

The Karmapa and Taiwan

Chen Yu-hsin | Professor at NanHua University

Abstract

Tibetan Buddhism has seen a steady increase of followers year by year since its introduction to Taiwan. The Karma Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, which invented the Tulku lineage, has also developed in Taiwan. The sixteenth Karmapa, holder of the Black Crown of Karma Kagyu, was known around the world for his dedication to the development of monks and to the promotion of Buddhism. After the death of the sixteenth Karmapa in 1981, Tai Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche, and Shamarpa Rinpoche agreed to take joint responsibility for the recognition of the next Karmapa reincarnation. After more than ten years, Ogyen Trinley Dorje was recognized as the seventeenth Karmapa in 1992 at the prompting of Tai Situ Rinpoche. However, Shamarpa Rinpoche moved in 1994 to recognize Trinley Thaye Dorje as the seventeenth Karmapa. The split recognition led to incessant conflicts between supporters of both camps. Karma Kagyu followers in Taiwan allowed themselves to be drawn into these controversies by making a choice between the two seventeenth Karmapas. It is important for Karma Kagyu followers in Taiwan to exercise wisdom to remember what made them believe in Tibetan Buddhism in the first place and to understand Tibetan Buddhism's complicated religious and political entanglements in Tibet so as to keep their religious belief pure and simple, immune to the negative effects of secular elements.

Key Words: *Tibetan Buddhism, Karmapa, Karma Kagyu, Tai Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche, Shamarpa Rinpoche, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, Trinley Thaye Dorje*

Introduction

Throughout the history of Tibetan Buddhism, two gurus were bestowed the title of Karmapa by the Chinese emperor. One of them belongs to the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism, and the other is the holder of Black Crown of Karma Kagyu—Karmapa. The Karmapa title of the Sakya school gradually died out, as the Sakya school waned in influence and power. The Kagyu school teamed up with nobles and followers to replace the Sakya regime as the theocratic rulers of Tibet for the next hundred or so years. In mid-17th century, the Gelug school brought in Mongol forces to build the Gaden Phodrang regime in Tibet. Since then, Gelug became the dominant school of Tibetan

Buddhism, with other schools being sidelined at the hands of Gelug and Qing Dynasty of China. The Karma Kagyu had been defeated to the point of not being able to stage a comeback. It was not until 1959, when Tibetan people staged a massive exodus to India and other countries, and the 14th Dalai Lama was unable to leave India, that the 16th Karmapa of Black Crown of Karma Kagyu made himself well-known on the international stage by visiting many places in Europe and Asia.

Tibetan Buddhism has been growing in popularity among the Taiwanese since its introduction to Taiwan. Major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelug have been able to grow and prosper in Taiwan. In the history of Tibet, the Kagyu school joined hands with powerful clans, secular powers, and religious forces to form the first theocratic regime in Tibet. The Kagyu is also the first school of Tibetan Buddhism to create the reincarnation system, and many sects (four large sects and eight small sects) derived from it. A few of those sects were now defunct, and the surviving sects were introduced to Taiwan. Although the Black Crown lineage is just one of the sects of Karma Kagyu, it is a very popular sect among followers of Karmapa, and has more material and human resources than any other sect. Therefore, it is a highly powerful and influential sect of Tibetan Buddhism that one that many have been watching closely.

1. Karmapa

The reincarnation system of Tibetan Buddhism was first created by Black Crown (zhwa nagpa) of Karma Kagyu. The leader of Black Crown lineage is called “Karmapa.” In 1407, Deshin Shekpa, the fifth Karmapa (1384-1415), was bestowed the title of “Precious Religious King, Great Loving One of the West, Mighty Buddha of Peace,” hence he was known among Chinese followers as “Karmapa.”

(1) The sixteenth Karmapa

The sixteenth Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (1924-1981), was born in Dergé in 1924. He was recognized by the 11th Tai Situpa (1886-1953) and the second Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche (1904-1953) as the reincarnation of the 15th Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje (1871-1922). At the age of seven, he was taken to the Palpung Monastery where the 11th Situpa Pema Wangchok and Mipham Chokyi Lodro gave him ordination. In 1944, he visited Bhutan for the first time at the request of King of Bhutan. At the age of 23, he undertook upasampada and embarked on a pilgrimage tour to Nepal and India. In June 1954, he and

the Dalai Lama and others answered an invitation to visit Beijing. After returning from Beijing, he once again embarked on a pilgrimage to India, Nepal, and Sikkim.

In early 1959, the 16th Karmapa sent the 12th Tai Situpa and the 9th Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche to Bhutan. In early February, he led a group of 160 young reincarnations including Sharmarpa Rinpoche, the 4th Pönlop Rinpoche, and Gyaltzab Rinpoche, as well as Buddhist followers to leave Palpung Monastery for Dharamsala, India. In early April, he went to India to meet with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru after visiting Bhutan and Sikkim. It was in the meeting that Nehru agreed to finance construction of a new monastery. The resulting Rumtek Monastery, which officially opened in January 1966, became Karmapa's headquarters outside Tibet. In 1972, he led Sharmarpa, the fifth Pönlop Rinpoche, and monks of Rumtek Monastery to embark on a pilgrimage to India. In 1974, he traveled to Europe for the first time to preach, visiting Denmark, Norway, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, West Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Rome and also meeting the Pope. As a direct result of this tour, many countries in the West established Buddhist institutes. In November 1976, Karmapa visited New York and Canada for the first time to preach. In late June 1977, he once again made a journey to Europe, this time visiting the UK, France, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, West Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. In late November 1979, he presided over the ground-breaking ceremony of Karmapa International Buddhist Institute (KIBI) in New Delhi, which was opened to train learned scholars of Buddhism. In May 1980, he once again traveled to London, New York, Woodstock, and San Francisco to give speeches and hold Buddhist rituals. On November 5, 1981, he passed away at Zion Hospital in Chicago, USA.

The 16th Karmapa lived in an era when Tibet was hit with drastic political changes. Whether in Tibet and in India, he spared no efforts in promoting Tibetan Buddhism, and earned himself much respect among the Tibetan people and international society. He made two important contributions: training learned scholars to promote Tibetan Buddhism, and introducing Tibetan Buddhism to various parts of the West. By training learned scholars, he revived the much weakened Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism. By introducing Tibetan Buddhism to the West, he made the world discover Tibetan culture before the Dalai Lama came along.

(2) Karma Kagyu senior leadership

After the death of the 16th Karmapa in 1981, followers of Karma Kagyu were

praying eagerly for the next reincarnation, chanting the phrase “Karmapa Khyenno” (meaning “Karmapa knows!”) in Kagyu rituals everywhere. From the end of 1981 to 1984, a senior leadership consisting of Dhamcho Yongdu, Secretary General of the late Karmapa, and Tai Situpa, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Gyaltzab Rinpoche, and Shamarpa Rinpoche was looking for reincarnation of Karmapa. After Dhamcho Yongdu passed away in 1982, the rest four members of the senior leadership continued to look for the reincarnation of Karmapa, and became known as “four rinpoches” among followers in Taiwan. They were also influential figures in the Karma Kagyu school.

1. Shamarpa

The first Shamarpa, Khedrup Drakpa Senge (1283-1349) is a disciple of the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (1284-1339). The second Shamarpa, Shamar Khachö Wangpo (1350-1405) was bestowed the honorific Red Crown (zhwa dmar) by a Mongol Khan. This was the beginning of the Red Crown lineage. After the death of the fourth Karmapa, Shamar Khachö Wangpo recognized Deshin Shekpa as the fifth Karmapa, and became his lama. The tenth Shamarpa, Chödrub Gyamtso (1742-1792), and the sixth Panchen Lama, Lobsang Palden Yeshe (1738-1780) who passed away in Beijing, were half-brothers. Angry with Lobsang Palden Yeshe’s lion’s share of inheritance, Chödrub Gyamtso directed the Gurkhas (ancestors of today’s Nepal) to sack the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Tibet. In response, Qianlong Emperor of Qing Dynasty sent troops to fight the invading Gurkhas, who bent their knees when the Chinese army reached the Gurkha capital of Swayambhunath. The Gurkhas returned the stolen assets and the remains of Sharmapa to the monastery. The Qing emperor then gave the seat of Shamarpa, the Yangpachen Monastery, as well as all the monasteries belonging to Sharmapa to Gelug school. The followers of Shamarpa were sent into exile as slaves in China, and China would not allow any more reincarnations of Shamarpa.

From 1792 to the fall of Qing Dynasty in early 20th century, there were no more reincarnations of Shamarpa. The new reincarnation of Shamarpa did not appear until the 16th Karmapa recognized his 6-year-old nephew Mipham Chokyi Lodro (1952-) as the 14th Shamarpa and held his enthronement ceremony at Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim in 1964. Following the death of the 16th Karmapa, the 14th Shamarpa became one of the senior lamas who held responsibility of searching for the new Karmapa reincarnation. He also entered into management of the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute (KIBI) in

New Delhi, and was one of the senior lamas who recognized Trinley Thaye Dorje as the 17th Karmapa through the traditional process of recognition. Being the nephew of the 16th Karmapa, he also shared close ties with ruling and opposition parties in India. A well-respected figure, he repeatedly visited Taiwan to promote Tibetan Buddhism. His loyal supporters include actress Chen Lili who was active in Taiwan and Hong Kong and the Karma Kagyu Temple in Taiwan.

2. Tai Situpa

The first Tai Situpa, Chokyi Gyaltsen (1377-1448), is the disciple of the second Shamarpa Kachö Wangpo. He is the first Tibetan incarnation conferred the honorific title "Kenting Naya Tang Nyontse Geshetse Tai Situpa" by the Yongle Emperor of the Ming Dynasty. This is the beginning of Tai Situpa lineage. The 8th Tai Situpa, Chokyi Jungne (1699-1774), set up Palpung Monastery at Derge in 1727 as the seat of Tai Situpa. The incumbent 12th Tai Situpa, Pema Tönyö Nyinje (1954-), was born in Derge in 1954. At eighteen months old, he was recognized as the reincarnation of Tai Situpa by the 16th Karmapa via the traditional process of recognition. He was first sent to Palpung Monastery, then had his enthronement ceremony at Tsurphu Monastery. At the age of five, he was sent to Bhutan and Sikkim. He was later sent to Darjeeling of northern India to seek treatment for tuberculosis. After he recovered from tuberculosis, he returned to Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim. At the age of 22, he used the land given to him by followers in Derge and Nangqên to found his own seat, Sherab Ling, at Himachal Pradesh in northern India, near the Tibetan followers who had settled in Bir. In 1981, he visited the Samye Ling Tibetan Center in Scotland for the first time to preach Buddhism. In 1982, he visited the US for the first time, and founded the Maitreya Institute there in the following year. He visited Taiwan many times to preach. The highly influential Taiwanese playwright and theater director Stan Lai, his wife Ding Nai-chu, and Taiwanese politician Chen Li-an are all his loyal followers.

3. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche

Jamgon Kongtrul means literally the reincarnation of Mañjuśrī of Kongpo. The first Jamgon Kongtrul, Lodrö Thayé (1813-1899), is a native of Kongpo. He is credited as one of the founders of the Rime movement of Tibetan Buddhism. After his death, his followers started looking for the next reincarnation. The second Jamgon Kongtrul, Jamgön Palden Khyentse Özer

(1902-1952), is the son of the 15th Karmapa.¹ The third Jamgon Kongtrul, Karma Lodrö Chökyi Senge (1954-1992), was born in Lhasa in 1954. At the age of one, he was recognized by the 16th Karmapa as the reincarnation of Jamgon Kongtrul. At the age of six, he had his enthronement ceremony at the old Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim. At the age of thirteen, he along with Shamarpa and Tai Situpa learned the ten commandments of the śrāmaṇera from Karmapa. At the age of twenty, he and Tai Situpa and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche were taught upasampada by Karmapa. He often joined Karmapa on preaching tours around the world. Following the death of Karmapa, he continued to preach in the USA, Europe, and South Asia. He founded the Rigpe Dorje Foundation in many countries and established Pāramitā Charitable Trust in India. In June 1987, he opened the Karma Shri Nalanda Institute. In 1984, he returned to Palpung Monastery and Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet to hold abhisenca and Buddhist initiation rituals. In 1988, he founded the Kagyu Mahayana Buddhist Institute at Kalimpong to train Buddhist monks. In 1991, he returned to Tibet once again and visited the Derge Printing House. He also held abhisenca and Buddhist initiation rituals at Palpung Monastery and Dhankar Monastery in Nangqên. He died of a car accident at the age of 39 on April 26, 1992.² The fourth Jamgon Kongtrul was recognized in 1996, and now lives in Pullahari Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal.

4. Goshir Gyaltsab

Gyaltsab is believed by his followers to embody the activity of Vajrapani. He is the regent looking after Tsurphu monastery and the interests of the Karmapas in between two Karmapas. The first Gyaltsab Rinpoche Paljor Dondrub (1427-1489) received the title Goshir (literally: "state teacher") from the Emperor of China. Gyaltsab Rinpoche is known as Tsurphu Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche. In 1954, the 16th Karmapa recognized reincarnation of the incumbent 12th Gyaltsab Rinpoche (1954-). At the age of four, the incumbent 12th Gyaltsab Rinpoche had his official Buddhist initiation and enthronement by the 16th Karmapa. He became a disciple of the 16th Karmapa. Since the death of the 16th Karmapa, he has been the regent looking after Rumtek Monastery.

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¹ "The 2nd Jamgon Kongtrul, Khyentse Ozer," <http://www.jamgonkongtrul.org/namthar2.htm>.

² Compiled and translated by Nianchu, Commemorative Album of the Third Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Song of the Undead (Taipei: Baoman Printing House, 1993), p.1.

(3) Recognition of the 17th Karmapa

Although the Karma Kagyu school is highly experienced in the search and recognition of reincarnations, the search for the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa was challenging because it concerned the vast number of followers and various social connections of the deceased 16th Karmapa, especially since he was a well-respected figure among exile Tibetans who had fled Tibet in 1959 as well as Tibetan followers still in China. Therefore, the four senior lamas including Tai Situpa, Jamgon Kongtrul, Goshir Gyaltzab, and Shamarpa formed a search party to look for the new reincarnation of Karmapa. It was not until 1992 that a decisive result finally materialized, following a long time of under-the-table struggles. Growing impatient with the long wait, and tired of gossips and rumors regarding the search, the Kham people sent a letter through the Derge Association to all Tibetan people in March 1992 accusing the senior lamas other than Tai Situpa of causing delays in the recognition of new Karmapa reincarnation.³ Facing strong pressure from countrymen, the senior lamas fastened their pace. On June 12, 1992, Tai Situpa and Jamgon Kongtrul returned from Dharamsala and made a public announcement in front of the Main Hall of Rumtek Monastery that the reincarnation of Karmapa finally appeared in Tibet after a 12-year hiatus.⁴ The announcement is the official beginning of internal strife within the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism.

1. Ogyen Trinley Dorje (1985-)

Ogyen Trinley Dorje was born in 1985 in Lhatok Township, Qamdo County, Tibet Autonomous Region, to primarily nomadic parents. According to the 12th Tai Situpa, the previous Karmapa left him a locket in early 1981, sometime before the death of the Karmapa. One day in 1990, Tai Situpa opened the locket which he wore as an amulet and found in it a prophetic letter. He followed the instructions left to him by the previous Karmapa and in May 1992, identified Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the reincarnation of 16th Karmapa.⁵ The 17th Karmapa identified by the 12th Tai Situpa and the 12th Jamgon Kongtrul was also recognized by China and the Dalai Lama. On June 17, 1992, Ogyen Trinley Dorje arrived at the Tsurphu Monastery, where he was officially installed on September 27 as the 17th Karmapa. He is also the first reincarnation recognized by China since 1959.

³ Michel Nesterenko, translated by Lin Shuzhen and Yang Kunsheng, *Archives of Karmapa* (Taipei, Jin Feng Publishing, 1993), p.30.

⁴ *Song of the Undead*, p.5.

⁵ Translated by Lee Yizhen, *The Seventeenth Karmapa*, (Taipei: Chinese Buddhist Vajrayana Karma Kagyu Committee, 1993), p.14.

2. Trinley Thaye Dorje (1983-)

Trinley Thaye Dorje is the son of the 3rd Mipham Rinpoche of the Nyingmapa school. He was born in Lhasa. In 1988 Shamar Rinpoche started to investigate whether Thaye Dorje was the reincarnation of the Karmapa by asking Tsechu Rinpoche who was visiting Lhasa to gather information. Then he sent another lama (Lobon Rinpoche, regent of Karma Kagyu Monastery in Taiwan) to directly observe Thaye Dorje in Lhasa. In the end, Shamarpa confirmed in July 1988 that Thaye Dorje was indeed reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa. In 1994, the year after Ogyen Trinley Dorje was recognized as the 17th Karmapa, Thaye Dorje left Lhasa for India under the arrangement of Shamarpa and was officially enthroned by Shamarpa as the 17th Karmapa. Therefore, there are two claimants to the title of the 17th Karmapa: one is in Tibet, and the other is in India.

3. Controversies over the 17th Karmapa

The recognition of Ogyen Trinley Dorje started a round of fierce public debate amid followers of Tibetan Buddhism over legitimacy of the 17th Karmapa. Each of the two claimants has his supporters who would like to see their spiritual leader officially recognized as the true reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa.⁶ Shamarpa spoke out first, accusing the recognition of Ogyen Trinley Dorje of being political machinations of China and the Dalai Lama, and calling Ogyen Trinley Dorje a political reincarnation of China. Shamarpa also requested Tai Situpa to disclose the supposed prophetic letter left by the 16th Karmapa for the world to examine its authenticity.⁷ On the other hand, Tai Situpa also dashed back both verbally and in writing that (1) This Shamarpa is a fake. (2) This Shamarpa was recognized by the 16th Karmapa for one reason only: he is the nephew of the 16th Karmapa. (3) This Shamarpa killed Jamgon Kongtrul by planting a bomb in the latter's car. (4) This Shamarpa is the "demon" in the prophecy of the fifth Karmapa. (5) The tenth Shamarpa, Chödrub Gyamtso, is also a demon, which is why the Dalai Lama chose to bury him alive.⁸

Much of the debate is centered on sovereignty of Rumtek Monastery, the

⁶ Or as followers of Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism put it, the right of succession to the throne of Black Crown.

⁷ H.H. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, *The Truth About the Karmapa Controversy*, 04.07.2000, <http://www.karmapa-issue.org/history/controversy.htm>.

⁸ "History of Internal Conflicts among Lamas of Vajrayana," the written response from Khenpo's advisors to Su Wang and Shamar Rinpoche, <http://www.a202.idv.tw/Discuz/viewthread.php?tid=11959>.

seat of the 16th Karmapa in Sikkim. In 1993, Tai Situpa led a large group of monks and followers to attack the monastery. Many monks of the monastery were beaten, forced to flee, and some were arrested by local police. This is the most violent incident in the struggle for ownership of Rumtek Monastery, and ended with victory for the Ogyen Trinley Dorje camp. However, Indian court ruled in 2004 that Rumtek Monastery belonged to the Karmapa Foundation under Trinley Thaye Dorje.⁹ The Ogyen Trinley Dorje camp filed an appeal, which is still being reviewed by court. The struggle between the two camps was a touchy issue for India. Local watchers point out blankly:

“India government prevented Ogyen Trinley Dorje from going to Rumtek Monastery because they did not want to see commotions amid the local Tibetans. In Delhi, supporters of the two claimants to the title of the 17th Karmapa had already clashed, and the Indian government did not want the unfortunate incident to repeat itself in Sikkim, a place where a large number of Tibetan Buddhism followers live. Besides, China refuses to recognize India’s sovereignty over this place, and the Indian government does not want to give China an excuse to claim that the Tibetan people were still not happy despite having their own spiritual leader in India. That would destroy the entire legitimacy of the Tibet movement. So it was all the Indian government could do to prevent further conflicts. The Indian government was right in saying that the question of Rumtek ownership should be decided by the highest religious authority concerned. If the Dalai Lama could not solve the problem, what could the Indian government do about it?¹⁰”

In 1999, Ogyen Trinley Dorje secretly arrived at Dharamsala without permission from China, and managed to find a shelter in India with the help of the Dalai Lama, much to the embarrassment of Beijing. At this point, both claimants to the title of the 17th Karmapa had left Tibet and settled in India, and as a result tension between the two camps intensified. As the nephew of the 16th Karmapa, Shamarpa had direct control over the Karmapa Charitable Trust founded by his uncle.¹¹ He considered himself eligible enough to identify the next reincarnation of Karmapa, and did not hesitate to argue with the Dalai Lama. However, he failed to sway the Dalai Lama’s support for Ogyen Trinley Dorje. In the end, he gave in and asked the Dalai Lama to recognize Ogyen

⁹ “The Indian court decision on Rumtek,”

http://www.karmapa-issue.org/politics/court_case/page06.htm.

¹⁰ <http://www.karmapacontroversy.org/Sec0Doc22.htm>.

¹¹ Collection of Works of Karmapa, pp.67-70. The Karmapa Charitable Trust was founded in 1962 in accordance with the law of India to manage the Karmapa’s possessions. Management of the Karmapa Charitable Trust is responsible for looking after the Karmapa’s interests between two Karmapas or before the incumbent Karmapa reaches the age of twenty-one.

Trinley Dorje as Karmapa of Tsurphu Monastery and Trinley Thaye Dorje as Karmapa of Rumtek Monastery.¹² Ogyen Trinley Dorje was at that time under surveillance of the Indian government and therefore did not have much freedom of movement. Trinley Thaye Dorje, on the other hand, was more able to travel freely, and he often left India to preach in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. In March 2009, Shamarpa personally wrote to Wisdom Publications, a US-based company that publishes books on Tibetan Buddhism, to voice strong protest against the company's publications regarding the controversy over the 17th Karmapa.¹³ Apparently, the controversy over the 17th Karmapa and the power struggle between the two claimants are not finished yet.

2. Followers of Karma Kagyu School in Taiwan

Although some followers of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan were aware of the 16th Karmapa who lived in exile and actively preached in other countries, there was no organized community of Tibetan Buddhist followers in Taiwan because only a small number of Tibetan monks were preaching outside Tibet, and not very many Taiwanese people were studying Buddhism outside Taiwan. However, as the local economy became increasingly prosperous, more and more Taiwanese people went to study Buddhism outside Taiwan. In addition, following the death of the 16th Karmapa, an exceptionally large number of Karma Kagyu monks left Tibet to start their own monasteries. The 16th Karmapa wrote in 1967 about a five-grade hierarchy of senior lamas in Karma Kagyu school:¹⁴

Most of these senior lamas had gradually built up their supporter base under the leadership and guidance of the 16th Karmapa. Following the death of 16th Karmapa, all the first-grade Karma Kagyu senior lamas had preached in Taiwan, and even four-grade senior lamas like Thrangu Rinpoche had a large

¹² Letter to H.H. the Dalai Lama by Shamar Rinpoche, 20.06.2000, http://www.karmapa-issue.org/arguments/letter_dalai_lama.htm.

¹³ http://www.karmapa-issue.org/news/letter_hh_shamarpa.htm.

¹⁴ The five grades include the first grade: 1. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, 2. Khyenzig Drugchen Rinpoche, 3. Tsungme Jamgon Situ Rinpoche, 4. Tsungme Chogtrul Taglung Rinpoche. The second grade: 1. Chogtrul Jamgon Rinpoche, 2. Chogtrul Gyaltsab Rinpoche, 3. Chogtrul Pawo Rinpoche. The third grade: 1. Chortle Joe Won Ponlop Rinpoche, 2. Chortle Palpung Khyentse Rinpoche, 3. Chogtrul Drungsar Khyentse Rinpoche, 4. Chogtrul Surmang Rinpoche, 5. Chogtrul Palpung Ongen Rinpoche, 6. Chogtrul Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche, 7. Chogtrul Traleg Rinpoche, 8. Chogtrul Surmang Trungpa Rinpoche, 9. Chogtrul Decho Yangdzin Rinpoche, 10. Chogtrul Dilyag Dabsang Rinpoche, 11. Garchen Tripa Dorje Lopon. The fourth grade: 1. Khentrul Thrangu Rinpoche, 2. Bagyo Trulku Rinpoche, 3. Drupon Tulku Rinpoche, 4. Dilyag Urgen Rinpoche, 5. Dilyag Sabchu Rinpoche, 6. Tulku Ongen Mingyur Rinpoche, 7. Chogling Tulku Rinpoche, 8. Gyalse Tulku Rinpoche. The fifth grade: 1. Salche Tulku, 2. Tenga Tulku, 3. Palme Tulku, 4. Bardo Tulku, 5. Drung Tulku, 6. Tragar Tulku, 7. Yoldrag Tulku, <http://www.karmapa-issue.org/politics/ranking.htm>.

group of followers and Buddhist institutions in Taiwan.

(1) Development history of Karma Kagyu school in Taiwan

Karma Kagyu school's development in Taiwan can be traced to Han Chinese lay Buddhists Shen Shuwen, Chang Chengji, and Chen Jianmin, who had studied Buddhism under Kunga Rinpoche of Karma Kagyu in China. In 1942, Shen Shuwen went to the seat of Kunga Rinpoche of Mount Kunga of Kham. After spending some time in the monastery practicing under Kunga Rinpoche, Shen left Hong Kong for Taiwan in 1958 and established Kunga Abode in Zhonghe. In 1960, Shen founded another Kunga Abode in Tainan, which was rebuilt as Kunga Monastery in 1994. It is a rather unique and large Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Tainan City. In 1980, the 16th Karmapa performed tonsure on Shen and Shen actively arranged for Karma Kagyu Tibetan monks to visit Taiwan, including Thrangu Rinpoche in 1980, Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche who unveiled the Buddha statue in the new hall of Kunga Abode in 1981, and Bagyo Rinpoche who unveiled the new hall of Kunga Monastery in 1982.¹⁵

Chang Chengji began his eight-year study of Buddhism under Kunga Rinpoche at the age of seventeen at Snow Mountain Monastery in Kunga of Xikang. In 1945, he became a teacher at New School University in New York and also at University of Pennsylvania. In 1963, he was hired by Chinese Culture University to teach Buddhist philosophy and comparative religious studies at the Department of Philosophy. Later he became Director of Graduate Institute of Religious Studies at Chinese Culture University. In 1966, he left Taiwan for the US.¹⁶ In 1976, he became Director of Hsinchu Buddhist Canon Translation Institute under the Buddhist Association of the United States. While in Taiwan, he preached mahāmudrā. Chen Jianmin had his abhiseka in Sichuan in 1930. He was a disciple of the fifth Kunga Rinpoche. In 1939, he went to study Buddhism in Kham. In 1947, he began a 25-year stay in India, during which he devoted himself to the study of Buddhism. In mid-1980s, he repeatedly visited Taiwan to preach Buddhism. He passed away in 1987 in the United States, and his wife Chen Xiangyou and his disciple Xu Qinting continued to preach Buddhism in Taiwan.

In 1982, the third Gar Rinpoche and the 14th Lakang Rinpoche of Drukpa Kagyu school started preaching in Taiwan. In late 1985, Zhuchen Rinpoche,

¹⁵ Huang Yingjie, *Annals of Vajrayana in Republic of China Era* (Taipei: Buddha All Cultural Enterprise, 1995), p.153.

¹⁶ Zhong Yuancun et al., *History of Buddhism's Development in China* (Taipei: Heavenly Lotus Publishing, 1984), p.1089.

leader of Drukpa Kagyu, came to Taiwan to preach in person. He was followed by Khyentse Yeshe Rinpoche, Zigar Rinpoche, and Wangdu Rinpoche who came to Taiwan to preach and set up headquarters. Zhuchen Rinpoche's Drukpa Kagyu Buddhist Center has branches in Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung. Other Drukpa Kagyu headquarters include the Chinese Buddhist Drukpa Kagyu Association, and Tainan Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana Association. The Drukpa Kagyu Gar Rinpoche Buddhist Center, the seat of Gar Rinpoche, also has branches in Taipei and Tainan. The Drikung Kagyu lamas were late in coming to Taiwan. In 1987, Lamchyen Gyalpo of Drikung Kagyu came to Taiwan to recognize a lama reincarnation. In 1988, Ayang Rinpoche came to Taiwan to preach. In 1989, Drikung Kagyu leader Drigung Rinpoche personally came to Taiwan to preach, and subsequently sent Lamchyen Gyalpo Rinpoche and Nubpa Rinpoche to establish the Drikung Kagyu Abode, where Tenzin Lama instructs the traditional Drikung Kagyu practice. The abode focuses more on the teaching of principles and practice, and less on abhiseka and rituals.¹⁷ Kalu Rinpoche of Shangpa Kagyu came to Taiwan to hold rituals in 1982, and later established the Taipei Kagyu Drodun Kunchab, also known as Dashang Monastery. He also founded the Taichung Kagyu Ranjung Kunkyab.

The four senior lamas who look after the interests of Karmapa of Karma Kagyu school: Shamarpa, Tai Situpa, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, and Goshir Gyaltzab Rinpoche had all preached in Taiwan on invitation. For example, Shamarpa visited Taiwan for the first time in 1984 and preached for two weeks. In 1985, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche came to Taiwan and founded the Taiwan Karma Kagyu Association. Thrangu Rinpoche, Gata Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche, Badu Rinpoche, Kalu Rinpoche, Beru Khyentse Rinpoche, Dabzang Rinpoche, Salje Rinpoche, and Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche all came to preach in Taiwan. In 1984, Shamarpa sent Sangsang Rinpoche to be stationed in Taiwan, and other lamas such as Kongda, Chenno, Krita, and Zopa all had extended stay in Taiwan. After 1981, Tibetan Buddhism's popularity grew in Taiwan, yet there were many scandals in Taiwan involving civilians financially supporting lamas and also lamas doing suspicious practice. In 1993, Taiwan approved amendments to the Civil Organizations Act, allowing the country's people more freedom in forming organizations. As a result, followers of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan started to establish registered organizations with the help of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission in Taiwan since

¹⁷ Chang Fucheng, "A Brief Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism's Development in Taiwan," *Fakuan* (2001), No.141.

1995, instead of just gathering at abhiseka rituals. Slowly they started to appear as social organizations or religious organizations. Major Kagyu societies in Taiwan are as follows:

Taipei City: Kagyu Buddhist Society, Karma Kagyu Promotion Society, ROC Karma Dhargye Choeling Dharma Center, Jiaozheng Fachuang Buddhist Society, China Drikung Kagyu Association, ROC Drikung Kagyu Association, Drikung Kagyu Dzogchen Association, Drukpa Kagyu Society, Mahamudra Five Paths Dharma Studies, Fitness Society, Taiwan Tibetan Zurmang Buddhist Institute, the ROC Tibet Association, Zupu Foundation, Bodhisattva Academy, Karma Kagyu Dharmachakra Center, Vajra Vidya Buddhist Center, Drukpa Kagyu Buddhist Center, Drukpa Kagyu Center, Taiwan Drigung Kagyu Center, Tieqiu Jilin Mahayana Center, Drikung Kagyu Abode. Taipei County: Drikung Kagyu Bhumang Jampaling Society, Karmapa Dharmachakra Center, Kagyu Drodun Kunchab, Zuri Maha Mudra Buddhist Center, Padmasambhava Dharmachakra Center, Karma Triyana Dharmachakra Center, Kagyu Zurmang Triyana Dharmachakra Center, Sangdeng Quelin Meditation Center, Kunga Abode, Zhenghui Abode, Mingda Abode. Yilan County: Karma Kagyu Yilan Dharmachakra Center. Hsinchu County: Karma Quelin Buddhist Center. Taichung City: Taichung Drukpa Kagyu Buddhist Center, Taichung Kagyu Ranjung Kunkyab, Barong Kagyu Buddhist Society, Vajrayana Karma Kagyu Society. Taichung County: Karma Anhe Liyi Dharmachakra Center. Nantou County: Karma Kagyu Damkar Buddhist Society. Chiayi City: Chiayi Karma Kagyu Dharmachakra Center. Tainan City: Drukpa Kagyu Society, Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist Society, Karma Kagyu Monastery, Chongqing Monastery, Kunga Monastery, Tainan Drukpa Kagyu Buddhist Center, Taichung Thrangu Tara Aabbey Center. Tainan County: Karma Kagyu Promotion Society. Kaohsiung City: Kaohsiung Buddhist Karma Kagyu Dharmachakra Center, Kaohsiung Karma Xiyue Village Buddhist Center. Hualien County: Hualien Karma Kagyu Dharmachakra Center.

There are many Kagyu societies in Taiwan, and most of them are well-organized. Until 1988, Kagyu had the greatest number of societies in Taiwan than other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. This has much to do with the fact that Kunga Abode, which introduced a number of Tibetan lamas to Taiwan, is of the Kagyu school. The Kagyu school has many but well-organized societies, and is not so political as the Gelug or Sakya school. Therefore, Kagyu was one of the earliest schools of Tibetan Buddhism to grow and prosper in Taiwan.¹⁸ After 1988, it was surpassed by Nyingma school, and

¹⁸ Yao Lixiang, *Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan* (Taipei: Dongta Publications, 2007), p.119.

Gelug school also saw its popularity growing in Taiwan. Kagyu school, on the other hand, did not see much increase in popularity. According to the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission's latest statistics in 2009, Taiwan presently has 233 Tibetan Buddhist societies, including 102 Nyingma societies, 75 Kagyu societies, 26 Sakya societies, 14 Gelug societies, and 2 Jonang societies. The remaining societies promote more than just one school of Tibetan Buddhism. Nearly half of the societies in Taiwan are located in Taipei City and Taipei County, and nearly eighty percent are located in big cities in the north, central, and south. Only a few are located in other places on the island.¹⁹ Taiwan has 500,000 to 600,000 followers of Tibetan Buddhism, of which 1/4 are Kagyu followers. Right now the more popular sects of Kagyu school include Karma Kagyu, Drikung Kagyu, Talung Kagyu, and Drukpa Kagyu.

(2) Split of Karma Kagyu followers

Following the death of the 16th Karmapa in 1981, the four senior lamas had divided views over the next reincarnation of Karmapa. In the end, the four lamas divided into two camps: Tai Situpa, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche formed their own camp, and Shamarpa went his own way. The former had the support of China and the Dalai Lama, and the latter identified the next Karmapa reincarnation through the traditional process. With the recognition of Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the 17th Karmapa in June 1992, there were two claimants to the title of the 17th Karmapa. Supporters of the two claimants started to set up their own headquarters in Taiwan. The two camps rarely made contacts.

1. Followers of Ogyen Trinley Dorje

Followers of Ogyen Trinley Dorje included societies founded by Kagyu lineages such as Tai Situpa, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche, and Thrangu Rinpoche. These societies included: Yilan Xingchi Buddhist Center, Taipei Kagyu Buddhist Society, Taipei Yongey Bodhi Institute, Taiwan Kagyu Buddhist Academy, Jiajie Monastery Buddhist Center, Kalu Rinpoche Center, Kagyu Drodun Kunchab, Jin Fa Lin, Dashang Monastery, Panchiao Vajra Vidya Buddhist Center, Hwa Yue Foundation, Taiwan Karma Lekshey Ling Institute of Higher Buddhist Studies, Zhonghe Namom Buddha Thrangu Center, Taoyuan Palpung Sherab Ling Buddhist Studies Center, Taoyuan Dagpo Kagyu Buddhist Studies Center, and Tibetan Nieduo Vajrayana

¹⁹ "Hundreds of Thousands Tibetan Buddhism Followers in Taiwan Favor Abhiseka," 2009/09/04, <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/090904/4/1qffp.html>.

Buddhist Studies Center in northern Taiwan, the Kagyu Buddhist Center, Taichung Thrangu Tara Aabbey Center, the ROC Guangming Ziran Chengjiu Lekong Zen Center, Taichung Tudian Quling Buddhist Center, Taichung Yongey Bodhi Institute, Taichung Kagyu Triyana Nandanavana, Milarepa Buddhist Center (Meditation Center), Prajñā Buddhist Center, Chunghwa Thrangu Center in central Taiwan, Karma Kagyu Liaoyi Jiaoguang Fazhou Buddhist Studies Center, Karma Jixiang Suman Renyun Buddhist Studies Center, Kunga Hevajra Buddhist Studies Center (Chiayi branch), Tainan City Vajra Vidya Buddhist Committee, Tainan Karma Kagyu Dharmachakra Center (Kunga Monastery), Kunga Hevajra Buddhist Studies Center (Tainan branch), Tainan Chongqing Monastery, Benchen Phuntshok Gatshalling Tainan, Kaohsiung Palpung Sherabling Buddhist Studies Center, Kaohsiung Kagyu Triyana Nandanavana, Kaohsiung Dilyak Monastery Buddhist Studies Center, Kaohsiung Bodhi Buddhist Studies Center, Kaohsiung Gangkar Dalefalin, Kaohsiung Vajra Vidya Buddhist Committee, Falu Magazine, and Hualien Palpung Sherabling in southern Taiwan.²⁰

The devout Kagyu followers in Taiwan have been quite active through their societies. For example, Chen Li-an of Hwayue Foundation has long been promoting Tibetan Buddhism. He is a follower of Ogyen Trinley Dorje. His youngest son, Chen Tingyu, is a long-time disciple of Ogyen Trinley Dorje. Chen Li-an once produced a video called “Karmapa’s Video” to promote Ogyen Trinley Dorje’s status as the true Karmapa reincarnation. Tai Situpa and his supporters reportedly received generous support from Taiwanese followers when they fought for ownership of Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim in 1993. Besides giving monetary support, many Taiwanese people personally showed up in the fight for Rumtek Monastery. Moreover, Ding Nai-chu, an avid supporter of Tai Situpa, has spared no efforts in her support for Ogyen Trinley Dorje despite the fact that she came to be friendly with the Nyingma school. Other prominent supporters of Ogyen Trinley Dorje include Kalu Rinpoche’s Drodun Center, and Thrangu Rinpoche’s supporters in Taiwan.

2. Trinley Thaye Dorje’s supporters

Followers of Thaye Dorje in Taiwan are mostly followers of Shamarpa. Followers of Shamarpa in Taiwan would naturally support the 17th Karmapa recognized by Shamarpa. According to Thaye Dorje’s official website, Thaye Dorje had about 881 Buddhist centers in 61 countries and regions around the

²⁰ “Kagyu Monasteries: Taiwan,” official website of the 17th Karmapa in Mandarin language, <http://www.kagyuoffice.org.tw/kagyu/monastery/Taiwan.htm>.

world,²¹ including 19 in Taiwan: Hualien Karma Kagyu Dharmacakra Center, Kaohsiung Buddhist Karma Kagyu Dharmacakra Center, Kaohsiung Naropa Buddhist Center, Kaohsiung Bodhi Path Karma Kagyu Buddhist Center, Karma Kagyu Kagyu Kadalın Buddhist Studies Center, Taichung Karma Kagyu Association, Taichung Tilopa Buddhist Center, Marpa Buddhist Center, Tainan Karma Kagyu Treatment for Addiction Association, Tainan Karma Kagyu Halfway Home, Marpa Buddhist Studies Center, Karma Kagyu Monastery, Jamyang Charitable Foundation, Karma Dhargye Dharmacakra Center, Taipei Karma Kagyu Dharmacakra Center, Taipei Zupu Buddhist Center, Karma Phuntsok Dharmacakra Center, Panchiao Karma Kagyu Dharmacakra Center.²²

More than half of these 19 Buddhist centers have close ties with Karma Kagyu Monastery in Tainan County. The incumbent abbot of Karma Kagyu Monastery is Lobon Yixi Wangchuk Rinpoche, a native of Yongkang, Tainan County who is also known as Wei Chengxiang, a psychic of Lord Guang Ze. He started making contact with Shamarpa in 1985, and founded the Jamyang Charitable Foundation in 1987. In 1988, he had tonsure at the hands of Shamarpa and officially became a lama. He founded the Tainan Karma Kagyu Treatment for Addiction Association in 1989, and was recognized in 1991 as the reincarnation of Dorje Lopbon Rinpoche of Zugu Monastery and had his enthronement in Rumtek Monastery of Sikkim.²³ In 1993, he founded the China Karma Kagyu Promotion Association, and established the Karma Shri Nalanda Institute in his monastery, where he has held many events. Therefore, one can understand Lopbon Rinpoche's staunch loyalty to his lineage and to Thaye Dorje. Another Han Chinese who had tonsure at the hands of the 16th Karmapa in the United States, Sonam Gyatsho Bhikkhu (born Wu Wentou in Taiwan), is the founder of Falu Magazine, which publishes latest information on Kagyu school.²⁴

3. The Era of Two Claimants to the Title of 17th Karmapa

Generally speaking, a Buddhist monk is defined as a person who takes refuge in the "Three Jewels": Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Tibetan Buddhism, with its emphasis on lineage and inheritance, requires lamas to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and Guru. Tibetan Buddhist lamas are expected

²¹ Karma Kagyu Lineage, <http://www.kagyu.net/>.

²² Karma Kagyu Lineage, Asia: Taiwan, <http://www.kagyu.net/world.asp?QuLand=250>.

²³ Huang Huili, "The First Research of Tibetan Traditional Buddhism's Development--Base on the Tibetan Tradition Buddhism's Group in Tainan Area" (a master's degree thesis presented to Graduate Institute of Taiwan Culture, National University of Tainan, 2000), p.58.

²⁴ Rushi, "Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan," *Collected Works of Dharma Master Rushi* (Nantou: Nalin Publications, 2001), p.216.

to treat the Guru with respect and absolute loyalty and obedience. The story of Kagyu guru Milarepa (1040-1123) loyally serving his guru Marpa (1012-1097) is often told as an ideal example of obedience. The first step of converting to Tibetan Buddhism is the empowerment ritual. A tantric practice is not considered effective or as effective until a qualified master has transmitted the corresponding power of the practice directly to the student. In addition, in the history of Kagyu school, the reincarnation system and the theocratic system are a form of organized social force that binds together regions, clans, powers, and groups. As such, the empowered students or followers are brought in as part of this social force and are expected to remain absolute loyal to their qualified masters. Once empowered, students or followers would find it difficult to change faith, and they are obliged to participate in the collective action. The emergence of two claimants to the title of the 17th Karmapa caused a split in the followers of Kagyu.

(1) Ogyen Trinley Dorje

In late December 1999, Ogyen Trinley Dorje left Tsurphu Monastery of China. He arrived at Dharamsala, India in the morning of January 5, 2000 and met with the Dalai Lama. He then settled in Dharamsala. His exodus did not cause much reaction. India quietly provided him with political refugee status and shelter. The US government dispatched Tibetan affairs investigators on January 9 on a fact-finding mission. The delegation did not make any provocative statements against China following the trip to India. China, on the other hand, hinted Ogyen's possible return to Tibet in the future by stating that he had left a letter saying that he "went abroad to bring back the Black Crown and Dharma instruments of the previous Karmapa reincarnation." Apparently his exodus was viewed with caution and expectation. While staying in India, Ogyen spent most of his time meeting followers and studying Buddhism, rarely making public appearances until recently, when he started to preach and make speeches in public. His actions are still being closely followed by media around the world.

Ogyen was asked by the media for his comments on the incident in Lhasa in March 2008, the breakoff in negotiations between the Dalai Lama's representatives and China, and issues related to Tibet. He presented himself as a trustworthy person by making neutral, unbiased statements, and by showing proper respect for the Dalai Lama. In May of the same year, after one and half year of preparation by Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, founder of Karmapa Foundation in Seattle, and his followers, Ogyen finally had the permission of

India to embark on a 18-day visit to New York and other places.²⁵ In 2009, Ogyen attracted much attention for his “Green Tibet” speech on environmental protection in Dharamsala.

(2) Trinley Thaye Dorje

Controversy over the 17th Karmapa spread to Taiwan in 1999, when Karma Kagyu Monastery invited Thaye Dorje to preside over a Buddhist ritual marking the millennium. At that time, entry and exit control was under the jurisdiction of Bureau of Consular Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan and the National Immigration Agency under the Ministry of the Interior of Taiwan. However, the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission of Taiwan would also be notified of entry and exit of any Mongolian or Tibetan citizen. Tibetan Buddhist lamas seeking to enter Taiwan would need to have a registered Buddhist society in Taiwan making application on their behalf. Once the application is approved by the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, the Bureau of Consular Affairs would be notified, and would in turn notify the Taiwanese representative office concerned to issue visa to the applicant. Supporters of Ogyen Trinley Dorje tried various ways to stop Thaye Dorje from getting visa. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission were under huge pressure from both camps. For example, the day before Thaye Dorje’s scheduled arrival at Taiwan, legislator Zheng Yongjin (now Hsinchu County Magistrate) insisted on staying at the office of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission Commissioner until permission was given to allow Thaye Dorje to enter Taiwan the next day.²⁶ The controversy over the 17th Karmapa is believed to have been caused by misunderstandings and disagreements among the four senior lamas and also by complex political and economic factors. The controversy also seriously hindered Karma Kagyu school’s spread in Taiwan.²⁷

Thaye Dorje has visited countries in Europe many times, inheriting the legacy of the 16th Karmapa and gradually building his supporter base. He visited Taiwan in 1999 and 2005 to preach. In 2007, he went on a preaching tour to Austria, Spain, Switzerland, Finland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, and France. In early February 2009, he went to preach in Hong Kong. Famous entertainers in Hong Kong, such as the late Anita Mui, and Tan Sri

²⁵ COLLINS, GLENN., “Young Spiritual Leader Arrives in New York, Ready to Teach and Be Taught,” *The New York Time*, May 16, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/16/nyregion/16karmapa.html>.

²⁶ The author of paper, while serving as Director of Tibetan Affairs Department of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, personally witnessed the event.

²⁷ Yao Lixiang, *Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan* (Taipei: Dongta Publications, 2007), pp.80-81.

Michelle Yeoh, Takeshi Kaneshiro, Sandy Lam, Mr. and Mrs. Zheng Jiacheng, Vivian Hsu, Christie Hu, and Yun He Wanwei, are all followers of Thaye Dorje. The reincarnation of Martsang Kagyu, one of the four major and eight minor sects of Kagyu school, is also a supporter of Thaye Dorje.

(3) The choice of Taiwanese followers

Ogyen Trinley Dorje has far more followers in Taiwan and also far more Buddhist societies than Trinley Thaye Dorje. Apparently the Taiwanese followers have made their choice between the two claimants to the title of 17th Karmapa. It is important for the Taiwanese followers to further understand the past, current situation, and future prospects of the Kagyu school. The Karma Kagyu school was once a heavyweight player on the political stage of Tibet history. The second Karmapa was a prominent figure in the court of Mongol Empire, and was made a Goshir and bestowed the Black Crown by Möngke Khan. When Kublai Khan and Ariq Böke fought a civil war, the second Karmapa supported the latter. After Kublai won the war and formed an empire, the second Karmapa was exiled to Jiangnan. In the reign of Yongle Emperor of Ming Dynasty, the fifth Karmapa's power grew in Tibet, and Karma Kagyu soon replaced Pamuk Kagyu as the ruling sect of Tibet, causing the Gelug to be sidelined. In mid-17th century, the fifth Dalai Lama of Gelug school joined forces with the Mongols to conquer the whole Tibet, Karma Kagyu rebelled against the ruling Gelug, but were defeated and forced to exile to Bhutan, never to recover from their loss.

The controversy over the two claimants to the title of 17th Karmapa resulted in a number of disputes including the violent incident in Sikkim and the lawsuit over sovereignty. The two claimants made a show of tranquility on the surface, but their under-the-table struggle has planted terrible woes for Karma Kagyu, even to the point of severely weakening the influence of Karma Kagyu.²⁸ Since Ogyen Trinley Dorje is recognized by both the Dalai Lama and China, and has good relationship with the Dalai Lama after exiled to India, he gradually became well-known in the world with the help of the Dalai Lama, and there are rumors that he would be successor to the incumbent Dalai Lama.²⁹ Could Ogyen be the next spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism after the 14th Dalai Lama passes away? Judging from the history of the 16th Karmapa, it is likely that once the Dalai Lama of Gelug school passes away, the 17th Karmapa of Karma Kagyu school would become the next spiritual leader of exile Tibetans,

²⁸ Lin Zhaozhen, *A Quiet Exile—the Story of a Young Karmapa* (Taipei: Booklife, 2002), p.148.

²⁹ DAVID VAN BIEMA, "Ogyen Trinley Dorje: The Next Dalai Lama?" *The New York Time*, May 29, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1810314,00.html>.

but he can never replace the Dalai Lama as the new political leader of exile Tibetans. Neither of the two claimants to the title of the 17th Karmapa can be expected to repeat the history of the 16th Karmapa, because of the differences in background and experience. It is even uncertain whether they would become the sole dominant leader of Kagyu like the previous Karmapa. It is very unlikely for the massive Gelug followers to switch their faith from one guru to another. It is even more unlikely that a Gelug leader would appoint someone from Karma Kagyu as his successor. Besides, there seems to be no end to the struggle between the two claimants to the title of the 17th Karmapa, even powerful countries like China, India, and the US cannot alter the faith of their respective followers. Besides, Gelug has another spiritual leader in the form of Panchen Lama who, with strong support from China, looks set to become the next spiritual leader of Gelug. And Gelug followers in exile must be looking hard for the next reincarnation of Dalai Lama to be the next leader of the Tibetan Government in Exile, which is registered in India under the name of the Dalai Lama Foundation. Meanwhile, Gelug lamas in exile would need a spiritual leader, and China would begin the process to recognize the 15th reincarnation of Dalai Lama. Therefore, the chances of the 17th Karmapa replacing the 14th Dalai Lama as the political and spiritual leader of Tibet are slim.

To make the best informed choice, followers of Tibetan Buddhism need to understand the cause of their faith, as well as Tibetan Buddhism's theocratic nature, the power struggle between the various schools, the controversy among followers, and the reality of the time. It would be best for followers to understand how Tibetan Buddhism works and leave secular considerations out of religious beliefs.

Conclusion

In the course of modernization, Taiwan has been open-minded to religions around the world. Religious groups of all sorts can feel free to preach in Taiwan. Tibetan Buddhism has been able to grow and prosper in Taiwan because of the existing base of local Buddhist followers. However, as followers of Tibetan Buddhism are divided into different camps espousing different gurus, there are often clashes between these camps. Leaders of various schools of Tibetan Buddhism are intentionally or unintentionally manipulating such clashes in order to maintain or expand their influence and power. Meanwhile, political leaders of the secular world would sometimes join forces with religious groups against political enemies. Alliances between political and religious powers

would often stir up waves of social movement. Tibetan Buddhism, with its extraordinary practice, has been able to instruct followers to cultivate wisdom to enrich their social and spiritual lives, and has been able to unite followers as one powerful group. Although it is a good thing that Tibetan Buddhism is strong enough to spread from Tibet to the rest of the world and become a popular religion in Taiwan, it needs to be free from the tangles of politics and stay focused on preaching Buddhism to become as popular as the mainstream Chinese Buddhism.

Tibetan Buddhism followers in Taiwan are already drawn into the controversy over the 17th Karmapa, which is political in nature. After Thaye Dorje visited Taiwan for the second time in his capacity as the 17th Karmapa, supporters of Ogyen Trinley Dorje are eager to arrange for their spiritual leader's visit to Taiwan. Encouraged by Ogyen's recent visit to the United States, his supporters in Taiwan must be going all out in bringing their spiritual leader to Taiwan. Although Ogyen is not as politically sensitive a figure as the Dalai Lama, his position as a claimant to the title of the 17th Karmapa, and his subtle relationships with China and the Dalai Lama are certain to cause varied reactions from the people in Taiwan, even threatening to affect social harmony. Tibetan Buddhism followers from all walks of life would not hesitate to form pressure groups to defend their religious faith. It would be a major test of the Republic of China government's ability to deal with internal as well as Mainland Chinese affairs, as the government needs to stay neutral and fair like the Indian government was in the case of Rumtek Monastery ownership and think carefully about the issue of religious freedom versus law and order.