorje Drak, Mindrolling monastery and Palri monastery in Upper Tibet; and Kathok, Palyul and Dzogchen monasteries in Lower Tibet. After the decline of Chongye Palri Thegchog Ling monastery and the flourishing of Shechen, the mother monasteries became Dorje Drak and Mindrolling in the upper region, Shechen and Dzogchen in the center, and Kathok and Palyul in the lower part of Tibet. Dodrubchen is often substituted for Kathok in the list. Out of these "main seats of the Nyingma" developed a large number of Nyingma monasteries throughout Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal.

Also of great importance to the Nyingma lineage is Samye, the first Tibetan monastery, founded by Shantarakshita.

8 Contemporary lineage teachers

Authentic contemporary Nyingma teachers include His Holiness Trulshik Rinpoche, His Holiness Chatral Rinpoche, His Holiness Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche, Kyabje Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche, Kyabje Dodrupchen Rinpoche, Kyabje Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, Yangthang Rinpoche, Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, filmmaker Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche (son of H.H. Thinley Norbu Rinpoche), Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, Lama Gonpo Tseten, Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, Jigme Lodro Rinpoche, Tertön Orgyen Kusum Lingpa, Sogyal Rinpoche, Palden Sherab Rinpoche, Khenpo Sherab Sangpo, Garab Dorje Rinpoche (son of H.H. Thinley Norbu Rinpoche), Khentru Lodro Thaye Rinpoche, Chamtrul Rinpoche and Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche, among others.

9 See also

Organizations

- Rigpa

Teachings

- Chokling Tersar
- Longchen Nyingthig
- Nam Cho

Traditions

- Ngagpa

10 Notes

1. Followers of the tradition are known as Nyingmapa "pa" being a common suffix comparable to "er" or "ite" in English.
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Kagyü School

Contents II

- 1 Introduction - Nomenclature, orthography and etymology
 - 1.1 “Kagyü” & “Kargyü”
- 2 Shangpa Kagyü
- 3 Marpa Kagyü & Dagpo Kagyü
 - 3.1 Indian Origins
 - 3.2 Marpa and his successors
 - 3.3 Milarepa and his disciples
 - 3.3.1 Gampopa
 - 3.4 Twelve Dagpo Kagyü Lineages
 - 3.4.1 Four primary schools of the Dagpo Kagyü
 - 3.4.1.1 Karma Kamtsang
 - 3.4.1.1.1 Sub-schools
 - 3.4.1.1.2 Karmapa controversy
 - 3.4.1.2 Barom Kagyü
 - 3.4.1.3 Tshalpa Kagyü
 - 3.4.1.4 Phagdrü Kagyü
 - 3.4.2 Eight Secondary schools of the Dagpo Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.1 Drikung Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.1.1 Sub-schools
 - 3.4.2.2 Lingre Kagyü & Drukpa Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.2.1 Lingre Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.2.2 Drukpa Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.3 Martsang Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.4 Shugseb Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.5 Taklung Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.6 Trophu Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.7 Yabzang Kagyü
 - 3.4.2.8 Yelpa Kagyü
 - 3.4.3 Dagpo Kagyü Lineages Today
- 4 Kagyü Doctrines
 - 4.1 Mahāmudrā
 - 4.2 The Six Yogas of Naropa
- 5 Kagyü Literature
- 6 References
- 7 Sources
- 8 Further Reading

1 Introduction - Nomenclature, orthography and etymology

The Kagyu, Kagyupa, or Kagyud (Tibetan, Wylie: *bka' brgyud pa*) school, also known as the "Oral Lineage" or *Whispered Transmission* school, is today regarded as one of six main schools (*chos lugs*) of Himalayan or Tibetan Buddhism, the other five being the Nyingma, Sakya, Jonang, Bon and Gelug. Along with the later two the Kagyu is classified as one of the Sarma or "New Transmission" schools since it primarily follows the Vajrayāna or Tantric teachings based on the so-called "New Tantras" *i.e.* those which were translated during the second diffusion of the Buddha Dharma in Tibet.

Like all schools of Tibetan Buddhism the Kagyu consider their practices and teachings to be inclusive of the full range of Buddha's teachings (or three yāna) since they follow the fundamental teachings and vows of individual liberation & monastic discipline (Pratimoksha) which accord with the Mulasarvastivada tradition of the Śrāvakayāna (sometimes called Nikāya Buddhism or "Hīnayāna"); the Bodhisattva teachings, vows of universal liberation and philosophy of the Mahāyāna; and the profound means and samaya pledges of the Secret Mantra Vajrayāna.

What differentiates the Kagyu from the other schools of Himalayan Buddhism are primarily the particular esoteric instructions and tantras they emphasize and the lineages of transmission which they follow.

Due to the Kagyu tradition's particularly strong emphasis on guru devotion and guru yoga, and the personal transmission of esoteric instructions (*dam ngag* or *man ngag*) from master to disciple, the early Kagyu tradition soon gave rise to a bewildering number of independent sub-schools or sub-sects centered round individual charismatic Kagyu teachers and the hereditary lineages as well as mindstream emanation lineages.

Strictly speaking, the term Kagyu (Tibetan, Wylie: *bka' brgyud*) ("Oral Lineage" or "Precept Transmission") applies to any line of transmission of an esoteric teaching from teacher to disciple. We sometimes see references to the "Atisha Kagyu" ("the precept transmission from Atiśa") for the early Kadampa,^[1] or to "Jonang Kagyu" for the Jonangpa and "Ganden Kagyu" for the Gelugpa sects.^[2]

Today the term Kagyu is almost always used to refer to the Marpa Kagyu or Dagpo Kagyu and its off-shoots, which developed from the teachings transmitted by the translator Marpa Chökyi Lodrö and his successors. It is also applied to the separate lesser-known Shangpa Kagyu tradition which developed from the teachings independently transmitted by Khyungpo Naljor.^[3]

1.1 "Kagyu" & "Kargyu"

In his 1970 article "*Golden Rosaries of the Bka' brgyud schools*" E. Gene Smith, discusses the two forms of the name — Kagyu Tibetan, Wylie: *bka' brgyud* and Kargyu Tibetan, Wylie: *dkar brgyud*:

A note is in order regarding the two forms Dkar brgyud pa and Bka' brgyud pa. The term Bka' brgyud pa simply applies to any line of transmission of an esoteric teaching from teacher to disciple. We can properly speak of a Jo nang Bka' brgyud pa or Dge ldan Bka' brgyud pa for the Jo nang pa and Dge lugs pa sects. The adherents of the sects that practice the teachings centring around the *Phyag rgya chen po* and the *Nā ro chos drug* are properly referred to as the Dwags po Bka' brgyud pa because these teachings were all transmitted through Sgam po pa. Similar teachings and practices centering around the *Ni gu chos drug* are distinctive of the Shangs pa Bka' brgyud pa. These two traditions with their offshoots are often incorrectly referred to simply as Bka' brgyud pa.

Some of the more careful Tibetan scholars suggested that the term Dkar brgyud pa be used to refer to the Dwags po Bka' brgyud pa, Shangs pa Bka' brgyud pa and a few minor traditions transmitted by Nā ro pa, Mar pa, Mi la ras pa, or Ras chung pa

but did not pass through Sgam po pa. The term Dkar brgyud pa refers to the use of the white cotton meditation garment by all these lineages. This complex is what is normally known, inaccurately, as the Bka' brgyud pa. Thu'u kwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma sums up the matter: "In some later 'Brug pa texts the written form 'Dkar brgyud' indeed appears, because Mar pa, Mi la, Gling ras, and others wore only white cotton cloth. Nevertheless, it is fine if [they] are all called Bka' brgyud." At Thu'u kwan's suggestion, then, we will side with convention and use the term "Bka' brgyud."^[4]

One source indicates "the term 'Kagyu' derives from the Tibetan phrase meaning 'Lineage of the Four Commissioners' (*Ka-bab-shi-gyu-pa*). This four-fold lineage is 1) the illusory body and transference yogas of the *Guhyasamaja* and *Chatushpitha Tantra*, transmitted through Tilopa, Nagarjuna, Indrabhuti, and Saraha; 2) the dream yoga practice of the Mahamaya from Tilopa, Charyapa, and Kukuripa; 3) the clear-light yoga of the *Chakrasamvara*, *Hevajra*, and other Mother Tantras, as transmitted from Hevajra, Dombipa, and Lavapa; and 4) the inner-heat yoga, Kamadevavajra, Padmavajra, Dakini, Kalpabhadra, and Tilopa."^[5]

2 Shangpa Kagyu

The Shangpa Kagyu (shangs pa bka' brgyud) differs in origin from the better known Marpa Kagyu or Dagpo Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism which is the source of all present day Kagyu schools. The Dagpo Kagyu and its branches primarily came from the lineage of the Indian siddhas Tilopa and Naropa transmitted in Tibet through Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa and their successors; whereas the Shangpa lineage descended from two female siddhas Naropa's consort Niguma^[6] and Virupa's disciple Sukhasiddhi transmitted in Tibet in the 11th century through Kedrub Khyungpo Nalor. The tradition takes its name from the valley of Shang where Khyungpo Nalor established the monastery of Zhong Zhong or Zhang Zhong. For seven generations the Shangpa Kagyu lineage remained a one-to-one transmission.^[7] Although there were a few temples and retreat centres in Tibet and Bhutan associated with the Shangpa transmission, the Shangpa Kagyu never really became established there as an independent religious institution or sect, but rather its teachings were transmitted down through the centuries by lamas belonging to many different schools. In the 20th century the Shangpa Kagyu teachings were transmitted by the first Kalu Rinpoche, who had many disciples in Tibet, India and the West.

3 Marpa Kagyu & Dagpo Kagyu

The Kagyu begins in Tibet with Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (1012–1097) who trained as a translator with Drogmi Lotsawa Shākya Yeshe (*'brog mi lo ts'a ba sh'akya ye shes*) (993–1050), and then traveled three times to India and four times to Nepal in search of religious teachings. His principal gurus were the siddhas Nāropa - from whom he received the "close lineage" of Mahāmudrā and Tantric teachings, and Maitripa - from whom he received the "distant lineage" of Mahāmudrā.

Tilopa



3.1 Indian Origins

Marpa's guru Nāropa (1016–1100) was the principal disciple of Tilopa (988-1089) from East Bengal. From his own teachers Tilopa had received the Four Lineages of Instructions (*bka' babs bzhi*)^[8] which he passed on to Nāropa who codified them into what became known as the Six Doctrines or Six Yogas of Nāropa. These instructions consist a combination of the completion stage (Skt. *sampannakrama*; Tib. *rdzogs rim*) practices of different Buddhist highest yoga tantras (Skt. *anuttarayoga tantra*; Tib. *bla-med rgyud*) which utilize the energy-winds (Skt. *vāyu*, Tib. *rlung*;), energy-channels (Skt. *nāḍī*, Tib. *rtsa*;) and energy-drops (Tib.) of the subtle vajra-body in order to achieve the four types of bliss, the clear-light mind and realize the state of Mahāmudrā.

The Mahāmudrā lineage of Tilopa and Nāropa is called the "direct lineage" or "close lineage" as it is said that Tilopa received this Mahāmudrā realisation directly from the Dharmakaya Buddha Vajradhara and this was transmitted only through Nāropa to Marpa.

The "distant lineage" of Mahāmudrā is said to have come from the Buddha in the form of Vajradara through incarnations of the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteshvara and Manjusri to Saraha, then from him through Nagarjuna, Shavaripa, and Maitripa to Marpa. The Mahāmudrā teachings coming from Saraha which Maitripa transmitted to Marpa include the "Essence Mahāmudrā" (*snying po'i phyag chen*) where Mahāmudrā is introduced directly without relying on philosophical reasoning or yogic practices.

According to some accounts, on his third journey to India Marpa also met Atiśa (982–1054) who later came to Tibet and helped found the Kadampa lineage^[3]



Marpa

Marpa established his "seat" at Drowolung (*gro bo lung*) in Lhodrak (*lho brag*) in Southern Tibet just north of Bhutan. Marpa married the lady Dagmema, and took eight other

concubines as mudras. Collectively they embodied the main consort and eight wisdom dakini in the mandala of his yidam Hevajra.

Marpa's four most outstanding students were known as the "Four Great Pillars" (ka chen bzhi):^[9]

1. Milarepa (1040–1123), born in Gungthang province of western Tibet, the most celebrated and accomplished of Tibet's yogis, who achieved the ultimate goal of enlightenment in one lifetime became the holder of Marpa's meditation or practice lineage.
2. Ngok Choku Dorje (rngog chos sku rdo rje)^[10] (1036–1102)- Was the principal recipient of Marpa's explanatory lineages and particularly important in Marpa's transmission of the Hevajra Tantra. Ngok Choku Dorje founded the Langmalung temple in the Tang valley of Bumthang district, Bhutan - which is still standing today.^[11] The Ngok branch of the Marpa Kagyu was an independent lineage carried on by his descendants at least up to the time of the Second Drukchen Gyalwang Kunga Paljor ('brug chen kun dga' dpal 'byor) 1428-1476 who received this transmission, and 1476 when Go Lotsawa composed the Blue Annals.^[12]
3. Tshurton Wangi Dorje (mtshur ston dbang gi rdo rje)^[13] - (or Tshurton Wangdor) was the principal recipient of Marpa's transmission of the teachings of the Guhyasamāja tantra. Tshurton's lineage eventually merged with the Zhalu tradition and subsequently passed down to Tsongkhapa who wrote extensive commentaries on Guhyasamāja.
4. Meton Tsonpo (mes ston tshon po)

Marpa had wanted to pass his lineage through his son Darma Dode following the usual Tibetan practice of the time to transmit of lineages of esoteric teachings via hereditary lineage (father-son or uncle-nephew), but his son died at an early age and consequently he passed his main lineage on through Milarepa.

Other important students of Marpa include:

- Marpa Dowa Chokyi Wangchuck (mar pa do ba chos kyi dbang phyug).
- Marpa Goleg (mar pa mgo legs) who along with Tshurton Wangdor received the Guhyasamāja teachings.
- Barang Bawacen (ba rang lba ba can) - who received lineage of the explanatory teachings of the Mahāmāyā Tantra.

In the 19th Century Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye (1813–1899) collected the initiations and sadhanas of surviving transmissions of Marpa's teachings together in the collection known as the Kagyu Ngak Dzö (Tibetan, Wylie: *bka' brgyud sngags mdzod*) ("Treasury of Kagyu Tantras").

3.3 Milarepa and his disciples

Among Milarepa's many students were Gampopa Sonam Rinchen (sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen) (1079–1153), a great scholar, and the great yogi Rechung Dorje Drakpa, also known as Rechungpa.

3.3.1 Gampopa

Gampopa combined the stages of the path tradition of the Kadampa order with teaching and practice of the Great Seal (Mahamudra) and the Six Yogas of Naropa he received from Milarepa synthesizing them into one lineage which came to be known as Dagpo Kagyu - the main lineage of the Kagyu tradition as we know it today.

Following Gampopa's teachings, there evolved the so-called "Four Major and Eight Minor" lineages of the Dagpo (sometimes rendered "Tagpo" or "Dakpo") Kagyu School. This phrase

is descriptive of the generation or order in which the schools were founded, not of their importance.

- Together Marpa, Milarepa and Gampopa are known as "Mar Mi Dag Sum" (*mar mi dwags gsum*) and together these three are considered to be the founders of the Kagyu school of Buddhism in Tibet.

3.4 Twelve Dagpo Kagyu Lineages

Although few survive as independent lineages today, there were originally twelve main Kagyu lineages derived from Gampopa and his disciples. Four primary ones stemmed from direct disciples of Gampopa and his nephew; and eight secondary ones branched from Gampopa's disciple Phagmo Drupa.^[14] Several of these Kagyu lineages in turn developed their own branches or sub-schools. It must be said, though, that the terminology "primary and secondary" (*che chung*) for the Kagyu schools can only be traced back as far as Kongtrul's writings (19th c.). The Tibetan terminology "che chung", literally "large (and) small," does not reflect the size or influence of the schools, as for instance the Drikung school was in the 13th century probably the largest and most influential of them, although it is, according to Kongtrul, "secondary".

The abbatal throne of Gampopa's own monastery of Daglha Gampo, passed to his own nephew Dagpo Gomtsul.

3.4.1 Four primary schools of the Dagpo Kagyu

3.4.1.1 Karma Kamtsang

The Drubgyu Karma Kamtsang, often known simply as the Karma Kagyu, was founded by one of Gampopa's main disciples Dūsum Khyenpa (1110–1193), later designated as the first Karmapa.

3.4.1.1.1 Sub-schools

The Karma Kagyu itself has three subschools in addition to the main branch.^[15]

- Surmang Kagyu, founded by Trungmase, a student of Karmapa Deshin Shekpa, this sub-sect was centered on Surmang monastery now in the Qinghai province of China.
- Nendo Kagyu, founded by Karma Chagme (*kar ma chags med*) (1613–1678), a disciple of the 6th Shamarpa (*zhwa dmar chos kyi dbang phyug*) (1584–1630)
- Gyaltön Kagyu

3.4.1.1.2 Karmapa controversy

Following the death of the 16th Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje in 1981, followers came to disagree over the identity of his successor. In the early 1990's two main candidates, Ogyen Trinley Dorje and Trinley Thaye Dorje, were publicly identified. The 14th Shamarpa, and nephew of the 16th Karmapa, recognized Trinley Thaye Dorje as the 17th Karmapa; while other senior Karma Kagyu incarnates, including the 13th Palpung Situ and 12th Goshir Gyaltsab, recognized Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the 17th Karmapa, as did the Dalai Lama. Both of these candidates underwent enthronement ceremonies and each is now considered by his respective followers to be *the* 17th Gyalwa Karmapa.^{[16][17]} A minority of Karma Kagyu adherents recognize *both* candidates as legitimate incarnations of the previous Karmapa.

3.4.1.2 Barom Kagyu

The Barom Kagyu was founded by Gampopa's disciple Barompa Darma Wangchug (*'ba' rom pa dar ma dbang phyug*) (1127–1199/1200) who established Barom Riwoche monastery (*nag chu 'ba' rom ri bo che*) in 1160.

An important early master of this school was Tishri Repa Sherab Senge (*'gro mgon ti shri ras pa rab sengge*) (1164–1236).

This school was popular in the Nangchen principality of Khams (now Nangqên, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in southern Qinghai province) where it has survived in one or two pockets to the present day.

Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche (1920–1996) was a holder of the Barom Kagyu Lineage.

3.4.1.3 Tshalpa Kagyu

The Tshalpa Kagyu was established by Zhang Yudrakpa Tsöndru Drak (*zhang g.yu brag pa brtson 'gru brags pa*) (1123–1193) or Lama Zhang who founded the monastery of Tsal Gungtang (*tshal gung thang*). Lama Zhang was a disciple of Gampopa's nephew Dagpo Gomtsul (*dwags sgom tshul khrims snying po*) (1116–1169).

The Tshalpa Kagyu tradition continued to function independently until the 15th century when it was absorbed by the Gelugpa, who still maintain many of its transmissions.^[18] All of the former Tshalpa properties became Gelugpa possessions under the administration of Sera monastery.

3.4.1.4 Phagdru Kagyu

The Phagmo Drupa Kagyu (Tibetan, Wylie: *phag mo gru pa bka' brgyud*) or Phagdru Kagyu was founded by Phagmo Drupa Dorje Gyalpo (Tibetan, Wylie: *phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po*), (1110–1170) who was the elder brother of the famous Nyingma Lama Ka Dampa Deshek (1122–1192) founder of Katok Monastery. Before meeting Gampopa, Dorje Gyalpo studied with Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (*sa chen kun dga' snying po*) (1092–1158) from whom he received whole Lamdré transmission.^[19]

In 1158 Dorje Gyalpo built a reed-hut hermitage at Phagmo Drupa ("Sow's Ferry Crossing") in a juniper forest in Nedong (Tibetan, Wylie: *sne gdong*) high above the Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) river. Later, as his fame spread and disciples gathered, this site developed into the major monastic seat of Dentsa Thel (Tibetan, Wylie: *gdan sa thel*). Following his death the monastery declined and his disciple Jigten Sumgon sent Chenga Drakpa Jungne (Tibetan, Wylie: *spyang snga grags pa 'byung-gnas*) (1175–1255), a member of the Lang (rlang) family, to become abbot and look after the monastery. "Chenga Drakpa Jungne was abbot for 21 years and restored the monastery to its former grandeur. In 1253 when the Sakyapas came to power they appointed Dorje Pel [(Tibetan, Wylie: *rdo rje dpal*)] the brother of Chenga Drakpa Jungne as Tripon [hereditary myriarch] of Nedon. From that time on the Tripon who as a monk, assumed the seat of government of Nedon and also ruled as abbot at Dentsa Thel and his brothers married in order to perpetuate the family line. This tie with the monastery founded by Phagmo Drupa led to the Tripons of Nedong to become known as Phagdru (short of Phagmo Drupa) Tripon and their period of rule in Tibet as the Phagmo Drupa period (or Phagmodrupa dynasty)."^[20]

Changchub Gyaltsen (1302–1364) was born into this Lang family. In 1322, he was appointed by the Sakyapa's as the Pagmodru Myriarch of Nedong and given the title "Tai Situ" in the name of the Yuan emperor. Soon he fought with a neighboring myriarchy trying to recover land lost in earlier times. This quarrel displeased the Sakya ruler (*dpon chen*) Gyalwa Zangpo (Tibetan, Wylie: *rgyal ba bzang po*) who dismissed him as myriarch. Following a split between Gyalwa Zangpo and his minister Nangchen Wangtson (Tibetan, Wylie: *nang chen dbang brtson*), the former restored Changchub Gyaltsen to his position in 1352. Taking advantage of the situation, Changchub Gyaltsen immediately went on the offensive and soon controlled the whole of the Central Tibetan province of U (dbus). Gyalwa Zangpo and

Changchub Gyaltsen were reconciled at a meeting with the Sakya Lama Kunpangpa (Tibetan, Wylie: *bla ma kun spangs pa*). This angered Nangchen Wangtson who usurped Gyalwa Zampo as Sakya ruler and imprisoned him.

In 1351 Changchub Gyaltsen established an important Kagyu monastery at the ancient Tibetan capital of Tsetang. This was later dismantled during the time of the 7th Dalai Lama Kelzang Gyatso (18th Century) and replaced by a Gelugpa Monastery, Gaden Chokhorling.^[21]

In 1358, Wangtson assassinated Lama Kunpangpa. Learning of this, Changchub Gyaltsen then took his forces to Sakya, imprisoned Wangtson, and replaced four hundred court officials and the newly appointed ruling lama. The Phagmodrupa rule of Central Tibet (U, Tsang and Ngari) dates from this coup in 1358.^[22]

As ruler Changchub Gyaltsen was keen to revive the glories of the Tibetan Empire of Songtsen Gampo and assert Tibetan independence from the Mongol Yuan Dynasty and from Ming Dynasty China. He took the Tibetan title “Desi” (sde-srid), re-organized the thirteen myriarchies of the Yuan-Shakya rulers into numerous districts (*rdzong*), abolished Mongol law in favour of the old Tibetan legal code, and Mongol court dress in favour of traditional Tibetan dress.^[23]

Tai Situ Changchub Gyaltsen died in 1364 and was succeeded as by his nephew Jamyang Shakya Gyaltsen (Tibetan, Wylie: *jam dbyangs sha kya rgyal mtshan*) (1340–1373), who was also a monk. The subsequent rule of the Phagmodrupa dynasty lasted until 1435 followed by the Rinpungpa kings who ruled for four generations from 1435–1565 and the three Tsangpa kings 1566-1641.

In 1406 the ruling Phagmodrupa prince, Drakpa Gyaltsen, turned down the imperial invitation to him to visit China.

From 1435 to 1481 the power of the Phagmodrupa declined and they were eclipsed by the Rinpungpa (Rin spungs pa) of Tsang, who patronized the Karma Kagyu school.

The Phagmo Drupa monastery of Dentsa Thel "was completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution in 1966-1978"^[24]

3.4.2 Eight Secondary schools of the Dagpo Kagyu

The eight secondary lineages (*zung bzhi ya brgyad* or *chung brgyad*) of the Dagpo Kagyu all trace themselves to disciples of Phagmo Drupa.

3.4.2.1 Drikung Kagyu



Drikung Monastery

One of the most important of the Kagyu sects still remaining today, the Drikung Kagyu takes its name from Drikung Thil Monastery founded by Jigten Gonpo Rinchen Pal (*'Jig-rten dgon-po rin-chen dpal*) (1143-1217) also known as Drikung Kyopa.

The special Kagyu teachings of the Drikung tradition include the "Single Intention" (*dgongs gcig*), the "The Essence of Mahāyāna Teachings" (*theg chen bstan pa'i snying po*), and the "Fivefold Profound Path of Mahāmudrā" (*lam zab mo phyag chen lnga ldan*).

Since the 15th Century the Drikung Kagyupa received influence from the "northern terma" (*byang gter*) teachings of the Nyingma tradition.

3.4.2.1.1 Sub-schools

Several sub-schools branched off from the Drikung Kagyu including the Lhapa or Lhanangpa Kagyu, founded by Gyalwa Lhanangpa (1164–1224) who came to Bhutan in 1194. This school was at one time important in Western Bhutan, particularly in the Thimphu and Paro regions where they were rivals of the Drukpa Kagyu. The Lhapa first came into conflict with the early Drukpa teacher, Phajo Drugom Zhigpo (b. 12th cent.)^[25] and finally with Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594–1651). In 1640 the remaining followers of the Lhapa Kagyu were expelled from Bhutan together with the Nenyingspa followers as both had sided with the attacking Tsangpa forces against the Drukpa during their three invasions of Bhutan and continued to refuse to acknowledge the authority of the Shabdrung.^[26]

3.4.2.2.1 Lingre Kagyu & Drukpa Kagyu

3.4.2.2.2 Lingre Kagyu

Lingre Kagyu refers to the lineages founded by Lingrepa Pema Dorje (Wylie: *gling ras pa padma rdo rje*) [1128-1188]^[27] also known as Nephupa after Nephu monastery (*sna phu dgon*) he founded near Dorje Drak (*rdo rje brag*) in Central Tibet (*dbus*). Lingrepa's teachers were Gampopa's disciple Phagmo Drupa Dorje Gyalpo; Rechungpa's disciple Sumpa Repa; and Ra Yeshe Senge, a lineage holder of Ra Lotsawa.

3.4.2.2.3 Drukpa Kagyu

The Drukpa Lineage was established by Ling Repa's main disciple Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorje (1161–1211) who established monasteries at Longbol (*klong rbol*) and Ralung (*rwa lung*). Later Tsangpa Gyare went to a place called Nam Phu where, legend has it, nine roaring dragons rose from the ground and soared into the sky. The Tibetan word for dragon is *'brug* which is pronounced as 'Druk' and so Tsangpa Gyare's lineage and the monastery he established at the place became known as the Drukpa and he became known as the Gyalwang Drukpa. This school became widespread in Tibet and in surrounding regions. Today the Southern Drukpa Lineage is the state religion of Bhutan; and, in the western Himalayas, Drukpa Lineage monasteries are found in Ladakh, Zaskar, Lahul, and Kinnaur. Along with the Mahamudra teachings inherited from Gampopa and Pagmodrupa, particular teachings of the Drukpa Lineage include the "Six Cycles of Equal Taste" (*ro snyom skor drug*), a cycle of instructions said to have been hidden by Rechungpa discovered by Tsangpa Gyare; and the "Seven Auspicious Teachings" (*rten 'brel rab bdun*) revealed to Tsangpa Gyare by seven Buddhas who appeared to him in a vision at Tsari.

Sub-schools

Several of Tsangpa Gyare's students started sub-schools, the most important of which were the Lower Drukpa founded by Gyalwa Lorepa Wangchug Tsondu and the Upper Drukpa founded by Gyalwa Gotsangpa Gonpo Dorje. This branch further gave rise to several important sub-schools. However the chief monasteries and succession of the First Gyalwang Drukpa Tsangpa Gyare passed to his nephew Öñre Darma Senge at Ralung and this lineage was known as The Middle or Central Drukpa. This lineage of the hereditary "prince-abbots" of Ralung continued to 1616 when Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal fled to Bhutan due to a

dispute over the incarnation of the 4th Gyalwang Drukpa and the enmity of the Tsangpa ruler. Due to those events the Central Drukpa split into the Southern Drukpa branch led by the Shabdrung and his successors in Bhutan, and the Northern Drukpa branch led by Pagsam Wangpo and the successive Drukchen incarnations in Tibet.^[28]

(a) The Lower Drukpa

The Medruk (*smad 'brug*) or Lower Drukpa sub-school was founded by the First Gyalwang Drukpa Tsangpa Gyare's disciple Gyalwa Lorepa Wangchuk Tsondu (*lo ras dbang phyug brtson 'grus*) [1187-1250] who lived a simple life. Lorepa built the Üri (*dbu ri*) and Sengeri (*seng ge ri*) monasteries and visited Bhutan where he founded Tharpaling (*thar pa gling*) monastery in Bumthang. A special transmission of the Lower Drukpa Lineage is known as

The Five Capabilities (*thub pa lnga*) which are:^[29]

1. Being capable of [facing] death: capability of Mahāmudrā (*phyag rgya chen-po 'chi thub*).
2. Being capable of [wearing only] the cotton cloth: capability of psychic heat (*gtum mo ras thub*).
3. Being capable of the tantric activities done in seclusion (*gsang spyod kyi ri thub*)
4. Being capable of [facing] the disturbances of 'don spirits: sickness (*nad 'don gyi 'khrug thub*).
5. Being capable of [facing] circumstances: capability of [applying] antidotes (*gnyen-po rkyen thub-pa*).

(b) The Upper Drukpa

The Toddruk (*stod 'brug*) or Upper Drukpa sub-school was founded Tsangpa Gyare's disciple Gotsangpa Gonpo Dorje (*rgod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje*) [1189—1258] a highly realized yogin who had many disciples. His main disciples were Ogyenpa Rinchenpal (*o rgyan pa*), Yangonpa (*yang dgon pa*), Chilkarpa (*spyil dkar pa*) and Neringpa.

Gotsangpa's disciple Ogyenpa Rinchenpal (1230—1309), who was also a disciple of Karma Pakshi, became a great siddha who traveled to Bodhgaya, Jalandhar, Oddiyana and China. In Oddiyana he received teachings related to the Six Branch Yoga of the Kālacakra system known as Approach and Attainment of the Three Adamantine States (*rdo rje gsum gyi bsnyen sgrub*) and, after returning to Tibet, founded the Ogyen Nyendrub tradition and wrote many works including a famous guide to the land of Oddiyana. Ogyenpa had many disciples including the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (*rang byung rdo rje*), Kharchupa (*mkhar chu pa*) [1284—1339] and Togden Daseng (*rtogs dan zla seng*).

Barawa Gyaltsen Palzang (*'ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang*) [1255—1343] was a great scholar of the upper Drukpa Kagyu succession of Yangonpa. He established the Barawa Kagyu sub-school which for a time was widespread in Tibet, and survived as an independent lineage until 1959.^[30] For a time this lineage was also important in Bhutan

(c) The Middle or Central Drukpa

The Middle Drukpa (*bar 'brug*) was the hereditary lineage (*dung rgyud*) of Tsangpa Gyare centered at Ralung. Following Tsangpa Gyare the next holder of this lineage was his nephew Önre Darma Senge (*dar ma sengge*) [1177—1237] - son of Tsangpa Gyare's brother Lhanyen (*lha gnyan*). Darma Senge was succeeded by his own nephew Zhonnu Senge (*gzhon nu seng ge*) [1200—1266], and he by his nephew Nyima Senge (*nyi ma seng ge*) [1251—1287]. The lineage then went to his cousin Dorje Lingpa Senge Sherab (*rdo rje gling pa seng ge shes rab*) [1238—1287], son of Lopon Öntag (*dbon stag*) a member of the branch of the Drukpa lineage descended from Tsangpa Gyare's brother Lhabum (*lha 'bum*). The lineage passed to Senge Sherab's brother Senge Rinchen (*seng ge rin chen*) [1258—1313] who was succeeded in turn by his son Senge Gyalpo (*seng ge rgyal po*) [1289—1326], grandson Jamyang Kunga Senge (*'jam dbyangs kun dga' seng ge*) [1289—1326], great-

grandson Lodro Senge (*blo gros seng ge*) [1345—1390], and great-great-grandson Sherab Senge (*shes rab seng ge*) [1371—1392]. These first nine holders of Tsangpa Gyare's lineage were known as the "Incomparable Nine Lions" (*mnyam med seng ge dgu*). Sherab Senge, who died at the age of 21, was succeeded on the throne of Ralung by his elder brother Yeshe Rinchen (*ye shes rin chen*) [1364—1413] and he by his sons Namkha Palzang (*nam mkha' dpal bzang*) [1398—1425] and Sherab Zangpo (*shes rab bzang po*) [1400—1438]. These three were considered to be the emanations of the three great Bodhisattvas Manjusri, Vajrapani and Avalokiteshvara respectively. Sherab Zangpo's son was the first incarnation of Tsangpa Gyare (i.e. the second Gyalwang Drukpa), Gyalwang Je Kunga Paljor (*rgyal dbang rje kun dga' dpal 'byor*) [1428-1476] who received teachings from the most renowned lamas of his age and became a great author and teacher. From Kunga Paljor the lineage passed to his nephew Ngawang Chögyal (*ngag dbang chos rgyal*) [1465—1540], then successively in turns from father to son to Ngakyi Wangchug (*ngag gi dbang phyug grags pa rgyal mtshan*) [1517—1554], Mipham Chögyal (*mi pham chos rgyal*) [1543—1604], Mipham Tenpai Nyima (*mi pham bstan pa'i nyi ma*) [1567—1619] and Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (*zhabs drung ngag dbang rnam rgyal*) [1594—1651] who was the great-great-grandson of Ngawang Chögyal. In the Middle Drukpa tradition many great scholars appeared including the fourth Gyalwang Drukpa, Kunkhyen Padma Karpo (*kun mkhyen padma dkar po*) [1527—1592], Khewang Sangay Dorji (*mkhas dbang sangs rgyas rdo rje*) [1569—1645] and Bod Khepa Mipham Geleg Namgyal (*bod mkhas pa mi pham dge legs rnam rgyal*) [1618—1685] who was famed for his knowledge of poetics, grammar and medicine. Three great siddhas of Middle Drukpa school were Tsangnyon Heruka (*gtsang snyon*) [1452 1507]- author of the *Life of Milarepa*, the *Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, the *Life of Rechungpa*, and compiler of the *Demchog Khandro Nyengyud*; Druknyon Kunga Legpa (*'brug smyon kun legs*) [1455-1529] also known as Drukpa Kunleg; and Unyon Kunga Zangpo (*dbus smyon kun dga' bzang po*) [1458-1532]. All three were disciples of Drukchen Gyalwang Je Kunga Paljor. The fourth Gyalwang Drukpa incarnation of Tsangpa Gyare, "The Omisient" Padma Karpa, whose collected works fill over twenty volumes in modern editions, was the most famous scholar of the tradition and among the Drukpa practitioners as he is known as Kunkhyen Pekar (*kun mkhyen pad dkar*) or Druk Tamche Khyenpa. He founded the Sangngag Chöling (*gsang sngags chos gling*) monastery in Jaryul (*byar yul*) southern Tibet in 1571 which became the seat of the successive Gyalwang Drukpa incarnations in Tibet and so the center of the Northern Drukpa lineage. Following the death of Kunkhyen Padma Karpo two incarnations were recognized: 1.) Pagsam Wangpo (*dpag bsam dbang po*) who was the offspring of the Chongje Depa and 2) Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal [1594 1651] who was also the heir to Drukpa lineage of Ralung. Pagsam Wangpo gained the backing of the powerful Tsangpa Desi who was a patron of the Karma Kagyu school and hostile to Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The latter subsequently fled to Bhutan, where his lineage already had many followers, and established the Southern Drukpa Kagyu (lho 'brug pa dka' brgyud) and became both the spiritual and temporal head of the country after which the country became known as 'Druk Yul' or 'Country of the Drukpas' in the Tibetan and Dzongkha (Bhutanese) languages.

3.4.2.3 Martsang Kagyu

The Martsang Kagyu was founded by Marpa Drupthob Sherab Yeshe who established Sho Monastery in E. Tibet. This Kagyu sub-sect was eventually absorbed by the Palyul branch of the Nyingma school.

3.4.2.4 Shugseb Kagyu

The Shugseb Kagyu (*shug gseb bka' brgyud*) was established by Gyergom Chenpo Zhonnu Drakpa (gyer sgom chen po gzhon nu grags pa) (1090–1171) who founded the Shugseb monastery in Nyiphu. The Shugseb Kagyu emphasised the Mahamudra teachings of the Dohas, spiritual songs of realisation by Indian masters such as Saraha, Shavaripa, Tilopa, Naropa and Maitripa etc.

3.4.2.5 Taklung Kagyu

- Taklung Kagyu (*stag lungs bka' brgyud*) named after Taklung monastery established in 1180 by Taklung Tangpa Tashi Pal (*stag lung thang pa bkra shis dpal*) (1142–1210).

3.4.2.6 Trophu Kagyu

The Trophu Kagyu (*khro phu bka' brgyud*) was established by Gyal Tsha Rinchen Gon (*rgyal tsha rin chen mgon*) (1118–1195) and Kunden Repa (*kun ldan ras pa*) (1148–1217). The tradition was developed by their nephew, Thropu Lotsawa who invited Pandit Shakysri of Kashmir, Buddhasri and Mitrayogin to Tibet.

The most renowned adherent of this lineage was Buton Rinchen Drub (*bu ston rin chen grub*) (1290–1364) of Zhalu^[31] who was a student of Trophupa Sonam Senge (*khro phu ba bsod nams sengge*)^[32] and Trophu Khenchen Rinchen Senge (*khro phu mkhan chen rin chen sengge*)^[33] Other notable teachers of this tradition include Chegompa Sherab Dorje (1130?-1200)^[34]

3.4.2.7 Yabzang Kagyu

- Yabzang Kagyu (*g.ya' bzang bka' brgyud*) founded by Sharawa Kalden Yeshe Senge (d. 1207).^[35] His foremost disciple was Yabzang Chöje Chö Monlam (1169–1233)^[36] who in 1206 established the monastery of Yabzang, also known as Nedong Dzong, in Yarlung.^[37] The Yabzang Kagyu survived as an independent school at least until the 16th century.

3.4.2.8 Yelpa Kagyu

The Yelpa Kagyu (*yel pa bka' rgyud*) was established by Drubthob Yeshe Tsegpa (drub thob ye shes brtsegs pa, b. 1134). He established two monasteries, Shar Yelphuk (*shar yel phug*) and Jang Tana (*byang rta rna dgon*).

3.4.3 Dagpo Kagyu Lineages Today

The principle Dagpo Kagyu lineages existing today as organized schools are the Karma Kagyu, Drikung Kagyu and the Drukpa Kagyu. For the most part, the teachings and main esoteric transmissions of the other Dagpo Kagyu lineages have been absorbed into one or another of these three independent schools. Periodic attempts are made to reestablish the institutional independence of some of the other lineages, such as the Taklung Kagyu and Barom Kagyu, but these have met with very modest success to date.

4 Kagyu Doctrines

4.1 Mahāmudrā

The central teaching of Kagyu is the doctrine of Mahamudra, "the Great Seal", as elucidated by Gampopa in his various works. This doctrine focuses on four principal stages of meditative practice (the Four Yogas of Mahamudra), namely:

1. The development of single-pointedness of mind,
2. The transcendence of all conceptual elaboration,
3. The cultivation of the perspective that all phenomena are of a "single taste",
4. The fruition of the path, which is beyond any contrived acts of meditation.

It is through these four stages of development that the practitioner is said to attain the perfect realization of Mahamudra.

4.2 The Six Yogas of Naropa

Main article: Six Yogas of Naropa

Important practices in all Kagyu schools are the tantric practices of Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini, and particularly the Six Yogas of Naropa.

5 Kagyu Literature

In terms of view, the Kagyu (particularly the Karma Kagyu) emphasize the Hevajra tantra with commentaries by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye and Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, the Uttaratantra with commentaries by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye and another by Gölo Shönu Pal as a basis for studying buddha nature, and the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje's *Profound Inner Reality* (Tib. *Zabmo Nangdon*) with commentaries by Rangjung Dorje and Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye as a basis for tantra.

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Sakya School

Contents III

- 1 Introduction - Origins
- 2 Teachings
- 3 Subschools
- 4 Feudal lordship over Tibet
- 5 Sakya today
- 6 The Rimé movement
- 7 Notes
- 8 References

1 Introduction - Origins

The Sakya (Tibetan, wylie: *Sa skya*, "pale earth") school is one of four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the others being the Nyingma, Kagyu, and Gelug. It is one of the Red Hat sects along with the Nyingma and Kagyu.

The name *Sakya* ("pale earth") derives from the unique grey landscape of Ponpori Hills in southern Tibet near Shigatse, where Sakya Monastery, the first monastery of this tradition, and the seat of the Sakya School was built by Khon Konchog Gyalpo (1034–1102) in 1073. The Sakya tradition developed during the second period of translation of Buddhist scripture from Sanskrit into Tibetan in the late 11th century. It was founded by Drogmi, a famous scholar and translator who had studied at the Vikramashila University directly under Naropa, Ratnakarashanti, Vagishvakirti and other great panditas from India for twelve years.^[1] Konchog Gyalpo became Drogmi's disciple on the advice of his elder brother.^[2] The tradition was established by the "Five Venerable Supreme Masters" starting with the grandson of Khonchog Gyalpo, Kunga Nyingpo, who became known as Sachen, or "Great Sakyapa".^[3]

- Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092–1158)
- Sonam Tsemo (1142–1182)
- Drakpa Gyaltsen (1147–1216)
- Sakya Pandita (1182–1251)
- Chogyal Pakpa (1235–1280)

Buton Rinchen Drub (1290–1364) was an important scholar and writer and one of Tibet's most celebrated historians. Other notable scholars of the Sakya tradition are the so called "Six Ornaments of Tibet:"

- Yaktuk Sangyey Pal
- Rongton Sheja Kunrig (1367–1449)
- Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo
- Zongpa Kunga Namgyel
- Gorampa Sonam Senge (1429–1489)
- Shakya Chogden (1428–1507)

The leadership of the Sakya School is passed down through a hereditary system between the male members of the Sakya branch of the Khon family.

2 Teachings



Sakya Pandita

Sakya Pandita

Sachen, the first of the five supreme masters, inherited a wealth of tantric doctrines from numerous Tibetan translators or "lotsawas" who had visited India: most importantly Drokmi Lotsawa, Bari Lotsawa and Mal Lotsawa. From Drokmi comes the supreme teaching of Sakya, the system of Lamdré (lam 'bras) or "Path and its Fruit", deriving from the mahasiddha Virupa, based upon the Hevajra Tantra. Mal Lotsawa introduced to Sakya the esoteric Vajrayogini lineage known as "Naro Khachoma." From Bari Lotsawa came innumerable tantric practices, foremost of which was the cycle of practices known as the *One Hundred Sadhanas*. Other key transmissions that form part of the Sakya spiritual curriculum include the cycles of Vajrakilaya, Mahakala and Guhyasamaja.

The fourth Sakya patriarch, Sakya Pandita, was notable for his exceptional scholarship and composed many important and influential texts on sutra and tantra, including, *Clarifying the Thought of the Sage* and *Discriminating the Three Vows*.

The main Dharma system of the Sakya school is the Path with Its Result [lam dang 'bras bu bcas], which is split into two main lineages, Explanation for the Assembly (tshogs bshad) and the Explanation for Close Disciples (slobs bshad).

The other major Dharma system of the Sakya school is the Naropa Khechari Explanation For Disciples (Naro mkha spyod slob bshad).

3 Subschoools

In due course, two subsects emerged from the main Sakya lineage,:

- Ngor, founded in Tsang by Ngorchhen Kunga Zangpo (1382–1457). The Ngor school is centered around Ngor Evam Choden monastery. It represents 85% of the Sakyapa school and most if not all the monasteries in India are Ngorpa, apart from Sakya Trizin's monastery.
- Tshar, founded by Tsarchen Losal Gyamtso (1496 - 1560 or 1502–1556).

There were three "mother" monasteries of the Sakya school: Sakya Monastery, founded in 1073, Ngor Evam Choden, founded in 1429, and Phanyul Nalendra in Phanyul, north of

Lhasa, founded in 1435 by Kuntchen Rongten. Nalendra became the home of the 'whispered-lineage' of the Tsar school.^[4]

4 Feudal lordship over Tibet

Further information: Tibet under Yuan administrative rule and Tibet during the Ming Dynasty
In 1264 the feudal reign over Tibet was given to Phagpa by the Mongolian emperor, Kublai Khan. Sakya lamas continued to serve as viceroys of Tibet on behalf of Yuan emperors for nearly 75 years after Phagpa's death (1280), until the Emperor of the Ming Dynasty in China subjugated the Mongols. The leaders of the Sakya regime were as follows.^[5]

- Phagpa 1253-1280
- Dharmapala Raksita 1280-1282, d. 1287
- Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen 1286-1303
- Zangpo Pal 1306-1323
- Khatsun Namka Lekpa Gyaltsen 1325-1341
- Jamyang Donyo Gyaltsen 1341-1344
- Lama Dampa Sonam Lotro Gyaltsen 1344-1347
- Lotro Gyaltsen 1347-1365

5 Sakya

The head of the Sakya school, known as Sakya Trizin ("holder of the Sakya throne"), is always drawn from the male line of the Khön family. The present Sakya Trizin, Ngawang Kunga Tegchen Palbar Samphel Wanggi Gyalpo, born in Tsedong in 1945, is the forty-first to hold that office. 41st Sakya Trizin is the reincarnation of two great Tibetan masters: a Nyingmapa lama known as Apong Terton (Orgyen Thrinley Lingpa), who is famous for his Red Tara cycle, and his grandfather, the 39th Kyabgon Sakya Trizin Dhagtsul Thrinley Rinchen (1871–1936).^[6] Today, he resides in Rajpur, India along with his wife, Dagmo Tashi Lhakyi, and two sons Ratna Vajra Rinpoche and Gyana Vajra Rinpoche. Ratna Vajra Rinpoche being the older son, is the lineage holder and is married to Dagmo Kalden Dunkyi Sakya and Gyana Vajra Rinpoche is married to Dagmo Sonam Palkyi Sakya. Traditionally hereditary succession alternates between the two Sakya palaces since Khon Könchok Gyelpo's (1034–1102) reign. The Ducho sub-dynasty of Sakya survives split into two palaces, the Dolma Phodrang and Phuntsok Phodrang. Sakya Trizin is head of the Dolma Phodrang. H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya (b. 1929) is the head of the Phuntsok Phodrang, and lives in Seattle, Washington, where he co-founded Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism with Dezhung Rinpoche III, and constructed the first Tibetan Buddhist Monastery in the United States. Dagchen Sakya's father was the previous Sakya Trizin, Trichen Ngawang Thutop Wangchuk, throne holder of Sakya, and his mother Dechen Drolma. Dagchen Sakya is married to Her Eminence Dagmo Jamyang Kusho Sakya; they have five sons, and several grandchildren.

6 The Rimé movement

During the 19th century the great Sakya master and terton Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, the famous Kagyu master Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye and the important Nyingma terton Orgyen Chokgyur Lingpa founded the Rime movement, an alleged ecumenical attempt to incorporate all teachings of all schools, to overcome the separation of Buddhist transmission in different traditions.

This movement still influences modern Tibetan Buddhist practice through the "five great treasures" of Jamgon Kongtrul and the treasure of rediscovered teachings (*Rinchen Terdzöd*).

7 Notes

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Gelug School

Contents IV

- 1 Lama Tsongkhapa
- 2 Monasteries and Lineage Holders
- 3 Vajrayāna Practice in the Gelug
- 4 Influence
- 5 References
- 6 Footnotes

The Gelug or Gelug-pa (or dGe Lugs Pa, dge-lugs-pa, or Dgelugspa), also known as the Yellow Hat sect, is a school of Buddhism founded by Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), a philosopher and Tibetan religious leader. The first monastery he established was at Ganden, and to this day the Ganden Tripa is the nominal head of the school, though its most influential figure is the Dalai Lama. Allying themselves with the Mongols as a powerful patron, the Gelug emerged as the pre-eminent Buddhist school in Tibet since the end of the 16th century.

1 Lama Tsongkhapa

A great admirer of the Kadampa (Bka'-gdams-pa) teachings, Tsongkhapa was an enthusiastic promoter of the Kadam School's emphasis on the mahāyāna principle of universal compassion as the fundamental spiritual orientation. He combined this with a strong emphasis on the cultivation of in-depth insight into the doctrine of emptiness as propounded by the Indian masters Nāgārjuna (2nd century) and Candrakīrti (7th century). Tsongkhapa said that these two aspects of the spiritual path, compassion and insight into wisdom, must be rooted in a wholehearted wish for liberation impelled by a genuine sense of renunciation. He called these the "Three Principal Aspects of the Path", and asserted that it is on the basis of these three that one must embark on the profound path of vajrayāna Buddhism.

The central teachings of the Gelug School are the Stages of the Path (*lamrim*), based on the teachings of the Indian master Atiśa (c. 11th century) and the systematic cultivation of the view of emptiness. This is combined with the yogas of highest yoga tantra deities such as Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, Yamāntaka and Kālacakra, where the key focus is the direct experience of the indivisible union of bliss and emptiness.

Six commentaries by Tsongkhapa are the prime source for the studies of the Gelug tradition, as follows:

- The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path (*Lam-rim chen-mo*),
- The Great Exposition of Tantras (*sNgag-rim chenmo*),
- The Essence of Eloquence on the Interpretive and Definitive Teachings (*Drnng-nges legs-bshad snying-po*),
- The Praise of Relativity (*rTen-'brel bstodpa*),
- The Clear Exposition of the Five Stages of Guhyasamāja (*gSang-'dus rim-Inga gsal-sgron*) and
- The Golden Rosary (*gSer-phreng*).

Each Gelug monastery uses its own set of commentarial texts by different authors, known as monastic manuals (Tib. *yigcha*). The teachings of Tsongkhapa are seen as a protection against developing misconceptions in understanding and practice of mahāyāna and vajrayāna Buddhism. It is said that his true followers take *The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* as their heart teaching.

The Gelug school focuses on ethics and monastic discipline of the *vinaya* as the central plank of spiritual practice. In particular, the need to pursue spiritual practice in a graded, sequential manner is emphasized. Arguably, Gelug is the only school of vajrayāna Buddhism that prescribes monastic ordination as a necessary qualification and basis in its teachers (lamas / gurus). Lay people are usually not permitted to give initiations if there are teachers with monastic vows within close proximity. This discipline was laid down by Tsongkhapa as a mechanism intended to help prevent Buddhist teachings from degeneration. Je Rinpoche through his unsurpassed wisdom and direct perception of Manjuśrī has shown sentient beings a view of how vajrayāna teachings can be practiced without compromising *vinaya*. One of the profound (but not necessarily distinguishing) features of the Gelug tradition is that it teaches the outward calm and controlled demeanour of the hearer, whilst at the same time the internal poise associated with the two stages of the yogic practitioner. Tsongkhapa's explanation (following Atisha) presents sutra and tantra as mutually complementary paths.

2 Monasteries and Lineage Holders

Tsongkhapa founded the monastery of Ganden in 1409 as his main seat. He had many students, his two main disciples being Gyaltsab Je (1364–1431) and Khedrub Je (1385–1438). Other outstanding disciples were Togden Jampal Gyatso, Jamyang Choje, Jamchenpa Sherap Senge and Gyalwa Gendün Drup, the 'first' Dalai Lama (1391–1474). After Tsongkhapa's passing, his teachings were held and spread by Gyaltsab Je and Khedrub Je who were his successors as abbots of Ganden monastery. The lineage is still held by the Ganden Tripas – the throne-holders of Ganden Monastery – among whom the present holder is Khensur Lungri Namgyal, the 101st Ganden Tripa (and not, as often misunderstood, by the Dalai Lama).

Drepung Monastery was founded by Jamyang Choje, Sera Monastery was founded by Chöje Shakya Yeshe and the Gyalwa Gendün Drup founded Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. Labrang Monastery, in Xiahe County in Gansu province (and in the traditional Tibetan province of Amdo), was founded in 1709 by the first Jamyang Zhaypa, Ngawang Tsondu. Many Gelug monasteries were built throughout Tibet as well as in China and Mongolia. Among the main lineage holders of the Gelug are the successive incarnations of the Dalai Lama (also commonly referred to as 'Gyalwa Rinpoche'), the succession of the Panchen Lama, the Chagkya Dorje Chang, Ngachen Könchok Gyaltzen, Kyishö Tulku Tenzin Thrinly, Jamyang Shepa, Phurchok Jampa Rinpoche, Jamyang Dewe Dorje, Takphu Rinpoche, Khachen Yeshe Gyaltzen, successive incarnations of Kyabje Yongzin Ling Rinpoche, and successive incarnations of Kyabje Yongzin Trijang Rinpoche.

3 Vajrayāna Practice in the Gelug

Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara and Yamāntaka are the three principal yidam practices in the Gelug lineage, although Kālacakra practice is also important. Guhyasamāja is the principal one; as the Dalai Lama remarks, "there is a saying in the Gelug, 'If one is on the move it is Guhyasamāja. If one is still, it is Guhyasamāja. If one is meditating, it should be upon Guhyasamāja.' Therefore, whether one is engaged in study or practice, Guhyasamāja should be one's focus."^[1]

4 Influence

Sonam Gyatso, who was considered to be the third incarnation of Gyalwa Gendün Drup^[2], formed an alliance with the then most powerful Mongol leader, Altan Khan, in 1577.^[3] As a result, he was designated as "Dalai" (a translation into Mongolian of the name Gyatso, meaning ocean)^[4], and Gyalwa Gendün Drup and Gendun Gyatso were posthumously recognized as the 1st and 2nd Dalai Lamas.^[5] Sonam Gyatso was very active in proselytizing among the Mongols^[6], and the Gelug tradition was to become the main spiritual orientations of the Mongols in the ensuing centuries.^[7] This brought the Gelugpas powerful patrons who

were to propel them to pre-eminence in Tibet.^[8] The Gelug-Mongol alliance was further strengthened as after Sonam Gyatso's death, his incarnation was found to be Altan Khan's great-grandson.^[9]

By the end of the 16th century, following violent strife among the sects of Tibetan Buddhism, the Gelug school emerged as the dominant one. According to Tibetan historian Samten Karmay, "Sonam Chopel^[10] (1595-1657), treasurer of the Ganden Palace, was the prime architect of the Gelug's rise to political power. Later he received the title *Desi* [Wylie: sde-sris], meaning "Regent", which he would earn through his efforts to establish Gelugpa power."^[11] From the period of Lozang Gyatso, 5th Dalai Lama in the 17th century, the Dalai Lamas held political control over central Tibet. In the course of this reign, the Jonang school was forcibly converted to the Gelug tradition as punishment for treason, along with some Kagyu and Nyingma monasteries.

Scottish Botanist George Forrest, who witnessed the 1905 Tibetan Rebellion led by the Gelug Lamas, wrote that the majority of the people in the Mekong valley in Yunnan were Tibetan. The Tibetan Buddhist Yellow Sect was the dominant power in the region, with their Lamas effectively governing the area. Forrest had a negative view of their reign, since according to him they used "force and fraud" to "terrorise the... peasantry". The Lamas completely ignored the Imperial Qing authorities in the region.^[12]

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Mahayana

Contents V

- 1 Introduction
- 2 History
 - 2.1 Early Mahāyāna Buddhism
 - 2.1.1 Origins of Mahāyāna
 - 2.1.2 Earliest Mahāyāna sūtras
 - 2.1.3 Earliest inscriptions
 - 2.1.4 Early Mahāyāna Buddhism
 - 2.1.5 Legacy of Early Mahāyāna Buddhism
 - 2.1.6 Late Mahāyāna Buddhism
- 3 Doctrine
 - 3.1 Universalism
 - 3.2 Bodhisattva
 - 3.3 Expedient Means
 - 3.4 Liberation
 - 3.5 Buddha nature
- 4 Mahāyāna scriptures
 - 4.1 Mahāyāna and the Āgamas
 - 4.2 Turnings of the Dharma Wheel
 - 4.3 Mahāyāna and early canon
- 5 Mahāyāna and the Theravāda school
 - 5.1 Role of the bodhisattva
 - 5.2 Theravāda and Hīnayāna
- 6 References
- 7 Notes
- 8 Further reading

1 Introduction

Mahāyāna (*mahāyāna*, literally the "Great Vehicle") is one of the two main existing branches of Buddhism and a term for classification of Buddhist philosophies and practice. Mahāyāna Buddhism originated in India.

The Mahāyāna tradition is the larger of the two major traditions of Buddhism existing today, the other being that of the Theravāda school. According to the teachings of Mahāyāna traditions, "Mahāyāna" also refers to the path of seeking complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, also called "Bodhisattvayāna", or the "Bodhisattva Vehicle." In the course of its history, Mahāyāna Buddhism spread from India to various other Asian countries such as China, Japan, Vietnam, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, and Mongolia. Major traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism today include Zen/Chán, Pure Land, Tiantai, and Nichiren, as well as the Esoteric Buddhist traditions of Shingon, Tendai and Tibetan Buddhism.

2 History

According to Jan Nattier, the term *Mahāyāna* ("Great Vehicle") was originally an honorary synonym for *Bodhisattvayāna* ("Bodhisattva Vehicle") — the vehicle of a bodhisattva seeking buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. The term *Mahāyāna* was therefore formed independently at an early date as a synonym for the path and the teachings of the bodhisattvas. Since it was simply an honorary term for *Bodhisattvayāna*, the creation of the term *Mahāyāna* and its application to Bodhisattvayāna did not represent a significant turning point in the development of a Mahāyāna tradition.

The earliest Mahāyāna texts often use the term *Mahāyāna* as an synonym for *Bodhisattvayāna*, but the term *Hīnayāna* is comparatively rare in the earliest sources. The presumed dichotomy between *Mahāyāna* and *Hīnayāna* can be deceptive, as the two terms were not actually formed in relation to one another in the same era.

Among the earliest and most important references to the term *Mahāyāna* are those that occur in the *Lotus Sūtra* (Skt. *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*) dating between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE. Seishi Karashima has suggested that the term first used in an earlier Gandhāri Prakrit version of the *Lotus Sūtra* was not the term *mahāyāna* but the Prakrit word *mahājāna* in the sense of *mahājñāna* (great knowing). At a later stage when the early Prakrit word was converted into Sanskrit, this *mahājāna*, being phonetically ambivalent, was mistakenly converted into *mahāyāna*, possibly due to what may have been a double meaning in the famous Parable of the Burning House, which talks of three vehicles or carts (Skt: *yāna*).

2.1. Early Mahayana Buddhism



Ancient Buddhist stūpas in Borobodur, Indonesia.



Early statue of the Buddha from Gandhāra, 1st–2nd century

2.1.1 Origins of Mahāyāna

The origins of Mahāyāna are still not completely understood. The earliest views of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the West assumed that it existed as a separate school in competition with the so-called "Hīnayāna" schools. Due to the veneration of buddhas and bodhisattvas, Mahāyāna was often interpreted as a more devotional, lay-inspired form of Buddhism, with supposed origins in stūpa veneration, or by making parallels with the history of the European Protestant Reformation. These views have been largely dismissed in modern times in light of a much broader range of early texts that are now available. These earliest Mahāyāna texts often depict strict adherence to the path of a bodhisattva, and engagement in the ascetic ideal of a monastic life in the wilderness, akin to the ideas expressed in the *Rhinoceros Sūtra*. The old views of Mahāyāna as a separate lay-inspired and devotional sect are now largely dismissed as misguided and wrong on all counts.

The earliest textual evidence of "Mahāyāna" comes from sūtras originating around the beginning of the common era. Jan Nattier has noted that in some of the earliest Mahāyāna texts such as the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* use the term "Mahāyāna", yet there is no doctrinal difference between Mahāyāna in this context and the early schools, and that "Mahāyāna" referred rather to the rigorous emulation of Gautama Buddha in the path of a bodhisattva seeking to become a fully-enlightened buddha.

There is also no evidence that Mahāyāna ever referred to a separate formal school or sect of Buddhism, but rather that it existed as a certain set of ideals, and later doctrines, for bodhisattvas.^[14] Paul Williams has also noted that the Mahāyāna never had nor ever attempted to have a separate Vinaya or ordination lineage from the early schools of Buddhism, and therefore each bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī adhering to the Mahāyāna formally belonged to an early school. This continues today with the Dharmaguptaka ordination lineage in East Asia, and the Mūlasarvāstivāda ordination lineage in Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore Mahāyāna was never a separate rival sect of the early schools.^[15]

The Chinese monk Yijing who visited India in the 7th century CE, distinguishes Mahāyāna from Hīnayāna as follows:^[16]

Both adopt one and the same Vinaya, and they have in common the prohibitions of the five offences, and also the practice of the Four Noble Truths. Those who venerate the bodhisattvas and read the Mahayana sūtras are called the Mahāyānists, while those who do not perform these are called the Hīnayānists.

Much of the early extant evidence for the origins of Mahāyāna comes from early Chinese translations of Mahāyāna texts. These Mahāyāna teachings were first propagated into China by Lokakṣema, the first translator of Mahāyāna sūtras into Chinese during the 2nd century CE.^[17]



A statue of Prajñāpāramitā personified, from Singhasari, East Java, Indonesia.

2.1.2 Earliest Mahāyāna sūtras

Some scholars have traditionally considered the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras to include the very first versions of the Prajñāpāramitā series, along with texts concerning Akṣobhya Buddha, which were probably composed in the 1st century BCE in the south of India.^{[18][19][20]} Some early Mahāyāna sūtras were translated by the Kuṣāṇa monk Lokakṣema, who came to China from the kingdom of Gandhāra. His first translations to Chinese were made in the Chinese capital of Luoyang between 178 and 189 CE.^[17] Some Mahāyāna sūtras translated during the 2nd century CE include the following:^[21]

1. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*
2. *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*
3. *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*
4. *Akṣobhyatathāgatasyavyūha Sūtra*
5. *Ugraparipṛccha Sūtra*
6. *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchā Sūtra*
7. *Drumakinnararājaparipṛcchā Sūtra*
8. *Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sūtra*
9. *Bhadrupāla Sūtra*
10. *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana Sūtra*
11. *Kāśyapaparivarta Sūtra*
12. *Lokānuvartana Sūtra*
13. An early sūtra connected to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*

Some of these were probably composed in the north of India in the 1st century CE.^[22] Thus scholars generally think that the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras were mainly composed in the south of India, and later the activity of writing additional scriptures was continued in the north.^[23] However, the assumption that the presence of an evolving body of Mahāyāna scriptures implies the contemporaneous existence of distinct religious movement called "Mahāyāna", may be a serious misstep.^[24]



Mahāyāna Buddhist triad, including Bodhisattva Maitreya, the Buddha, and Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. 2nd–3rd century CE, Gandhāra.

2.1.3 Earliest inscriptions

The earliest stone inscription containing a recognizably Mahāyāna formulation and a mention of the Buddha Amitabha was found in the Indian subcontinent in Mathura, and dated to around 180 CE. Remains of a statue of a Buddha bear the Brahmi inscription: "Made in the year 28 of the reign of king Huvishka, ... for the Buddha Amitabha" (Mathura Museum). However, this image was in itself extremely marginal and isolated in the overall context of Buddhism in India at the time, and had no lasting or long-term consequences.^[25] Evidence of the name "Mahāyāna" in Indian inscriptions in the period before the 5th century is very limited in comparison to the multiplicity of Mahāyāna writings transmitted from Central Asia to China at that time.^{[26][27]}

These views of a discrepancy between translated texts and epigraphical evidence assume the presence of Mahāyāna as distinct from the "Hīnayāna" schools. This view has been largely disproved in more recent scholarship, as Mahāyāna is now recognized as a tradition working within the context of the early Buddhist schools rather than as a separate movement.

2.1.4 Early Mahāyāna Buddhism

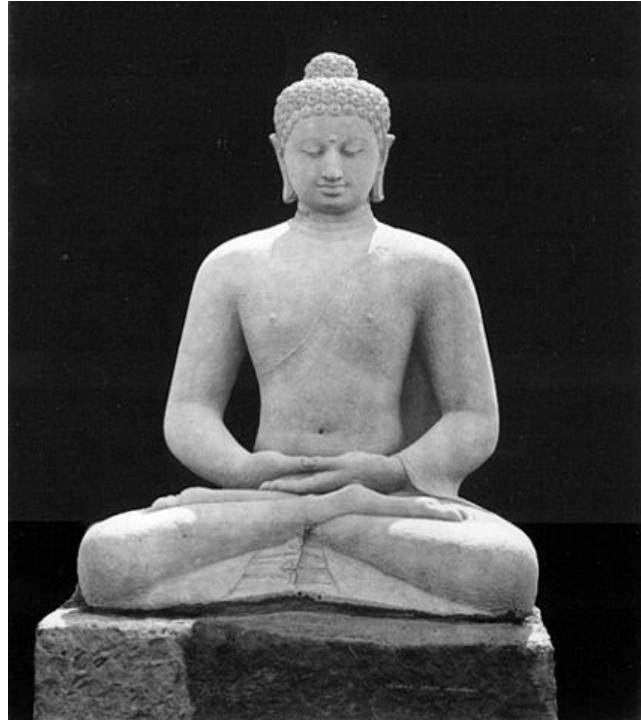
During the period of early Mahāyāna Buddhism, four major types of thought developed: Mādhyamaka, Yogācāra, Buddha Nature (*Tathāgatagarbha*), and Buddhist Logic as the last and most recent.^[28] In India, the two main philosophical schools of the Mahāyāna were the Mādhyamaka and the later Yogācāra.^[29]

2.1.5 Legacy of Early Mahāyāna Buddhism

Earlier stage forms of Mahāyāna such as the doctrines of Prajñāpāramitā, Yogācāra, Buddha Nature, and the Pure Land teachings are still popular in East Asia. In some cases these have spawned new developments, while in others they are treated in the more traditional syncretic manner. Paul Williams has noted that in this tradition in the Far East, primacy has always been given to study of the sūtras.^[30]

2.1.6 Late Mahāyāna Buddhism

Late stage forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India are found largely in the schools of Esoteric Buddhism. These were replaced in India and Central Asia after the early millennium by Islam (Sufism etc.) and Hinduism, and in south-east Asia by Theravāda Buddhism from Sri Lanka and Islam. They continue to exist in certain regions of the Himalayas. In contrast to the East Asian traditions, there has been a strong tendency in Tibetan Buddhism and the Himalayan traditions to approach the sūtras indirectly through the medium of exegetical treatises if at all.^[30]



Amitābha Buddha statue from Borobodur, Indonesia

3 Doctrine

Few things can be said with certainty about Mahāyāna Buddhism,^[31] especially its early Indian form, other than that the Buddhism practiced in China, Vietnam, Korea, Tibet, and Japan is Mahāyāna Buddhism.^[32] Mahāyāna can be described as a loosely bound collection of many teachings with large and expansive doctrines that are able to coexist simultaneously.^[33]

Mahāyāna constitutes an inclusive tradition characterized by plurality and the adoption of new Mahāyāna sūtras in addition to the earlier Āgama texts. Mahāyāna sees itself as penetrating further and more profoundly into the Buddha's Dharma. There is a tendency in Mahāyāna sūtras to regard adherence to these sūtras as generating spiritual benefits greater than those that arise from being a follower of the non-Mahāyāna approaches to Dharma.

Thus the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* claims that the Buddha said that devotion to Mahāyāna is inherently superior in its virtues to the following the śravaka or pratyekabuddha paths.^[34]

The fundamental principles of Mahāyāna doctrine were based on the possibility of universal liberation from suffering for all beings (hence the "Great Vehicle") and the existence of buddhas and bodhisattvas embodying Buddha Nature. Some Mahāyāna schools simplify the expression of faith by allowing salvation to be alternatively obtained through the grace of the Amitābha Buddha by having faith and devoting oneself to mindfulness of the Buddha. This devotional lifestyle of Buddhism is most strongly emphasized by the Pure Land schools and has greatly contributed to the success of Mahāyāna in East Asia, where spiritual elements traditionally relied upon mindfulness of the Buddha, mantras and dhāraṇīs, and reading of

Mahāyāna sūtras. In Chinese Buddhism, most monks, let alone lay people, practice Pure Land, some combining it with Chán (Zen).^[35]

Most Mahāyāna schools believe in supernatural bodhisattvas who devote themselves to the perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*), ultimate knowledge (Skt. *sarvajñāna*), and the liberation of all sentient beings. In Mahāyāna, the Buddha is seen as the ultimate, highest being, present in all times, in all beings, and in all places, and the bodhisattvas come to represent the universal ideal of altruistic excellence.



Bodhisattva Maitreya, the future successor of Gautama Buddha. Thikse monastery, Ladakh.

3.1 Universalism

Mahāyāna traditions generally consider that attainment of the level of an arhat is not final. This is based on a subtle doctrinal distinction between the Mahāyāna and some views contained in the early Buddhist schools concerning the issues of Nirvāṇa With Remainder and Nirvāṇa Without Remainder. The Mahāyāna position here is similar to that of the early school of the Mahāsāṃghika

Some of the early schools considered that Nirvāṇa Without Remainder always follows Nirvāṇa With Remainder (Buddhas first achieve enlightenment and then, at "death", Mahāparinirvāṇa) and that Nirvāṇa Without Remainder is final; whereas the Mahāyāna traditions consider that Nirvāṇa Without Remainder is always followed by Nirvāṇa With Remainder—the state of attainment of arhat is not considered final, and should be succeeded by Bodhisattvahood

This distinction is most evident regarding doctrinal concerns about the capability of a Buddha after Nirvāṇa, which is identified by the early schools as being Nirvāṇa Without Remainder. Amongst the early schools, a completely enlightened buddha (Skt. *samyaksambuddha*) is not able to directly point the way to Nirvāṇa after death. Some Mahayana schools however, hold that once a completely enlightened Buddha (Skt. *samyaksambuddha*) arises, he or she continues to directly and actively point the way to Nirvāṇa until there are no beings left in saṃsāra. Consequently, some Mahāyāna schools talk of a bodhisattva deliberately refraining from Buddhahood.^[36]

The early schools held that Maitreya will be the next Buddha to rediscover the path to Nirvana, when teachings of Gautam Buddha are forgotten. In contrast, some Mahāyāna schools hold that Maitreya will be the next buddha manifest in this world and will introduce the Dharma when it no longer exists, but when he dies (or enters *Mahāparinirvāṇa*), he will

likewise continue to teach the Dharma for all time. Moreover, some Mahāyāna schools argue that although it is true that, for this world-system, Maitreya will be the next buddha to manifest, there are an infinite number of world-systems, many of which have currently active buddhas or bodhisattvas manifesting.

Because the Mahāyāna traditions assert that eventually everyone will achieve complete enlightenment (Skt. *Anuttarā Samyaksaṃbodhi*), the Mahāyāna is labeled universalist, whereas the stance of the early scriptures is that attaining Nirvāṇa depends on effort and is not pre-determined.^[37]



Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. Ajaṇṭā Caves, Mahārāṣṭra, India.

3.2 Bodhisattva

The Mahāyāna tradition holds that pursuing only the release from suffering and attainment of Nirvāṇa is too narrow an aspiration, because it lacks the motivation of actively resolving to liberate all other sentient beings from Saṃsāra. One who engages in this path is called a bodhisattva.

The defining characteristic of a bodhisattva is bodhicitta, the intention to achieve omniscient Buddhahood (Trikaṃya) as fast as possible, so that one may benefit infinite sentient beings. Sometimes the term bodhisattva is used more restrictively to refer to those sentient beings on the grounds. As Ananda Coomaraswamy notes, "The most essential part of the Mahayana is its emphasis on the Bodhisattva ideal, which replaces that of the arhat, or ranks before it."^[38] According to Mahāyāna teachings, being a high-level bodhisattva involves possessing a mind of great compassion and transcendent wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*) to realize the reality of inherent emptiness and dependent origination. Mahāyāna teaches that the practitioner will finally realize the attainment of Buddhahood.

Six perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*) are traditionally required for bodhisattvas:

1. *dāna-pāramitā*: the perfection of giving
2. *śīla-pāramitā*: the perfection on behavior and discipline
3. *kṣānti-pāramitā*: the perfection of forbearance
4. *vīrya-pāramitā*: the perfection of vigor and diligence
5. *dhyāna-pāramitā*: the perfection of meditation
6. *prajñā-pāramitā*: the perfection of transcendent wisdom

3.3 Expedient Means

Expedient means (Skt. *upāya*) is found in the *Lotus Sutra*, one of the earliest dated Mahāyāna sūtras, and is accepted in all Mahāyāna schools of thought. It is any effective method that aids awakening. It does not necessarily mean that some particular method is "untrue" but is simply any means or stratagem that is conducive to spiritual growth and leads beings to awakening and nirvana. Expedient means could thus be certain motivational words for a particular listener or even the noble eightfold path itself. Basic Buddhism (what Mahāyāna would term *śravakayāna* or *pratyekabuddhayāna*) is an expedient method for helping people begin the noble Buddhist path and advance quite far. But the path is not wholly traversed, according to some Mahāyāna schools, until the practitioner has striven for and attained Buddhahood for the liberation of all other sentient beings from suffering. In an ultimate sense, all verbalised Dharma is an "expedient means", since the Dharma of ultimate truth cannot really be expressed in words or concepts. Anything that effectively points the way to liberation can be termed "expedient means"—an effective method for awakening beings from the sleep of spiritual ignorance. Mahāyāna often adopts a pragmatic notion of truth:^[39] doctrines are "true" in the sense of being spiritually beneficial. Some scholars have stated that the exercise of expedient means, "the ability to adapt one's message to the audience, is also of enormous importance in the Pāli canon."^[40] In fact the Pāli term *upāya-kosalla* does occur in the Pāli Canon, in the *Sangiti Sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*.^[41]

3.4 Liberation

"Devotional" Mahāyāna developed a rich cosmography, with various Buddhas and bodhisattvas residing in paradise realms. The concept of the three bodies (*trikāya*) supports these constructions, making the Buddha himself a transcendental figure. Dr. Guang Xing describes the Mahāyāna Buddha as "an omnipotent divinity endowed with numerous supernatural attributes and qualities ...[He] is described almost as an omnipotent and almighty godhead."^[42]

Under various conditions, the realms Buddha presides over could be attained by devotees after their death so, when reborn, they could strive towards buddhahood in the best possible conditions. Depending on the sect, this salvation to "paradise" can be obtained by faith, imaging, or sometimes even by the simple invocation of the Buddha's name. This approach to salvation is at the origin of the mass appeal of devotional Buddhism, especially represented by the Pure Land (淨土宗).

This rich cosmography also allowed Mahāyāna to be quite syncretic and accommodating of other faiths or deities. Various origins have been suggested to explain its emergence, such as "popular Hindu devotional cults (*bhakti*), and Persian and Greco-Roman theologies, which filtered into India from the northwest".^[43]

3.5 Buddha nature

The teaching of a "Buddha nature" may be based on the "luminous mind" concept found in the *Āgamas*. The essential idea, articulated in the Buddha nature sūtras, but not accepted by all Mahāyānists, is that no being is without a concealed but indestructible interior link to the awakening of *bodhi* and that this link is an uncreated element (*dhātu*) or principle deep inside each being, which constitutes the deathless, diamond-like "essence of the self".^[44] The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* states: "The essence of the Self (*ātman*) is the subtle Buddha nature..." while the later *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* states that the Buddha nature might be taken to be self (*ātman*), but it is not. In the Buddha nature class of sūtras, the word "self" (*ātman*) is used in a way defined by and specific to these sūtras. (See Atman (Buddhism).) According to some scholars, the Buddha nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) discussed in some Mahāyāna sūtras does not represent a substantial self (*ātman*); rather, it is a positive

language and expression of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and represents the potentiality to realize Buddhahood through Buddhist practices.^[45] It is the "true self" in representing the innate aspect of the individual that makes actualizing the ultimate personality possible. The actual "seeing and knowing" of this Buddha essence (*Buddha-dhātu*, co-terminous with the *Dharmakāya* or self of Buddha) is said to usher in nirvanic liberation. This Buddha essence or "Buddha nature" is stated to be found in every single person, ghost, god and sentient being. In the Buddha nature sūtras, the Buddha is portrayed as describing the Buddha essence as uncreated, deathless and ultimately beyond rational grasping or conceptualisation. Yet, it is this already real and present, hidden internal element of awakening (*bodhi*) that, according to the Buddha nature sūtras, prompts beings to seek liberation from worldly suffering, and lets them attain the spotless bliss that lies at the heart of their being. Once the veils of negative thoughts, feelings, and unwholesome behaviour (the *kleśas*) are eliminated from the mind and character, the indwelling Buddha principle (*Buddha-dhātu*: Buddha nature) can shine forth unimpededly and transform the seer into a Buddha. Prior to the period of these sūtras, Mahāyāna metaphysics was dominated by teachings on emptiness, in the form of Madhyamaka philosophy. The language used by this approach is primarily negative, and the Buddha nature genre of sūtras can be seen as an attempt to state orthodox Buddhist teachings of dependent origination and on the mysterious reality of nirvana using positive language instead, to prevent people from being turned away from Buddhism by a false impression of nihilism. In these sūtras the perfection of the wisdom of not-self is stated to be the true self; the ultimate goal of the path is then characterized using a range of positive language that had been used in Indian philosophy previously by essentialist philosophers, but was now transmuted into a new Buddhist vocabulary that described a being who has successfully completed the Buddhist path.^[46] An exegetical treatise (i.e., interpretive text) on Buddha nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) is the *Uttaratantra*, which sees Buddha nature not as caused and conditioned (*saṃskṛta*), but as eternal, uncaused, unconditioned, and incapable of being destroyed, although temporarily concealed within worldly beings by adventitious defilements.^[47] According to Buddhist scholar Dr. C. D. Sebastian, the *Uttaratantra*'s reference to a transcendental self (*ātma-pāramitā*) should be understood as "the unique essence of the universe,"^[48] thus the universal and immanent essence of Buddha nature is the same throughout time and space.^[49]

4 Mahāyāna scriptures



Statue of the Buddha with Dharmacakra Mudra, symbolizing his teaching of the Dharma. Sarnath, Vārāṇasī

4.1 Mahāyāna and the Āgamas

Mahāyāna Buddhism takes the basic teachings of the Buddha as recorded in early scriptures as the starting point of its teachings, such as those concerning karma and rebirth, anātman, emptiness, dependent origination, and the Four Noble Truths. Mahāyāna Buddhists in East Asia have traditionally studied these teachings in the Āgamas preserved in the Chinese Buddhist canon. "Āgama" is the term used by those traditional Buddhist schools in India who employed Sanskrit for their basic canon. These correspond to the Nikāyas used by the Theravāda school. The surviving Āgamas in Chinese translation belong to at least two schools, while most of the Āgamas teachings were never translated into Tibetan.

In addition to accepting the essential scriptures of the various early Buddhist schools as valid, Mahāyāna Buddhism also maintains large additional collections of sūtras that are not used or recognized by the Theravāda school. In the past, these were also not recognized by some individuals within the early Buddhist schools. In other cases, Buddhist communities were divided along these doctrinal lines. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Mahāyāna sūtras are often given greater authority than the Āgamas. The first of these Mahāyāna-specific writings were written probably around the 1st century BCE^[50] or 1st century CE.^[51]

4.2 Turnings of the Dharma Wheel

Dating back at least to the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* is a classification of the corpus of Buddhism into three categories, based on ways of understanding the nature of reality, known as the "Three Turnings of the Dharma Wheel". According to this view, there were three such "turnings".^[52]

1. In the first turning, the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths at Vārāṇasī for those in the śrāvaka vehicle. It is described as marvelous and wonderful, but requiring interpretation and occasioning controversy.^[53] The doctrines of the first turning are exemplified in the *Dharmacakra Pravartana Sūtra*. This turning represents the earliest phase of the Buddhist teachings and the earliest period in the history of Buddhism.
2. In the second turning, the Buddha taught the Mahāyāna teachings to the bodhisattvas, teaching that all phenomena have no-essence, no arising, no passing away, are originally quiescent, and essentially in cessation. This turning is also described as marvelous and wonderful, but requiring interpretation and occasioning controversy.^[53] Doctrine of the second turning is established in the *Prajñāpāramitā* teachings, first put into writing around 100 BCE. In Indian philosophical schools, it is exemplified by the Mādhyamaka school of Nāgārjuna.
3. In the third turning, the Buddha taught similar teachings to the second turning, but for everyone in the three vehicles, including all the śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas. These were meant to be completely explicit teachings in their entire detail, for which interpretations would not be necessary, and controversy would not occur.^[53] These teachings were established by the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* as early as the 1st or 2nd century CE.^[54] In the Indian philosophical schools, the third turning is exemplified by the Yogācāra school of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

Some traditions of Tibetan Buddhism consider the teachings of Esoteric Buddhism and Vajrayāna to be the third turning of the Dharma Wheel. Tibetan teachers, particularly of the Gelugpa school, regard the second turning as the highest teaching, due to their particular interpretation of Yogācāra doctrine. The Buddha Nature teachings are normally included in the third turning of the wheel. The Chinese tradition has a different scheme.

4.3 Mahāyāna and early canon

Scholars have noted that many key Mahāyāna ideas are closely connected to the earliest texts of Buddhism. The seminal work of Mahāyāna philosophy, Nāgārjuna's

Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, mentions the canon's *Katyāyana Sūtra* (SA 301) by name, and may be an extended commentary on that work.^[55] Nāgārjuna systematized the Mādhyamaka school of Mahāyāna philosophy. He may have arrived at his positions from a desire to achieve a consistent exegesis of the Buddha's doctrine as recorded in the canon. In his eyes the Buddha was not merely a forerunner, but the very founder of the Mādhyamaka system.^[56] Nāgārjuna also referred to a passage in the canon regarding "nirvanic consciousness" in two different works.^[57]

Yogācāra, the other prominent Mahāyāna school in dialectic with the Mādhyamaka school, gave a special significance to the canon's *Lesser Discourse on Emptiness* (MA 190).^[58] A passage there (which the discourse itself emphasizes) is often quoted in later Yogācāra texts as a true definition of emptiness.^[59] According to Walpola Rahula, the thought presented in the Yogācāra school's *Abhidharmasamuccaya* is undeniably closer to that of the Pali Nikayas than is that of the Theravadin Abhidhamma.^[60]

Both the Mādhyamikas and the Yogācārins saw themselves as preserving the Buddhist Middle Way between the extremes of nihilism (everything as unreal) and substantialism (substantial entities existing). The Yogācārins criticized the Mādhyamikas for tending towards nihilism, while the Mādhyamikas criticized the Yogācārins for tending towards substantialism.^[61]

Key Mahāyāna texts introducing the concepts of bodhicitta and Buddha nature also use language parallel to passages in the canon containing the Buddha's description of "luminous mind" and may have been based on this idea.^[62]

5 Mahāyāna and the Theravāda school

5.1 Role of the bodhisattva

In the early Buddhist texts, and as taught by the modern Theravada school, the goal of becoming a teaching Buddha in a future life is viewed as the aim of a small group of individuals striving to benefit future generations after the current Buddha's teachings have been lost, but in the current age there is no need for most practitioners to aspire to this goal. Theravada texts do, however, hold that this is a more perfectly virtuous goal.^[63]

5.2 Theravāda and Hīnayāna

Although the Theravāda school is usually described as belonging to Hīnayāna,^{[64][65][66][67][68]} some authors have argued that it should not be considered such from the Mahāyāna perspective. Their view is based on a different understanding of the concept of Hīnayāna. Rather than regarding the term as referring to any school of Buddhism that hasn't accepted the Mahāyāna canon and doctrines, such as those pertaining to the role of the bodhisattva,^{[65][67]} these authors argue that the classification of a school as "Hīnayāna" should be crucially dependent on the adherence to a specific phenomenological position. They point out that unlike the now-extinct Sarvāstivāda school, which was the primary object of Mahāyāna criticism, the Theravāda does not claim the existence of independent entities (*dharma*s); in this it maintains the attitude of early Buddhism.^{[69][70][71]} Adherents of Mahāyāna Buddhism disagreed with the substantialist thought of the Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas, and in emphasizing the doctrine of emptiness, Kalupahana holds that they endeavored to preserve the early teaching.^[72] The Theravādins too refuted the Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas (and other schools) on the grounds that their theories were in conflict with the non-substantialism of the canon. The Theravāda arguments are preserved in the *Kathāvatthu*.^[73] Thus, according to this view, no form of real Hīnayāna Buddhism survives today.

Some contemporary Theravādin figures have indicated a sympathetic stance toward the Mahāyāna philosophy found in texts such as the *Heart Sūtra* (Skt. *Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya*) and Nāgārjuna's *Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way* (Skt. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*).^{[74][75]}

6 References

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3. ^{^ a b} Nattier, Jan (2003), *A few good men: the Bodhisattva path according to the Inquiry of Ugra*: p. 174
4. [^] Nattier, Jan (2003), *A few good men: the Bodhisattva path according to the Inquiry of Ugra*: p. 172
5. [^] Ven. Dr. W. Rahula, *Theravada - Mahayana Buddhism*
6. [^] Williams, Paul. *Buddhism. Vol. 3. The origins and nature of Mahāyāna Buddhism*. Routledge. 2004. p. 50.
7. [^] I have assumed that, in the earliest stage of the transmission of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the Middle Indic form *jāna* or **jāna* (= Pkt < Skt *jñāna*, *yāna*) had stood in these places ... I have assumed, further, that the Mahāyānist terms *buddha-yānā* ("the Buddha-vehicle"), *mahāyāna* ("the great vehicle"), *hīnayāna* ("the inferior vehicle") meant originally *buddha-jñāna* ("buddha-knowledge"), *mahājñāna* ("great knowledge") and *hīnajñāna* ("inferior knowledge"). Karashima, Seishi (2001). Some Features of the Language of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 44: 207-230
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10. [^] Akira, Hirakawa (1993), *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Early Mahayana*: p. 271
11. [^] e.g. Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*
12. [^] "As scholars have moved away from this limited corpus, and have begun to explore a wider range of Mahayana sūtras, they have stumbled on, and have started to open up, a literature that is often stridently ascetic and heavily engaged in reinventing the forest ideal, an individualistic, antisocial, ascetic ideal that is encapsulated in the apparently resurrected image of "wandering alone like a rhinoceros." *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 494
13. [^] "One of the most frequent assertions about the Mahayana ... is that it was a lay-influenced, or even lay-inspired and dominated, movement that arose in response to the increasingly closed, cold, and scholastic character of monastic Buddhism. This, however, now appears to be wrong on all counts." *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 494
14. ^{^ a b} Nattier, Jan (2003), *A few good men: the Bodhisattva path according to the Inquiry of Ugra*: p. 193-194
15. [^] Williams, Paul (2008) *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*: p. 4-5
16. [^] Williams, Paul (2008) *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*: p. 5
17. ^{^ a b} "The most important evidence — in fact the only evidence — for situating the emergence of the Mahayana around the beginning of the common era was not Indian evidence at all, but came from China. Already by the last quarter of the 2nd century CE, there was a small, seemingly idiosyncratic collection of substantial Mahayana sutras translated into what Erik Zürcher calls 'broken Chinese' by an Indoscythian, whose Indian name has been reconstructed as Lokaksema." *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 492
18. [^] Akira, Hirakawa (translated and edited by Paul Groner) (1993). *A History of Indian Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass: p. 263, 268

19. ^ "The south (of India) was then vigorously creative in producing Mahayana Sutras" – Warder, A.K. (3rd edn. 1999). *Indian Buddhism*: p. 335.
20. ^ Akira, Hirakawa (translated and edited by Paul Groner) (1993). *A History of Indian Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass: p. 253
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22. ^ Akira, Hirakawa (translated and edited by Paul Groner) (1993). *A History of Indian Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass: p. 252, 253
23. ^ "The sudden appearance of large numbers of (Mahayana) teachers and texts (in North India in the second century AD) would seem to require some previous preparation and development, and this we can look for in the South." - Warder, A.K. (3rd edn. 1999). *Indian Buddhism*: p. 335.
24. ^ "But even apart from the obvious weaknesses inherent in arguments of this kind there is here the tacit equation of a body of literature with a religious movement, an assumption that evidence for the presence of one proves the existence of the other, and this may be a serious misstep." - *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 493
25. ^ "In other words, once nontextual evidence is taken into account the picture changes dramatically. Rather than being datable to the beginning of the common era, this strand of Mahayana Buddhism, at least, appeared to have no visible impact on Indian Buddhist cult practice until the 2nd century, and even then what impact it had was extremely isolated and marginal, and had no lasting or long-term consequences — there were no further references to Amitabha in Indian image inscriptions. Almost exactly the same pattern occurs (concerning Mahayana) on an even broader scale when nontextual evidence is considered." - *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 493
26. ^ "Certainly, we have for this period an extensive body of inscriptions from virtually all parts of India. ... But nowhere in this extensive body of material is there any reference, prior to the fifth century, to a named Mahāyāna.", *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 493
27. ^ "What is particularly disconcerting here is the disconnect between expectation and reality: We know from Chinese translations that large numbers of Mahāyāna sutras were being composed in the period between the beginning of the common era and the fifth century. But outside of texts, at least in India, at exactly the same period, very different — in fact seemingly older — ideas and aspirations appear to be motivating actual behavior, and old and established Hinayana groups appear to be the only ones that are patronized and supported., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 494
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29. ^ Harvey, Peter (1993). *An Introduction to Buddhism*. Cambridge University Press: p. 95.
30. ^ ^{a b} Williams, Paul (1989). *Mahayana Buddhism*: p.103
31. ^ "There are, it seems, very few things that can be said with certainty about Mahayana Buddhism", *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 492
32. ^ "But apart from the fact that it can be said with some certainty that the Buddhism embedded in China, Korea, Tibet, and Japan is Mahayana Buddhism, it is no longer clear what else can be said with certainty about Mahayana Buddhism itself, and especially about its earlier, and presumably formative, period in India.", *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 492
33. ^ "It has become increasingly clear that Mahayana Buddhism was never one thing, but rather, it seems, a loosely bound bundle of many, and — like Walt Whitman — was large and could contain, in both senses of the term, contradictions, or at least antipodal elements." - *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004): p. 492

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40. ^ "It is true that the term translated 'expounding in means', upaya-kausalya, is post-canonical, but the exercise of expounding to which it refers, the ability to adapt one's message to the audience, is of enormous importance in the Pali Canon." Gombrich, Richard F. (1997). *How Buddhism Began*. Munshiram Manoharlal: p. 17
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49. ^ Sebastian, Professor C. D. (2005), *Metaphysics and Mysticism in Mahayana Buddhism*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications: p. 278
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Vajrayana

Contents VI

- 1 Introduction - Terminology
 - 1.1 The Vajra
 - 1.2 Tantric Buddhism
- 2 Academic study difficulties
- 3 Classifying Vajrayana
 - 3.1 Vajrayana as an ex post facto classification
 - 3.2 Vajrayana as a newly composed teaching
 - 3.3 Vajrayana as evolved from the local conditions of Medieval India
 - 3.4 Classification based on Vajrayana scriptures and commentaries
 - 3.4.1 Vajrayana as a subset of Mahayana Buddhism
 - 3.4.2 Vajrayana as fruitional vehicle
 - 3.4.3 Vajrayana as an esoteric discipline
- 4 Vajrayana textual tradition
 - 4.1 Dunhuang: Tibetan tantric documents recovered from the Mogao Caves
- 5 Key features of Vajrayana
 - 5.1 Ritual
 - 5.2 Goal and motivation
 - 5.3 Upaya
 - 5.4 Two Truths Doctrine
 - 5.5 Vows and behaviour
 - 5.6 Esoteric transmission
- 6 Sub-schools
 - 6.1 Tibetan Buddhism
 - 6.2 Chinese Esoteric Buddhism
 - 6.3 Shingon Buddhism
 - 6.4 Tendai Buddhism
 - 6.5 Shugendō
 - 6.6 Newar Buddhism
- 7 Tantra techniques
 - 7.1 Deity yoga
 - 7.2 Four complete purities
 - 7.3 Guru yoga
 - 7.4 Death yoga
 - 7.5 Generation and completion stage practice in the annutarayoga tantras
- 8 Classifications of tantra
 - 8.1 By scholars
 - 8.2 By the New Translation Schools
 - 8.3 By the Ancient Translation School
- 9 History of Vajrayana
 - 9.1 India
 - 9.2 Sambalpur
 - 9.3 China
 - 9.4 Tibet and other Himalayan kingdoms
 - 9.5 Japan
 - 9.6 Indonesian Archipelago
 - 9.7 Mongolia
- 10 Notes
- 11 Further reading

1 Introduction - Terminology

Vajrayāna Buddhism (Devanagari; Tibetan: rdo rje theg pa; Mongolian: Очирт хөлгөн, Ochirt Hölgön;) is also known as Tantric Buddhism, Tantrayāna, Mantrayāna, Secret Mantra, Esoteric Buddhism and the Diamond Vehicle. Vajrayana is a complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought and practice which evolved over several centuries.^[1] Its main scriptures are called Tantras.^[1] A distinctive feature of Vajrayana Buddhism is ritual, which are Skilful Means (Upaya), which is used as a substitute or alternative for the earlier abstract meditations.^{[2][3]} Vajrayana was widespread in Bengal [9]. Earliest Bengali literature consisted of mystical Buddhist songs, known as Charyapada.

The period of Indian Vajrayana Buddhism has been classified as the fifth^[4] or final^[1] period of Indian Buddhism. Although the first tantric Buddhist texts appeared in India in the 3rd century and continued to appear until the 12th century,^[5] scholars such as Hirakawa Akira believe that the Vajrayana probably came into existence in the 6th or 7th century,^[4] while the term Vajrayana first came into evidence in the 8th century.^[1]

According to Vajrayana scriptures Vajrayana refers to one of three vehicles or routes to enlightenment, the other two being the Hinayana (not to be confused with Theravada) and Mahayana.

The terminology associated with Vajrayana Buddhism can be confusing. Most of the terms originated in the Sanskrit language of tantric Indian Buddhism and may have passed through other cultures, notably those of Japan and Tibet, before translation for the modern reader. Further complications arise as seemingly equivalent terms can have subtle variations in use and meaning according to context, the time and place of use; and because the Vajrayana texts employ the tantric tradition of the twilight language, a means of instruction that is deliberately coded. These obscure teaching methods relying on symbolism as well as synonym, metaphor and word association add to the difficulties faced by those attempting to understand Vajrayana Buddhism. Bucknell & Stuart-Fox (1986: p.vii) state:

In the Vajrayana tradition, now preserved mainly in Tibetan lineages, it has long been recognized that certain important teachings are expressed in a form of secret symbolic language known as *saṃdhyā-bhāṣā*, 'Twilight Language'. *Mudrās* and *mantras*, *maṇḍalas* and *cakras*, those mysterious devices and diagrams that were so much in vogue in the pseudo-Buddhist hippie culture of the 1960s, were all examples of Twilight Language [...]^[6]

1.1 The Vajra

The Sanskrit term "vajra" denoted the thunderbolt, a legendary weapon and divine attribute that was made from an adamantine, or indestructible, substance and which could therefore pierce and penetrate any obstacle or obfuscation. It is the weapon of choice of Indra, the King of the Devas in Hinduism. As a secondary meaning, "vajra" refers to this indestructible substance, and so is sometimes translated as "adamantine" or "diamond". So the Vajrayana is sometimes rendered in English as "The Adamantine Vehicle" or "The Diamond Vehicle". A vajra is also a scepter-like ritual object (Tibetan: *dorje*), which has a sphere (and sometimes a gankyil) at its centre, and a variable number of spokes, 3, 5 or 9 at each end (depending on the sadhana), enfolding either end of the rod. The vajra is often traditionally employed in tantric rituals in combination with the bell or ghanta; symbolically, the vajra may represent method as well as great bliss and the bell stands for wisdom, specifically the wisdom realizing emptiness or lack of inherent existence.

1.2 Tantric Buddhism

The term Tantric Buddhism was not one originally used by those who practiced it. As scholar Isabelle Onians explains:

"Tantric Buddhism" . . . is not the transcription of a native term, but a rather modern coinage, if not totally occidental. For the equivalent Sanskrit *tāntrika* is found, but not in Buddhist texts. *Tāntrika* is a term denoting someone who follows the teachings of scriptures known as Tantras, but only in Saivism, not Buddhism (although cf. the single known occurrence in a copper-plate inscription from Nālandā made in the name of the Javanese king Devapāla in the ninth century AD: *tāntrikabodhisattvagānasya*; SIRCAR 1983:II .37-38; ref. provided by Sanderson). Indeed, Alexis Sanderson has noted that it is usually used of followers of another tradition, by proponents of the Trika of practitioners of the Bhairava tantras, for example, and thus with a slightly pejorative tone, unlike the simple noun *tantra* (personal communication). Tantric Buddhism is a name for a phenomenon which calls itself, in Sanskrit, Mantranaya, Vajrayāna, Mantrayāna or Mantramahāyāna (and apparently never Tantrayāna). Its practitioners are known as *mantrins*, *yogis*, or *sādhakas*. Thus, our use of the anglicised adjective "Tantric" for the Buddhist religion taught in Tantras is not native to the tradition, but is a borrowed term which serves its purpose.^[7]

2 Academic study difficulties

Serious Vajrayana academic study in the western world is in early stages; because, these problems make research difficult:^[4]

1. Although a large number of Tantric scriptures are extant, they have not been formally ordered or systematized.
2. Because Hinduism influenced Vajrayana, further research into Hinduism is necessary.
3. Ritual as well as doctrine need to be investigated.

Buddhist tantric practice are categorized as secret practice; this is to avoid misinformed people from harmfully misusing the practices. A method to keep this secrecy is that tantric initiation is required from a Master before any instructions can be received about the actual practice. During the initiation procedure in the highest class of tantra (such as the Kalachakra), students must take the tantric vows which commit them to such secrecy.^[8] "Explaining general tantra theory in a scholarly manner, not sufficient for practice, is likewise not a root downfall. Nevertheless, it weakens the effectiveness of our tantric practice."^[9]

3 Classifying Vajrayana - Vajrayana as an *ex post facto* classification

As Matthew Kapstein has argued:

"The practice of "incantation and ritual," directed to both ultimate and mundane ends, had become normal Mahayana practice, and not merely a popular cult shunned by the learned clergy, prior to the sixth century, and probably as early as the third. Over the course of the centuries the volume of ritual lore incorporated into the Mahayana in this fashion increased without any but general doctrinal restriction....It was only after this corpus has grown sufficiently massive to take on a life of its own however, that conditions came to favor the emergence of the mantrayana and later Vajrayana as distinct ways of Buddhist practice....[T]his development occurred within a century or two following Bhavaviveka's day, and perhaps had begun already during his lifetime. Once it took place, it became possible to attempt an *ex post facto* classification of the whole mass of mantric lore that had accumulated during the preceding centuries. Thus, the so-called "outer tantras" had been part and parcel of Mahayana practice long before anyone ever conceived of them as a class apart."^[10]

3.1 Vajrayana as a newly composed teaching

The literature of Vajrayana is absent from the oldest Buddhist literature of the Pali Canon and the Agamas.

The Vajrayana tradition holds that its teachings were first expounded by the Buddha 16 years after his enlightenment. Historians have identified an early stage of Mantrayana beginning in the 4th century, and argue that assigning the teachings to the historical Buddha is "patently absurd".^[11]

Only from 7th^[11] or the beginning of the 8th century, tantric techniques and approaches increasingly dominated Buddhist practice in India.^[5]

The first tantric (Vajrayana Buddhist) texts appeared in the 3rd century, and continued to appear until the 12th century.^[5]

3.2 Vajrayana as evolved from the local conditions of Medieval India

Although the Vajrayana claims to be as ancient and authentic as any other Buddhist school, it may have grown up gradually in an environment with previously existing texts such as the *mahasannipata* and the *ratnaketudharani*.^[12] The basic position of Vajrayana is still the same as the early Buddhist position of not-self: there is nothing which is eternal.^[13] The changes that took place agreed with the changing society of medieval India: the presentation has changed, the techniques of the way to enlightenment have changed, the outward appearance of Buddhism came to be dominated by ritualism and the array of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and gods and goddesses.^[14]

3.4 Classification based on Vajrayana scriptures and commentaries

The tantric scriptures and its commentaries provide three strategies to discuss the theoretical nature of Vajrayana Buddhism:^[1]

1. Vajrayana as a subset of Mahayana Buddhism
2. Vajrayana as a fruitional or advanced vehicle (where Mahayana is a prelude to Vajrayana)
3. Vajrayana as the sorcerer's discipline (vidyadharasamvara)

3.4.1 Vajrayana as a subset of Mahayana Buddhism

According to this schema, Indian Mahayana revealed two vehicles (*yana*) or methods for attaining enlightenment: the method of the perfections (*Paramitayana*) and the method of mantra (*Mantrayana*).^[15] The *Paramitayana* consists of the six or ten *paramitas*, of which the scriptures say that it takes three incalculable aeons to lead one to Buddhahood. The tantra literature, however, claims that the *Mantrayana* leads one to Buddhahood in one single life.^[15] According to the literature, the mantra is an easy path without the difficulties innate to the *Paramitanaya*.^[15] *Mantrayana* is sometimes portrayed as a method for those of inferior abilities.^[15] However the practitioner of the mantra still has to adhere to the vows of the Bodhisattva.^[15]

When viewed as a subset of Mahayana, it is one of two paths of practice: the *Sutrayana* method of perfecting good qualities and the *Vajrayāna* method of taking the intended outcome of Buddhahood as the path. *Vajrayana* techniques are aimed at making it possible to experience Buddha-nature prior to full enlightenment. In order to transmit these experiences, a body of esoteric knowledge has been accumulated by Buddhist tantric yogis and is passed via lineages of transmission. In order to access this knowledge, the practitioner requires initiation from a skilled spiritual teacher or guru.^[16]

3.4.2 Vajrayana as fruitional vehicle

According to the Vajrayana theory, Vajrayana refers to one of the three routes to enlightenment, the other two being Theravada and Mahayana. According to this view, there were three "turnings of the wheel of dharma".^[11]

1. In the first turning Shakyamuni Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths at Varanasi in the 5th century BC, which led to the founding of Buddhism and the later early Buddhist schools. Details of the first turning are described in the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*. The oldest scriptures do not mention any further turnings other than this first turning.
2. The Mahayana tradition claims that there was a second turning in which the *Perfection of Wisdom sutras* were taught at Vulture's Peak, which led to the Mahayana schools. Generally, scholars conclude that the Mahayana scriptures (including the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*) were composed from the 1st century CE onwards.^[17]
3. According to the Vajrayana tradition, there was a third turning which took place at Dhanyakataka sixteen years after the Buddha's enlightenment. Some scholars have strongly denied that Vajrayana appeared at that time,^[11] and placed it at a much later time. The first tantric (Vajrayana Buddhist) texts appeared in the 3rd century CE, and they continued to appear until the 12th century.^[18]

3.4.3 Vajrayana as an esoteric discipline

Vajrayana teaches that in order to access esoteric knowledge, the practitioner requires initiation from a skilled spiritual teacher or guru.^[19]

4 Vajrayana textual tradition

Harunaga Isaacson, a leading scholar of Vajrayana Buddhism, remarks:

"though we do not know precisely at present just how many Indian tantric Buddhist texts survive today in the language in which they were written, their number is certainly over one thousand five hundred; I suspect indeed over two thousand. A large part of this body of texts has also been translated into Tibetan, and a smaller part into Chinese. Aside from these, there are perhaps another two thousand or more works that are known today only from such translations. We can be certain as well that many others are lost to us forever, in whatever form. Of the texts that survive a very small proportion has been published; an almost insignificant percentage has been edited or translated reliably."^[20]

Isaacson notes that Vajrayana texts exhibit a wide range of literary characteristics—usually a mix of verse and prose, almost always in a Sanskrit that "transgresses frequently against classical norms of grammar and usage," although also occasionally in various Middle Indic dialects or elegant classical Sanskrit.

4.1 Dunhuang: Tibetan tantric documents recovered from the Mogao Caves

Dalton and Schaik (2007, revised) provide an excellent online catalogue listing 350 Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection of the British Library which is currently fully accessible online in discrete digitized manuscripts; with the Wylie transcription of the manuscripts to be made discoverable online in future.^[21] The 350 texts are just a small number compared to the vast cache of the Dunhuang manuscripts.



5 Key features of Vajrayana

The distinction between traditions is not always rigid. For example, the tantra sections of the Tibetan Buddhist canon of texts sometimes include material not usually thought of as tantric outside the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, such as the *Heart Sutra*^[22] and even versions of some material found in the *Pali Canon*.^{[23][24]}

5.1 Ritual

The distinctive feature of Vajrayana Buddhism is ritual, which is used as a substitute or alternative for the earlier abstract meditations.^{[21][3]} For Vajrayana Tibetan death rituals, see *phowa*.

5.2 Goal and motivation

The goal of spiritual practice within the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions is to become a Buddha (i.e. attain complete enlightenment), whereas the goal for Theravada practice is specific to become an arahant (i.e. attain the enlightenment and liberation of nirvana). As with the Mahayana, motivation is a vital component of Vajrayana practice, and Vajrayana teaches that all practices are to be undertaken with the motivation to achieve Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

5.3 Upaya

The Vajrayana is based on the concept of "skillful means" (Sanskrit: *upaya*) as formulated in Mahayana Buddhism. It is a system of lineages, whereby those who successfully receive an Empowerment (Tibetan Buddhism) or sometimes called initiation (permission to practice) are seen to share in the mindstream of the realisation of a particular skillful means of the *vajra* Master. In the Vajrayana these skillful means mainly relate to tantric, Mahamudra or Dzogchen practices. Vajrayana teaches that the Vajrayana techniques provide an accelerated path to enlightenment.

5.4 Two Truths Doctrine

Vajrayana subscribes to the two truths doctrine of conventional and ultimate truths, which is present in all Buddhist tenet systems.^{[25][26]} The two truths doctrine is a central concept in the Vajrayana path of practice and is the philosophical basis for its methods. The two truths identifies conventional a.k.a. relative, and absolute a.k.a. nirvana. Conventional truth is the truth of consensus reality, common-sense notions of what does and does not exist. Ultimate truth is reality as viewed by an awakened, or enlightened mind.

In the Sutrayana practice, a path of Mahayana, the "path of the cause" is taken, whereby a practitioner starts with his or her potential Buddha-nature and nurtures it to produce the fruit of Buddhahood. In the Vajrayana the "path of the fruit" is taken whereby the practitioner takes his or her innate Buddha-nature as the means of practice. The premise is that since we innately have an enlightened mind, practicing seeing the world in terms of ultimate truth can help us to attain our full Buddha-nature.^[27]

Experiencing ultimate truth is said to be the purpose of all the various tantric techniques practiced in the Vajrayana. Apart from the advanced meditation practices such as Mahamudra and Dzogchen, which aim to experience the empty nature of the enlightened mind that can see ultimate truth, all practices are aimed in some way at purifying the impure perception of the practitioner to allow ultimate truth to be seen. These may be *ngondro*, or preliminary practices, or the more advanced techniques of the tantric *sadhana*.

5.5 Vows and behaviour

In general, practitioners of the Vajrayana need to abide by various tantric vows or *samaya* of behaviour. These are extensions of the rules of the Pratimoksha vows and Bodhisattva vows for the lower levels of tantra, and are taken during initiations into the empowerment for a particular Anuttarayoga tantra. The special tantric vows vary depending on the specific mandala practice for which the initiation is received, and also depending on the level of initiation.

A tantric guru, or teacher, is expected to keep his or her *samaya* vows in the same way as his students. Proper conduct is considered especially necessary for a qualified Vajrayana guru. For example, the *Ornament for the Essence* of Manjushrikirti states:^[28]

Distance yourself from Vajra Masters who are not keeping the three vows who keep on with a root downfall, who are miserly with the Dharma, and who engage in actions that should be forsaken. Those who worship them go to hell and so on as a result. The Ngagpa Yogis from the Nyingma school keep a special lay ordination.



Three ritual implements: vajra, bell, and counting beads.

5.6 Esoteric transmission

Vajrayana Buddhism is esoteric, in the sense that the transmission of certain teachings only occurs directly from teacher to student during an initiation or empowerment and cannot be simply learned from a book. Many techniques are also commonly said to be secret, but some Vajrayana teachers have responded that secrecy itself is not important and only a side-effect of the reality that the techniques have no validity outside the teacher-student lineage.^[29] In order to engage in Vajrayana practice, a student should have received such an initiation or permission.

Reginald Ray writes that "If these techniques are not practiced properly, practitioners may harm themselves physically and mentally. In order to avoid these dangers, the practice is kept "secret" outside the teacher/student relationship. Secrecy and the commitment of the student to the vajra guru are aspects of the *samaya* (Tib. *damtsig*), or "sacred bond", that protects both the practitioner and the integrity of the teachings."^[19]

The teachings may also be considered "self-secret", meaning that even if they were to be told directly to a person, that person would not necessarily understand the teachings without proper context. In this way the teachings are "secret" to the minds of those who are not following the path with more than a simple sense of curiosity.^{[30][31]}

The esoteric transmission framework can take varying forms. The Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism uses a method called Dzogchen. The Tibetan Kagyu school and the Shingon school in Japan use an alternative method called Mahamudra.

6 Sub-schools

Although there is historical evidence for Vajrayana Buddhism in Southeast Asia and elsewhere (see History of Vajrayana below), today the Vajrayana exists primarily in the form of the two major sub-schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism in Japan known as Shingon, with a handful of minor subschools utilising lesser amounts of esoteric or tantric materials.

6.1 Tibetan Buddhism

The Tibetan Buddhist schools, based on the lineages and textual traditions of the Kangyur and Tengyur of Tibet, are found in Tibet, Bhutan, northern India, Nepal, southwestern and northern China, Mongolia and various constituent republics of Russia that are adjacent to the area, such as Amur Oblast, Buryatia, Chita Oblast, the Tuva Republic and Khabarovsk Krai. Tibetan Buddhism is also the main religion in Kalmykia.

Vajrayana Buddhism was established in Tibet in the 8th century when Śāntarakṣita was brought to Tibet from India at the instigation of the Dharma King Trisong Detsen, some time before 767. He established the basis of what later came to be known as the Nyingma school. As a Tantric Mahasiddha Padmasambhava's contribution ensured that Tibetan Buddhism became part of the Vajrayana tradition. While Vajrayana Buddhism is a part of Tibetan Buddhism in that it forms a core part of every major Tibetan Buddhist school, it is not identical with it. Buddhist scholar Alexander Berzin refers to "the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions of Tibetan Buddhism".^[32] Training in the "common paths" of Sutra (including Lamrim) are said to be the foundation for the "uncommon path" of Vajrayana.^[33] The Vajrayana techniques add 'skillful means' to the general Mahayana teachings for advanced students. The 'skillful means' of the Vajrayana in Tibetan Buddhism refers to tantra techniques, Dzogchen (Tibetan; Sanskrit:*maha-ati*) and Mahamudra (Tibetan:*Chagchen*).



Chinese use of the Siddham script for the Pratisara Mantra. 927 CE.

6.2 Chinese Esoteric Buddhism

Esoteric traditions in China are similar in teachings to the Japanese Shingon school, though the number of practitioners was greatly reduced, due in part of the persecution of Buddhists under Emperor Wuzong of Tang, nearly wiping out most of the Chinese Esoteric Buddhist

lineage. In China and countries with large Chinese populations such as Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, Chinese Esoteric Buddhism is commonly referred as Tángmì "Tang Dynasty Secret Buddhism," or Hànduàn mízōng "Secret Buddhism of the Han Transmission" (Hànmì for short), or Dōngmì "Eastern Secret Buddhism." In a more general sense, the Chinese term Mizōng "The Secret Way", is the most popular term used when referring to any form of Esoteric Buddhism. These traditions more or less share the same doctrines as the Shingon school, with many of its students themselves traveling to Japan to be given transmission at Mount Koya.

According to Master Hsuan Hua, the most popular example of esoteric teachings still practiced in many Zen monasteries of East Asia, is the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* and its dhāraṇī (Sītāpatroṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇī), along with the Great Compassion Dharani (Nīlakaṇṭha Dhāraṇī), with its 42 Hands and Eyes Mantras.^[34]



A Shingon shrine with Mahavairocana at the center of the shrine, and the Womb Realm and Diamond Realm mandalas.

6.3 Shingon Buddhism

The Shingon school is found in Japan and includes practices, known in Japan as *Mikkyō*, which are similar in concept to those in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism. The lineage for Shingon Buddhism differs from that of Tibetan Vajrayana, having emerged from India and Central Asia (via China) and is based on earlier versions of the Indian texts than the Tibetan lineage. Shingon shares material with Tibetan Buddhism—such as the esoteric sutras (called Tantras in Tibetan Buddhism) and mandalas – but the actual practices are not related. The primary texts of Shingon Buddhism are the *Mahavairocana Sutra* and *Vajrasekhara Sutra*. The founder of Shingon Buddhism was Kukai, a Japanese monk who studied in China in the 9th century during the Tang Dynasty and brought back Vajrayana scriptures, techniques and mandalas then popular in China. The school mostly died out or was merged into other schools in China towards the end of the Tang Dynasty but flourished in Japan. Shingon is one of the few remaining branches of Buddhism in the world that continues to use the *siddham* script of the Sanskrit language.

6.4 Tendai Buddhism

Although the Tendai school in China and Japan does employ some esoteric practices, these rituals came to be considered of equal importance with the exoteric teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. By chanting mantras, maintaining mudras, or practicing certain forms of meditation, Tendai maintains that one is able to understand sense experiences as taught by the Buddha, have faith that one is innately an enlightened being, and that one can attain enlightenment within the current lifetime.



Shugendō practitioners in the mountains of Kumano, Mie.

6.5 Shugendō

Shugendō was founded in 7th century Japan by the ascetic En no Gyōja, based on the *Queen's Peacocks Sutra*. With its origins in the solitary *hijiri* back in the 7th century, Shugendō evolved as a sort of amalgamation between Esoteric Buddhism, Shinto and several other religious influences including Taoism. Buddhism and Shinto were amalgamated in the *shinbutsu shūgō*, and Kūkai's syncretic view held wide sway up until the end of the Edo period, coexisting with Shinto elements within Shugendō^[35]. In 1613 during the Edo period, the Tokugawa Shogunate issued a regulation obliging Shugendō temples to belong to either Shingon or Tendai temples. During the Meiji Restoration, when Shinto was declared an independent state religion separate from Buddhism, Shugendō was banned as a superstition not fit for a new, enlightened Japan. Some Shugendō temples converted themselves into various officially approved Shintō denominations. In modern times, Shugendō is practiced mainly by Tendai and Shingon sects, retaining an influence on modern Japanese religion and culture.

6.6 Newar Buddhism

Newar Buddhism is practiced by Newars in Nepal. This is the only form of Vajrayana Buddhism in which the scriptures are written in Sanskrit. Its priests do not follow celibacy and are called Vajracharyas.

7 Tantra techniques

According to the Vajrayana tradition,^[36] at certain times the bodymind^[37] is in a very subtle state which can be used by advanced practitioners to transform the mindstream. Such liminal times are known in Tibetan Buddhism as Bardo states and include such transitional states as during meditation, dreaming, sex and death.

7.1 Deity yoga

Deity yoga (Tibetan: *lha'i rnal 'byor*; Sanskrit: *Devata*) is the fundamental Vajrayana practice, often involving a *sadhana* liturgy and form, in which practitioners visualize themselves as the meditation Buddha or *vidam*. The purpose of Deity yoga is to bring the meditator to the realization that the deity and the practitioner are in essence the same, and non-dual. By visualizing oneself and one's environment entirely as a projection of mind, it helps the practitioner to become familiar with the mind's ability and habit of projecting conceptual layers over all experience. This experience undermines a habitual belief that views of reality and self are solid and fixed. Deity yoga enables the practitioner to release, or 'purify' him or

herself from spiritual obscurations (Sanskrit: *klesha*) and to practice compassion and wisdom simultaneously.

Beer (2004: p. 142) states:^[38]

Deity Yoga employs highly refined techniques of creative imagination, visualisation, and photism in order to self-identify with the divine form and qualities of a particular deity as the union of method or skilful means and wisdom. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, "In brief, the body of a Buddha is attained through meditating on it".

The realization of Deity yoga is attained as a result of pure concentration on bringing the three bodies into the path, in which the practitioner mentally generates themselves as a Tantric Deity (Sanskrit: *Yidam*) and their surroundings as the Deity's mandala. The purpose of doing this is to overcome ordinary appearances and conceptions which, according to Vajrayana, are the obstructions to nirvana and omniscience.^[39] Recent studies indicate that Deity yoga yields quantifiable improvements in the practitioner's ability to process visuospatial information, specifically those involved in working visuospatial memory.^[40]

7.2 Four complete purities

Four Purities (Tibetan: *yongs su dag pa bzhi; yongs dag bzhi*)^[41] In defining Vajrayana, Yuthok *et al.* identify the "Four Purities" which define the principal Tantric methodology of Deity Yoga that distinguishes it from the rest of Buddhism:^[42]

Vajrayana...is a subdivision of Mahayana, which may be divided into Sutrayana and Vajrayana (or Tantrayana). Vajrayana is regarded as a swifter path and is considered superior to Sutrayana. Whereas Sutrayana focuses on the causal method, Vajrayana teaches the Resultant method because it includes the 'four purities': (1) purity of environment (2) purity of body (3) purity of resources and (4) purity of deeds.

Kalachakranet identifies and defines the "Four Purities" in a complementary though different fashion:^[43]

The main tantric practices can be summarised in the "Four Purities":

1. Seeing one's body as the body of the deity
2. Seeing one's environment as the pure land or mandala of the deity
3. Perceiving one's enjoyments as bliss of the deity, free from attachment
4. Performing one's actions only for the benefit of others (bodhichitta motivation, altruism)^[44]

Imagery and ritual in deity yoga: representations of the deity, such as a statues (*murti*), paintings (*thangka*), or mandala, are often employed as an aid to visualization, in Deity yoga. Mandalas are sacred enclosures, sacred architecture that house and contain the uncontainable essence of a *yidam*. In the book *The World of Tibetan Buddhism*, the Dalai Lama describes mandalas thus: "This is the celestial mansion, the pure residence of the deity."

In the same context, all ritual in Vajrayana practice can be seen as aiding in this process of visualization and identification. The practitioner can use various hand implements such as a *vajra*, bell, hand-drum (*damaru*) or a ritual dagger (*phurba*), but also ritual hand gestures (*mudras*) can be made, special chanting techniques can be used, and in elaborate offering rituals or initiations, many more ritual implements and tools are used, each with an elaborate symbolic meaning to create a special environment for practice. Vajrayana has thus become a major inspiration in traditional Tibetan art.

7.3 Guru yoga

Guru yoga (or teacher practice) (Tibetan: *bla ma'i rnal 'byor*)^[45] is a practice that has many variations, but may be understood as a tantric devotional process whereby the practitioners unite their mindstream with the mindstream of the guru. The guru is engaged as *yidam*, as a

nirmanakaya manifestation of a Buddha. The process of guru yoga might entail visualization of an entire lineage of masters (refuge tree) as an invocation of the lineage. It usually involves visualization of the guru above or in front of the practitioner. Guru yoga may entail a liturgy or mantra such as the *Prayer in Seven Lines*. (Tibetan: *tshig bdun gsol 'debs*)^[46] The Guru or spiritual teacher is essential as a guide during tantric practice, as without their example, blessings and grace, genuine progress is held to be impossible for all but the most keen and gifted. Many tantric texts qualify the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha thus: "The Guru is Buddha, the Guru is Dharma, the Guru is also Sangha"^[47] to reflect their importance for the disciple. The guru is considered even more compassionate and more potent than the Buddha because we can have a direct relationship with the guru. The guru therefore appears with the *yidam* and *dakini* in the Three Roots refuge formulation of the three factors essential for tantric attainments.

7.4 Death yoga

Death yoga (or "bringing the three bodies into the path of death, intermediate state (*bardo*) and rebirth"^[48]) is another important aspect of Tantra techniques. Although it is sometimes called "death yoga," it is mainly practiced during life, in meditation. It can be practiced first according to generation stage, and then according to completion stage. The accumulation of meditative practice helps to prepare the practitioner for what they need to do at the time of death. At the time of death the mind is in a subtle state (clear light) that can open the mind to enlightenment if it is skilfully used to meditate on emptiness (*shunyata*). During completion stage meditation it is possible to manifest a similar clear light mind and to use it to meditate on emptiness. This meditation causes dualistic appearances to subside into emptiness and enables the practitioner to destroy their ignorance and the imprints of ignorance that are the obstructions to omniscience. It is said that masters like Lama Tsong Khapa used these techniques to achieve enlightenment during the death process. Actually, there are three stages at which it is possible to do this: at the end of the death process, during the *bardo* (or 'in between period') and during the process of rebirth. During these stages, the mind is in a very subtle state, and an advanced practitioner can use these natural states to make significant progress on the spiritual path. The Tibetan Book of the Dead is an important commentary for this kind of traditional practice.

This death yoga should not be confused with the non-Tantric meditation on impermanence and death, which is a common practice within Buddhist traditions used to overcome desirous attachment.

Another Tibetan ritual practice related to death is *phowa* (transference of one's consciousness), which can be done by oneself at the moment of death or by ritual specialists, *phowa-lamas*, on behalf of the dead. For the *Anuttarayoga Tantras* (Tib. *rnal-'byor bla-med-kyi-rgyud*), transferring one's consciousness constitutes one of the two ways to separate the coarse and subtle bodies through meditation. Daniel Cozort explains that '*phoba* (*phowa*) merely separates the coarse and subtle bodies without leading to the attainment of an "illusory body" (Tib. *sgyu-lus*). On the other hand, during the perfection type meditation, known as the "final mental isolation" (Tibetan: *sems-dben*) because it necessitates the presence of an "actual consort" (Tib. *las-rgya*), "the winds are totally dissolved in the indestructible drop" and "the fundamental wind naturally rises into an illusory body"^[49]

7.5 Generation and completion stage practice in the *annutarayoga* tantras

In the highest class of tantra, two stages of practice are distinguished. In the first stage of generation, one practices oneself in the identification with the meditational Buddha (*yidam*), generally until one can meditate single-pointedly on 'being' the deity (see above, deity yoga). In the next stage of completion, one engages in practices with the subtle energy system of the body (chakras and energy channels etc.) to actualize the physical and mental transformation into the meditation Buddha. (Similar practices are also found in Hindu tantra and yoga.) In some Buddhist tantras, both stages can be practiced simultaneously, whereas

in others, one first actualizes the generation stage before continuing with the completion stage practices.

Details of these practices are normally only explained to practitioners by their teachers after receiving an initiation or 'permission to practice'.

8 Classifications of tantra:

8.1 By scholars

The scholar Joseph M. Kitagawa says that Tantrayana may be divided into three main types of tantra^[11]:

1. Vajrayana - established the symbolic terminology and the liturgy that would characterize all forms of the tradition.^[11]
2. Sahajayana - was dominated by long-haired, wandering siddhas who openly challenged and ridiculed the Buddhist establishment.^[11]
3. Kalachakra Tantra - is farthest removed from the earlier Buddhist traditions, and incorporates concepts of messianism and astrology not present elsewhere in Buddhist literature.^[11]

8.2 By the New Translation Schools

The Sarma or New Translation schools of Tibetan Buddhism (Gelug, Sakya, and Kagyu) divide the Tantras into four hierarchical categories, namely:

- Kriyayoga (action tantra)
- Charyayoga (performance tantra)
- Yogatantra (yoga tantra)
- Anuttarayogatantra (highest yoga tantra)
 - further divided into "mother", "father" and "non-dual" tantras.

8.3 By the Ancient Translation School

A different division is used by the Nyingma or Ancient school:

- Three Outer Tantras:
 - Kriyayoga
 - Charyayoga
 - Yogatantra
 -
- Three Inner Tantras, which correspond to the Anuttarayogatantra:
 - Mahayoga
 - Anuyoga
 - Atiyoga (Tib. *Dzogchen*)
 - The practice of Atiyoga is further divided into three classes: Mental SemDe, Spatial LongDe, and Esoteric Instructional MenNgagDe.

9 History of Vajrayana

9.1 India

There are differing views as to where in the Indian sub-continent Vajrayana began. Some believe it originated in Bengal,^[50] now divided between the Republic of India and Bangladesh, with others claiming it began in Uddiyana, located by some scholars in the modern day Swat Valley in Pakistan, or in South India. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, it is claimed that the historical Shakyamuni Buddha taught tantra, but that since these are 'secret' teachings, confined to the guru/disciple relationship, they were generally written down long after the Buddha's other teachings, the Pali Canon and the Mahayana sutras.

The earliest texts appeared around the early 4th century. Nalanda University in eastern India became a center for the development of Vajrayana theory, although it is likely that the university followed, rather than led, the early Tantric movement. India would continue as the source of leading-edge Vajrayana practices up until the 11th century producing many renowned Mahasiddha.

Some believe that Indrabhuti, the king of Sambalpur founded Vajrayana while his sister who was married to Prince (Yuvaraja) Jalendra of Lankapuri (Sonepur) founded Sahajayana.

These new Tantric cults of Buddhism introduced Mantra, Mudra and Mandala along with six tantric Abhicharas (practices) such as Marana (Death), Stambhana, Sammohana, Vidvesan, Uchchatana and Vajikarana.

(Vajrayana) Buddhism had mostly died out in India by the 13th century, and tantric religions of Buddhism and Hinduism were also experiencing pressure from invading Islamic armies. By that time, the vast majority of the practices were also available in Tibet, where they were preserved until recently.

In the second half of the 20th century a sizable number of Tibetan exiles fled the oppressive, anti-religious rule of the Communist Chinese to establish Tibetan Buddhist communities in northern India, particularly around Dharamsala.

9.2 Sambalpur

Indrabhuti, the oldest known king of Sambalpur founded Vajrayana while his sister who was married to Yuvaraja Jalendra of Lankapuri (Suvarnapur) founded Sahajayana. These new Tantric cults of Buddhism introduced Mantra, Mudra and Mandala along with six Tantric Abhicharas (practices) such as Marana, Stambhana, Sammohana, Vidvesan, Uchchatana and Vajikarana. The Tantric Buddhist sects made efforts to raise the dignity of the lowest of the low of the society to a higher plane. It revived primitive beliefs and practices a simpler and less formal approach to the personal god, a liberal and respectful attitude towards women and denial of caste system.^{[51][52]}

From the 7th century onwards many popular religious elements of heterogeneous nature were incorporated into Mahayana Buddhism which finally resulted in the origin of Vajrayana, Kalachakrayana and Sahajayana Tantric Buddhism. Tantric Buddhism first developed in Uddiyana, a country which was divided into two kingdoms Sambhala and Lankapuri.

Sambhala has been identified with Sambalpur and Lankapuri with Subarnapura (Sonepur).^[53] Many celebrated Vajrayana Acharyas like Sarah, Hadipa, Dombi, Heruka, Tantipa and Luipa came from the so-called despised classes. The cult exerted a tremendous influence over the tribal and despised classes of people of Sambalpur and Bolangir region. It was in the 9th-10th century that there appeared seven famous Tantric maidens at Patna (Patnagarh) region which was then called Kuanri-Patana. These maidens are popularly known as Saat Bhauni (Seven sisters), namely, Gyanadei Maluni, Luhakuti, Luhuruni, Nitei Dhobani, Sukuti Chamaruni, Patrapindhi Savaruni, Gangi Gauduni and sua Teluni. They hailed from so-called the low castes of the society and were followers of Lakshminkara. Because of their miraculous power and feats; they have been later on deified and worshipped by the folk people.^[54]

A systematic analysis of the trend of religious development of the period under review and circumstantial evidences reveal that Chakra Sambara Tantricism of Tantric Buddhism gained popularity in the Gandhagiri region. The chief deity of Chakra Sambara Tantra is Buddha Sambara, the deity whose worship is still popular in China and Tibet. According to Sadhanamala, god Buddha Sambara is one-faced and two-armed. He appears terrible with his garment of tiger-skin, garland of heads, a string of skulls round the head, three eyes and in Âlidhamudrâ, he tramples upon Kalaratri. A number of texts relating to the procedures of worship of God Buddha Sambara have been composed by siddhacharyas like Darikapa, Santideva, Jayadratha and others. King Indrabhuti of Shambala (Sambalpur) composed Chakra Sambara Stotra, Chakra Sambara Anubandha Samgraha, Chakra Sambara Tantraraga Sambara Samuchchaya Nama Brutti etc. The philosopher cum king Indrabhuti became the source inspiration to the adherents of Tantric Buddhist cult in Kosal including Gandhagiri region.^[55]

Indrabhuti and Laksminkara, the two royal Buddhist Acharyas created a mass of followers to their cults. In the 9th-10th century the worship and sadhana of Buddha Sambara, the presiding deity of Chakra Sambara Tantra gained popularity in the Gandhagiri region. In Gandhagiri which also contained a large number of caves and rock shelters, apparently of the Vajrayanists and Sahajayanists, the adherents of the cults used to live in seclusion and practice Kaya Sadhana or Yogic practices along with worshipping god Buddha Sambara.^[56] This tantric Buddhist culture greatly affected the religious faith and beliefs of the tribal of Gandhagiri, so much so that eventually even today one can notice the invocation of various Buddhist Siddhacharyas and Buddhist deities in the mantras of the tribal to ward off evil spirits or cure some disease. It is also interesting to note here that Buddha was worshipped by many tribal in the name of Budharaja. There is also a small hillock at the heart of present day Sambalpur by the name Budharaja.^[57]

9.3 China



Esoteric practices related to Cundī have remained popular in Chinese Buddhism and the Sinosphere.

Esoteric teachings followed the same route into northern China as Buddhism itself, arriving via the Silk Road sometime during the first half of the 7th century, during the Tang Dynasty. Esoteric Mantranaya practices arrived from India just as Buddhism was reaching its zenith in China, and received sanction from the emperors of the Tang Dynasty. During this time, three great masters came from India to China: Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra. These three masters brought the esoteric teachings to their height of popularity in China.^[58]

During this era, the two main source texts were the *Mahāvairocana Abhisambodhi Tantra*, and the *Tattvasaṃgraha Tantra*. Traditions in the Sinosphere still exist for these teachings, and they more or less share the same doctrines as Shingon, with many of its students themselves traveling to Japan to be given transmission at Mount Koya.

Esoteric methods were naturally incorporated into Chinese Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty. Śubhakarasiṃha's most eminent disciple, Master Yixing was a member of the Zen school. In such a way, in Chinese Buddhism there was no major distinction between exoteric and esoteric practices, and the northern school of Zen Buddhism even became known for its esoteric practices of dhāraṇīs and mantras.^{[59][60]}

During the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongol emperors made Esoteric Buddhism the official religion of China, and Tibetan lamas were given patronage at the court.^[61] A common perception was that this patronage of lamas caused corrupt forms of tantra to become widespread.^[61] When the Mongol Yuan Dynasty was overthrown and the Ming Dynasty was established, the Tibetan lamas were expelled from the court, and this form of Buddhism was denounced as not being an orthodox path.^[61]

In late imperial China, the early traditions of Esoteric Buddhism were still thriving in Buddhist communities. Robert Gimello has also observed that in these communities, the esoteric practices associated with Cundī were extremely popular among both the populace and the elite.^[62]

9.4 Tibet and other Himalayan kingdoms

In 747 the Indian master Padmasambhava traveled from Afghanistan to bring Vajrayana Buddhism to Tibet and Bhutan, at the request of the king of Tibet. This was the original transmission which anchors the lineage of the Nyingma school. During the 11th century and early 12th century a second important transmission occurred with the lineages of Atisa, Marpa and Brogmi, giving rise to the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism, namely Kadam, Kagyu, Sakya, and Geluk (the school of the Dalai Lama).

9.5 Japan

During the Tang Dynasty in China, when esoteric Buddhist practices reached their peak, Japan was actively importing Buddhism, its texts and teachings, by sending monks on risky missions across the sea to stay in China for two years or more. Depending on where the monk stay and trained, they might bring esoteric Buddhist material and training back to Japan, or not.

In 804, monk Saicho came back from China with teachings from the Tiantai sect, but was also trained in esoteric lineages. When he later founded the Japanese Tendai sect, esoteric practices were integrated with the larger Tendai teachings, but Tendai is not an exclusively esoteric sect. Subsequent disciples of Saicho also returned from China in later years with further esoteric training, which helped to flesh out the lineage in Japan.

On the same mission in 804, Emperor Kammu also sent monk Kūkai to the Tang Dynasty capital at Chang'an (present-day Xi'an). Kūkai absorbed the Vajrayana thinking from eminent Indian and Chinese Vajrayana teachers at the time, and synthesized a version of which he took back with him to Japan, where he founded the Shingon school of Buddhism, a school which continues to this day. Unlike Tendai, Shingon is a purely esoteric sect.

9.6 Indonesian Archipelago

The empire of Srivijaya in southeast Sumatra was already a center of Vajrayana learning when Dharma Master Yijing resided there for six months in 671, long before Padmasambhava brought the method to Tibet. In the 11th century, Atisha studied in Srivijaya under Serlingpa, an eminent Buddhist scholar and a prince of the Srivijayan ruling house.

Through early economic relationships with the Srivijaya Empire, the Philippines came under the influence of Vajrayana. Vajrayana Buddhism also influenced the construction of Borobudur, a three-dimensional mandala, in central Java circa 800.



Shalu Monastery or Şalu Monastery

Wylie: *Zhwa-lu*, ZYPY: Xalu; simplified Chinese: 夏鲁寺; pinyin: *Xiàlǔ Sì*) is small monastery 22 km south of Shigatse in Tibet. Founded in 1040 by Chetsun Sherab Jungnay, for centuries it was renowned as a centre of scholarly learning and psychic training and its mural paintings were considered to be the most ancient and beautiful in Tibet. Shalu was the first of the major monasteries to be built by noble families of the Tsang Dynasty during Tibet's great revival of Buddhism, and was an important center of the Sakya tradition.

9.7 Mongolia

In the 13th century, the Tibetan Buddhist teachers of the Sakya school, led by Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen took part in a religious debate with Christians and Muslims before the Mongolian royal court. As a result the Mongolian Prince Godan adopted Tibetan Buddhism as his personal religion, although not requiring it of his subjects. Drogön Chögyal Phagpa, Sakya Pandita's nephew, eventually converted Kublai Khan to Buddhism. Since the Khan conquered China and established the Yuan Dynasty which lasted from 1271 to 1368, this led to the renewal in China of the Tantric practices which had died out there many years earlier. Vajrayana practice declined in China and Mongolia with the fall of the Yuan Dynasty, although Mongolia saw another revival of Vajrayana in the 17th century, with the establishment of ties between the Dalai Lama in Tibet and the Mongolian princedoms. This revived the historic pattern of the spiritual leaders of Tibet acting as priests to the rulers of the Mongol empire. Having survived suppression by the Communists, Buddhism in Mongolia is today primarily of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism and is being re-invigorated following the fall of the Communist government.

10 Notes

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