

A Brief History of Buddhism in Tibet

Adapted from a public talk by Lama Jampa Thaye

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Introduction

When taking someone as a personal spiritual master, we must have confidence in them and so we must know about his or her school of dharma before engaging in it, which principally means studying the history of dharma transmissions throughout the particular schools.

Patrul Rinpoche said,

A spiritual teacher is our true guide to liberation and omniscience, and we must follow him with respect. This is accomplished in three phases: firstly, by examining the teacher, then by following him, and finally by emulating his realisation and his actions. 1

So, regarding the first point, the examination of the teacher, we need to develop confidence in his or her teachings and knowing the teaching's pedigree is a very good indication of their genuine nature or otherwise. We can check whether they have a genuine origin by checking their history and so retain only the pure teachings.

Furthermore, the study of history allows us the opportunity to develop tremendous respect for the lineage of teachers throughout history and their successors, our own teachers. This leads to openness and devotion, Patrul's second point. Regarding Patrul's third point, studying history can encourage the imitation of those previous teacher's qualities. By reading their 'records of liberation' the aspiration to be like them is born in us and we can integrate their past example into our present life.

One may ask why we should study the history of Tibetan Buddhism. It is because Tibetan Buddhism is connected with our own situation. The figures of the history of Tibetan

Buddhism are our immediate ‘relatives’: we follow these traditions and have a living connection with their teachings. We are the next stage of the continuing line of transmission of the teachings.

Any history of dharma is an account of how Buddha’s teachings were transmitted. So, we begin with Shakyamuni Buddha. The dharma was passed on from him in different ways. We have the basket of sutras, dealing with the transformation of aggression, the basket of abidharma, dealing with the transformation of ignorance, and the basket of vinaya for the transformation of desire. These ‘three baskets’ form the basis of the hinayana and mahayana paths. In addition to these, Lord Buddha also taught the tantras, the teachings of the vajrayana, the culmination of the three paths. The tantras, taught only to Buddha’s most advanced disciples, allow an alchemical transformation of the defilements.

Subsequently, from the first century CE onwards, commentaries were written which explained and expanded the teachings of Buddha in more detail. Nagarjuna and Asanga were the greatest of the Indian masters who wrote such commentaries. Nagarjuna is famous for teaching the madhyamaka “middle way” philosophy, the teaching of emptiness, while Asanga gave both “buddha nature” and “mind only” teachings.² From them, and other masters, we inherit the shastras, explanatory commentaries on the words of Buddha.

In the sixth to tenth centuries CE came the great siddhas of India, the eighty-four vajrayana yogins who set out the practices for the easy accomplishment of the tantras. We inherit a vast amount of literature from them.

The diffusion of all three vehicles of Buddhism in Tibet is often characterised as occurring primarily in two phases; the early diffusion of the Nyingma school and the later diffusion in the eleventh to twelfth centuries CE of teachings which became associated with schools such as the Kadampa and the Kagyu. The differences between these schools are actually minor. Each concentrates on a particular cluster of teachings, but all schools possess the complete means for enlightenment. No school is deficient, all contribute to the completeness of Buddhism, each upholding ‘key pillars’.

The Early Diffusion

Nyingma

The Nyingma school developed in Tibet in the early or first diffusion and its influence on other schools has been very significant. For instance there seem to be few advanced Kagyu practitioners who are not partly Nyingma.

Buddhism came to Tibet in the late eighth century CE. Previously there had been a small influx, but this was the first effective one. Shakyamuni lived around 500 BC, so it took thirteen hundred years to become established in Tibet. And yet it is only about two hundred miles from the Tibetan border to Lumbini, Shakyamuni's birthplace in India.

There are three principle figures associated with this first diffusion:

- The King, Trison Detsun - later regarded as an emanation of the bodhisattva Manjushri.
- The Abbot, Shantiraksita - invited by King Trison Detsun around 780 AD to establish Buddhism. The plan was to teach philosophical texts and ordain Tibetans as monks, hence they attempted to establish the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery at Samye, southwest of Lhasa. However this initial attempt to implant the teachings in Tibet failed. The Abbot encountered great resistance from three sources: adherents of the native Bön religion, political enemies of the King and the native Tibetan spirits.
- The Vajrayana Master, Padmasambhava - invited to Tibet by King Trison Detsun and Shantiraksita. Padmasambhava is known as Guru Rinpoche, "Precious Teacher". He subdued all opposition by the force of his siddhis, his spiritual powers, enabling the construction of Samye and the transmission of all the teachings, both sutras and tantras.

Padmasambhava is regarded as equal to Buddha, often referred to as the "second Buddha from Öddiyana."³ He initiated the transmission of the inner tantric teachings; maha yoga, anu yoga and atiyoga. Accompanied by Vimalamitra from West India and other Indian Siddhas, Padmasambhava established these three principle teachings of the Nyingma school. "Nyingma" means "ancient" and this name actually originated after the second or later diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet, when the adherents to the teachings of Padmasambhava's lineage began referring to themselves as "the ancients".

The continuation of the transmission of the Nyingma teachings faced serious threat from persecution under King Langdarma who turned against the spread of dharma around 840 AD. His later assassination plunged Tibet into a period of chaos and uncertainty for the dharma. Langdarma had closed many of the few monasteries so that philosophical study, primarily a monastic activity, virtually ended. However, the transmission of the vajrayana teachings continued in two forms: kama, "the oral transmission", and terma, the "revealed treasures". Very few of Padmasambhava's students had been monks, so the teaching of the three higher tantras survived by being passed on through yogic clans. In

his omniscience, Padmasambhava foresaw different obstacles to dharma practice for future practitioners and so employed means to ensure that they would have teachings to deal with this. With the help of his wife, Yeshe Tsogyal, and his disciple Bairotsana⁴ the translator, he ‘concealed’ certain teachings. These concealed treasures would take one of two principal forms: sat-ter or gong-ter. The former are ‘earth treasures’, scriptures concealed in caves or lakes.

Teachings of the latter form had no physical object, but were concealed in the mindstream of one of Padmasambhava’s disciples, who would reappear in future incarnations and discover the teachings in their minds.

The concealment would be performed in a threefold manner:

- Blessing. Padmasambhava blesses one of his twenty five major disciples, thereby planting the seed of realisation of that teaching.
- Prediction. He then predicts their reincarnation as a tertön, “treasure revealer”, and the teaching which they would reveal.
- Entrustment. He then entrusts to the dakinis the code which would help the tertön decipher the teaching.

These tertöns would appear at a time when their hidden teaching was most appropriate for the particular defilements people were suffering from, and from then on the teaching would be transmitted in the ordinary fashion. Guru Rinpoche predicted one hundred and eight major treasure revealers. Their revealed teachings helped to revitalize dharma in Tibet, particularly for the Nyingma tradition. Whilst the teachings themselves do not differ much from those of the unbroken oral lineage, they have a freshness about them, and a particular aptness for the time at which they reappear. One of the most famous revealed treasures is the so-called “Tibetan Book of the Dead”.⁵

For instance, the sixteenth century saw the great treasure finder Jätson Nyingpo. Other tertöns normally take consorts, who are of very great assistance, but unusually Jätson Nyingpo was a monk. He revealed the teaching of Könchog Chindu, “The Union of All The Jewels”, a treasure cycle sufficient to bring its practitioner to full enlightenment. Another example of a highly important tertön was Chogyur Lingpa (1829-1871) who discovered numerous treasures including the Vajrakilaya teachings, a particularly relevant and effective practice for this time.

Perhaps the greatest of all the Nyingma masters was Longchenpa (1308-1363), one of the “Three Manjushris of Tibet”. The Nyingma school began to revive itself in the fourteenth century, and part of Lonchenpa’s contribution was to establish a complete structure for the Nyingma teachings, a logical progression through nine vehicles⁶, more precise than the usual classification as three vehicles⁷, but not contradictory to it. These culminate in the three inner tantras. Longchenpa proved that maha sandhi or dzok chen was authentically Buddhist, overcoming the objections of some who disputed its authenticity because of the fact that it derives from a different lineage to the new tantric teachings.⁸ So Longchenpa is the greatest systematiser and defender of the Nyingma school. The

vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa (1730-1797), considered an incarnation of Longchenpa, continued his work and very effectively spread Longchenpa's teachings.

The Nyingmapas did not have any great monasteries until the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries⁹ so the practitioners were mainly yogins, relying on hermitages and retreat centres. Unlike other schools, the Nyingma tradition did not have an organised hierarchy. So they were closer to ordinary people than other schools, but this has sometimes drawn accusations of being overly influenced by non-Buddhist culture, although there is no actual evidence of this. Today, they possess both lay masters and ordained masters. It may also be said that the great masters of other schools accept and practise Nyingma teachings, especially terma, because they have such great power and relevance when found.

We can distinguish the approaches of dzok chen and the common or ordinary vehicles. In the ordinary vehicles, one proceeds by abandoning negative acts and thoughts and generating positive forms of perception or behaviour. So here buddhahood is seen as something external. Some vehicles see it present as a potential, but this potential is inferior to, or differs from the goal, as the seed differs from the fruit. This is the approach we find in the buddha nature teachings of the ordinary mahayana, or in some of the lower tantras.

In dzok chen it is asserted that ultimately there is no real difference between buddhas and sentient beings. This is the view of dzok chen, the "vision of primordial purity" or kadak. The fundamental nature of awareness is totally pure, it is seen to be dharmakaya, the ultimate mode of buddha, or "body of truth". In sentient beings the dharmakaya is covered now by temporary obscurations under which is the total presence of buddha, not just the seed. So this is not a path as such but the realisation of the non-reality of obscurations.

The method is to be introduced by the master to the true nature of mind, or rigpa. This can occur in three ways: through instructions in words, through symbols or most effectively through mind to mind transmission. Once this occurs we must remain in it, or actualise it at all times until our delusions liberate themselves and the buddha mind is uncovered.

The Later Diffusion

Earlier, we saw how the assassination of King Langdarma led to a period of chaos in Tibet. In fact, there was no centralized monarchy for 400 years after that. By the beginning of the 11th century, the second wave of the transmission of the Dharma from India had begun. An important part of the new diffusion was played by translations of tantric teachings by Tibetan scholars, such as those of Rinchen Zangpo. So tantras like Hevajra, Kalachakra and Cakrasamvara that had not come to Tibet in the early diffusion now spread to many practitioners.

Perhaps the greatest figure to come from India at this time was Atisha. At the time when he came to Ngari in Tibet, at the age of sixty, the royal family of that area felt that Buddhism had become defective in many ways. There was disorder - a split between the tantrikas and the monastics. Some people were justifying negative behaviour by disguising it as tantric practice.¹⁰ The royal family wanted to purify Buddhism of these abuses by inviting an authoritative Indian master. It would be impossible to have found a more accomplished master than Atisha. He was a holder of the vinaya, and expert in the four philosophical Buddhist schools of vaibhasika, sautrantika, cittamatra and madhyamaka, as well as being fully accomplished in the tantras. In fact he was advised by the goddess Tara to go and popularize the teachings, in particular those associated with Tara. His major literary contribution in Tibet was his famous work *Lamp of the Path of Enlightenment*.

As both tantric and monastic, philosopher and practitioner Atisha was able to heal the fractures in Buddhism, in particular by demonstrating that all the different teachings represent the one path to enlightenment.

Kadam

Atisha died in 1054, and his disciple Dromton formed a new school. Unlike the Nyingmas, Dromton was consciously founding a school by establishing a monastery at Radeng rather than just a tradition of practices that later came to be seen as a school. This is the Kadam school, “those bound by the word” (i.e. of Buddha). It may be said to have three main lineages or streams:

- The textual lineage. Atisha was a great scholar (Pandita). He emphasised reliance on the works of Shantideva (e.g., *Entering the Bodhisattva Conduct*¹¹) and Nagarjuna to understand the philosophy of dharma.
- The oral instructions lineage. These are instructions on the practical realization of meditation, such as the lojong “mind training” teachings for the accomplishment of the altruistic mind.
- The pith instructions lineage. The tantras would be taught to the more advanced disciples. This comprised the tantric instructions on Yidams such as the four tantric deities Shakyamuni, Green Tara, Chenrezik and Acala, as well as the cycle of “The Sixteen Drops”.

Dromton's chief disciples were the "three brothers" or "cousins"; Potowa, Phuchungwa and Chenngawa. The Kadam spread like wildfire being an almost exclusively monastic tradition. It was very powerful in central Tibet around the 12th and 13th centuries, but in decline by the mid 14th century. Later it died out as an independent school.

The characteristic teaching of the Kadam school is lamrim, the "graduated path" derived from Atisha's *Lamp of the Path of Enlightenment*. This was his response to the task of showing the essential unity between the diverse teachings. It delineates three types of practitioners.

- Inferior, concerned with their own happiness in this life and in future lives. For them, the dharma teaches the accumulation of merit.
- Mediocre, who see no freedom from suffering whilst in samsara. Here the hinayana and the "four thoughts" are taught, the first teachings on the graduated path proper.
- Highest, who see that one cannot free oneself from samsara and leave others behind in suffering.

When one has this last and highest motivation, one has entered the mahayana, the great vehicle.

Kagyü

The Kagyü begins in Tibet with Marpa Lotsawa (Marpa the translator, 1012 - 1097). Marpa unified in himself two major streams of tantra in one lineage, the 'close' and 'distant' lineages.

The teachings of the 'close' lineage come from the sets of tantras received from Marpa's Indian master Naropa, disciple of Tilopa. Tilopa lived mid/late 10th century in East India. He originally had monastic training but became a wandering yogin. From his masters he received tantric teachings from four lines, known as the four lineages of injunctions. He passed these onto Naropa who codified them into the six yogas or doctrines, aspects of the completion stage practices of the utilization of the winds, channels and drops of the subtle body in order to refine the mind. These are the yogas of inner heat (Tib. tummo), clear light, illusory body, dream, bardo and transference of consciousness.

Marpa undertook three journeys to India, meeting a number of different masters, primarily Naropa and Maitripa. From Maitripa he received the 'distant' lineage, the teachings on mahamudra, the "great seal". Similar in nature to dzok chen, this transcends even the yogas of the subtle body, allowing the practitioner to rest in a natural state of mind from which true realization arises.

Once Marpa was fully equipped with the 'close' lineage from Naropa and the 'distant' lineage from Maitripa, students began to collect around him in south Tibet. Marpa married the lady Dagmema, and took eight concubines, who collectively embodied the consort and eight goddesses in the mandala of Hevajra. His four major students, the "four

pillars”, were Ngok Chöku Dorje, Metön Tshönpo, Tshutön Wangdor, and Mila Zhepa Dorje, or Milarepa. Marpa actually wanted to pass the lineage in its entirety through his son Darma Dode in accordance with the custom of family transmission, but in the event the lineage was passed on through Milarepa.

Milarepa’s fame spread widely. His two chief disciples were the yogin Rechungpa (described as “like the moon”) and Gampopa (“like the sun”). The transmission of the Kagyu school comes primarily through Gampopa.

Gampopa was a monk who had been educated extensively in the Kadampa tradition. He was thirty when he met with Mila, having completed a thorough medical and monastic education. From his Kadam masters Gampopa had received the graduated path and monastic ordination. When he began to teach after Mila’s death he introduced a two level structure to his teaching.

- Kadam teachings, such as his Jewel Ornament of Liberation, on the stages of the path to enlightenment.
- Tantric teachings inherited from Milarepa.

Most of Gampopa’s students studied his Kadam teachings, and this method was sufficient to realize mahamudra even though it is non-tantric, since Gampopa taught two kinds of mahamudra - the sutra mahamudra and the tantric mahamudra. Gampopa is thus known as the one who united the two streams of Kadam and mahamudra teachings. He changed the Kagyu by introducing monasticism, so it became a monastic tradition.

After Gampopa died, authority was passed to his four main disciples who established the four great Kagyu schools:

- The Phakmo Dru Kagyu, founded by Phakmo Dru Dorje Gyaltsen (1110 - 70), from which come the eight minor schools.¹³
- The Baram Kagyu, founded by Barampa Dharma Wongchug (ca. 1100)
- The Tsalpa Kagyu, founded by Lama Zhang (1123 - 94), disciple of Gampopa’s nephew Dakpo Gomtsul.
- The Karma Kagyu, or Karma Kamtshang, founded by Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa (1110 - 93).

All shared Gampopa’s synthesis of monasticism and practice, of the graduated path and mahamudra.¹⁴

The Karma Kagyu became the most extensive, although the Drukpa Kagyu became the state religion in Bhutan. Karmapa became the first recognized incarnate lama in Tibet, reborn as Karma Pakshi (lit. “Karmapa teacher”) twelve years after the death of Dusum Khyenpa. There has been an unbroken line of sixteen rebirths of Karmapa to this day.

The third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje’s, disciple Drakpa Senge was so advanced that Karmapa told him they were equals. To symbolize this he bestowed upon Drakpa a red

hat, similar to his own distinctive black hat.¹⁵ Hence that disciple became the Shamar Karmapa, the red-hat Karmapa (in contrast to Shanag Karmapa, the “black hat Karmapa”). There have been many other great Kagyu lamas, such as Situ Rinpoche and Jamgon Kongtrul.

At one time, the Drukpa Kagyu was very extensive, and the Karma Kagyu has also enjoyed great success with lay supporters ruling most of Tibet. Although its political power diminished after the 17th century, the Karma Kagyu remained dominant throughout Lhadak, Nepal, Sikkim and other areas.

The characteristic teachings of the Kagyu includes strong emphasis on devotion to the lama, and indeed all Vajrayana schools stress this, since it is said that no realization of the nature of mind whatsoever can arise without the blessing of one’s guru. This is reflected in the famous saying of Saraha; “When the guru’s blessing enters one’s mind, this is seen as clearly as the palm of one’s hand.” Similarly the guru’s blessing is seen in all the Kagyu biographies to be crucial to the attainment of realization. So, Guru Yoga is the heart of Kagyu practice, involving the supplication of one’s guru in order to seek the unity of guru and disciple’s minds.

There is a saying that the Kagyupas do not train by debate but by devotion. Once devotion arises blessings can occur and one may enter the mahamudra. Here one settles in the natural simplicity of ordinary mind, beyond accepting or rejecting, beyond wandering or holding. Realization arises naturally in this spontaneous state. Obscurations no longer veil the mind and its clear light nature becomes known, just as the sun becomes visible when unobscured by clouds. In dzok chen, the introduction of the disciple to the true nature of mind by the guru comes first and then the disciple settles in that state. In mahamudra one remains in that state and then introduction follows. But the realization is the same for both.

From the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje onwards, dzok chen and mahamudra were brought together. It is claimed that if one realizes dzok chen, one realizes mahamudra. Similarly if one realizes mahamudra, one realizes dzok chen.

Sakya

The Sakya school has a very rich history, having both Indian and Tibetan antecedents. The school’s actual commencement dates from the establishment of the Dharma centre founded in 1074 at Sakya in southwest Tibet by Konchok Gyalpo of the Khön family. This dynasty who remain at the centre of the school today were practitioners of the Nyingma teachings who became attracted to the new tantric teachings of Drogmi Lotsowa and Gayadhara. They embraced the Hevajra tantra in particular. Subsequently Konchok Gyalpo’s son Kunga Nyingpo was the first of the five Great Masters. He was known as the “Great Sakyapa”. He seems to have received every sutra and tantra teaching available and to have preserved such Nyingma teachings as Vajrakilaya. Hence from him come five principle streams: Vajrakilaya, Hevajra, Guhyasamaja, Vajrayogini and Mahakala, plus an extraordinary profusion of teachings beyond that. These were passed onto his two sons, Sonam Tsemo and Drakpa Gyaltsen, and then onto Sakya Pandita.

Sakya Pandita was even more learned than his predecessors, mastering in addition philosophical teachings such as Indian logic and secular studies such as poetry and arts.

The Khöns were not monastics, but preserved the teachings by family transmission. However Sakya Pandita was a monk and thus brought monasticism to the Sakyas, and following him the majority of Sakya practitioners became monks or nuns. The Khön dynasty almost immediately reverted to marrying and so the tradition that the head of the Sakyas be a married Khön was maintained. However outside of the Khön family there were relatively few lay masters.

The fifth great Sakyapa was Chogyal Phakpa, the nephew of Sakya Pandita. He brought Buddhism to Mongolia by the conversion of Kublai Khan, who was an excellent leader and student. The offering he gave in exchange for the initiation of Hevajra was Tibet. Hence the Kingship of Tibet was resumed, and was in the hands of the Sakya school for 75 years.

The Sakya school has enjoyed the dual reputation of tantric masters and scholars, and is renowned for its cultivation in all areas. It has not been particularly prone to fission unlike the Kagyu. The two subsects are the Ngorpa subsect of the late 14th century, established by Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo, the lamday master who founded the Ngor monastery, and the Tsharpa school emerging in the 16th century, established by Tsarchen Losal Gyamtso.

The lamday (“Path and Fruit”) is the central teaching of the Sakyas. It derives from the Hevajra tantra and was formulated in India in the ninth century by the tantric yogin Birwapa.¹⁶ Having achieved insight into Hevajra, he set out the stages to buddhahood in the Triple Vision and the Triple Tantra.

The Triple Vision is:

- The Vision of Impurity - stimulating a sense of renunciation which is achieved through contemplation of the “four thoughts.”
- The Vision of Experience - achieved through the generation of conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, which derive from the practice of samatha and vipasyana.¹⁷
- The Vision of Purity - achieved when we hear the qualities of enlightenment and aspiration arises to attain it through subsequent practice.

Then, if all the conditions are appropriate we enter into the Vajrayana through the initiation of Hevajra, which ripens the skandhas. This is the basis of the triple tantra:

- Base or Ground tantra - developing the sense of the inseparability of samsara and nirvana, seeing both as projections of mind. Once confidence in this view develops, one proceeds to the next stage.
- Path Tantra - containing the development and completion stages and deriving from the four levels of initiation.
- Fruit tantra - setting out the achievement of the five bodies of buddhahood.

Hence through the practice of lamday, buddhahood is certain. The Sakya tradition is the richest in possession of teachings, as reflected by the common reference to them as “the owners of all Dharmas”.

So the three major schools that came to Tibet in the 11th century were the Kadam, the Kagyu and the Sakya.¹⁸

Gelug

This great school of Buddhism in Tibet was established around the 14th / 15th centuries, founded by Tsongkhapa Lozang Drakpa of Amdo in northeast Tibet - Je Rinpoche (“Precious Lord”). Tsongkhapa differs from the other founders of schools in that at his time the direct connection of India and Tibet had finished in a sense. Tsongkhapa received all his teachings in Tibet from such teachers as the Sakya philosopher Jetsun Rendawa. He became a monk, observing the rules of the vinaya flawlessly. Tsongkhapa developed his own interpretation of prasangika madhyamaka.¹⁹ He also completed the study of many tantras, especially Guhyasamaja and was famed for his immense scholarship.

Tsongkhapa’s followers were initially known as the “New Kadampas”, Tsongkhapa himself being very attracted to the lamrim teachings of that tradition. Subsequently the New Kadampas became the Gelugpas - “Followers of the Virtuous Way.” Khedrupje and Gyaltsab Darma Rinchen were his principle students.²⁰

The Gelugpas became very strong throughout Tibet, building many monasteries. This school was exclusively monastic and many were attracted by their high level of discipline.

Whereas the Gelug after Tsongkhapa had one clearly delineated philosophical position the other schools tended to be somewhat more fluid. For instance although some Kagyupas favour zhentong madhyamaka, there have been notable Kagyu rangtongpas. In the Gelug schools, Tsongkhapa’s interpretation of prasangika madhyamaka is adhered to by all. He was very open to other traditions, but the philosophical exactitude of the Gelugpas may have contributed to their isolation.

Rimé

Finally, there is the remarkable 19th century movement known as Rimé. This is the “boundaryless” or “ecumenical” movement. It was not a new school. Certain masters felt a need to move away from the narrow mindedness of sectarian rivalry. So, in the 19th century various lamas almost entirely from east Tibet tried to produce a much vaster spirit of dharma, which was then exhibited in their teaching activities.

The three major figures who did so much to introduce the Rimé movement were the Sakyapa Jamyang Khyentze Wangpo, the Kagyupa Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, and the Nyingmapa tertön Chogyur Dechen Lingpa. Realizing Buddha’s teachings are all medicine for suffering, they set out to receive them all and then passed them on to each other and to their disciples. Jamyang Khyentze and his foremost disciple²¹ collected all the sadhanas of initiations and meditation practise. Jamgon Kongtrul produced the “five treasures”.

The Rimé movement was not an attempt to dissolve all the schools into one superschool, but to lose the boundaries between them. This strengthens the dharma. The Rimé spirit is not to ‘shop around’ for teachings, but to choose particular teachings in the understanding that all are equally powerful. So, in accordance with the wishes of Karma Thinley Rinpoche, we generally adhere to one tradition but with the Rimé spirit. This is the way forward for dharma.

Notes

1. The Words of My Perfect Teacher, p. 137, trans. Padmakara Translation Group, Delhi 1994.
2. Cittamatra or yogachara.
3. Öddiyana; Padmasambhava's birthplace northwest of India, probably now in Pakistan, where he appeared in the form of an eight year old boy in the heart of a lotus. Said to be a land of many dakinis and very strong vajrayana practice.
4. Sometimes Bairotsana is spelt Vairochana, the same name as one of the heads of the five buddha families.
5. The actual title of this text is Bardo Thodrol, translated by Fremantle / Trungpa as "The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Bardo". "Tibetan Book of the Dead" is the name invented by W.Y. Evans-Wentz who first co-translated it into English in the 1920's.
6. The nine vehicles are:

1. Shravakayana
2. Pratyekabuddhayana
3. Bodhisattvayana
4. Kriyayana
5. Upayana or caryayana
6. Yogayana
7. Mahayogayana
8. Anuyogayana
9. Atiyogayana

1 & 2 comprise the Hinayana, 3 comprises the ordinary Mahayana and 4 - 9 comprise the extraordinary Mahayana, or Vajrayana.

7. i.e. Hinayana, mahayana and vajrayana, although sometimes "the three vehicles" refers to shravakayana, pratyekabuddhayana and mahayana.

8. The dzok chen lineage begins with the primordial dharmakaya buddha Samantabhadra (Tib. Kun-tu-bzang-po), from whom the sambhogakaya buddha Vajrasattva (Tib. rDo-rje-sems-dpa') received it and passed it onto the human master Garab Dorje, who lived around 500 years after Shakyamuni. It came to Padmasambhava through Manjushrimitra, Sri Simha, and Jnanasutra.

9. The six great Nyingma monasteries, Mindrol Ling being the primary one.

10. This may have been Hindus performing practices associated with Shiva.

11. The Bodhisattvacharyavatara (Tib. Byang-chub sems-dpa' spyod-pa-la jug-pa). Shantideva was an 8th century Indian master: immaculately disciplined monk and (secretly) realized tantric yogin.

12. Milarepa's remarkable life story can be read about in The 100,000 Songs of Milarepa and The Life of Milarepa. See Further Reading above.

13. The "lesser eight": Drikhung, Talung, Yamzang, Shugseb, Druk, Mar, Yelpe and Trophu.

14. Brief accounts of these schools are given in Lama Jampa Thaye's Garland of Gold, pps. 65 - 73.

15. Which represents the hat woven for Dusum Khyenpa from the hair of 100,000

dakinis.

16. Also known as Virupa.

18. Shamatha is tranquillity meditation and vipasyana is insight meditation.

19. Other schools were also established in this period. There was the Shangpa Kagyu of Khyungpo Naljor and the female Chod Yul “Cutting Through Ego” school of Machig Labdronma. She was the student of the Indian siddha Dampa Sangye, founder of the Shijay “Pacifying Suffering” school. The Ugyen Nyendrup school of Ugyenpa Rinchen Pal was absorbed into the Drukpa and Karma Kagyu schools. Also the Jonang school of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen, attacked by prasangika madhyamaka (see n.20) scholars for holding the controversial zhentong philosophy, was partly absorbed into the Karma Kagyu school, ceasing activity as an independent school around the time of the fifth Dalai Lama.

19. The chief presentations of madhyamaka are rangtong and zhentong. The former asserts the essencelessness of all phenomena to be the highest view whilst the latter, deriving from such teachings as Maitreya’s Uttaratantrasastra asserts that ultimate reality is not merely empty but simulateously luminous. Prasangika madhyamaka, along with svatantrika madhyamaka belong to the rangtong division. Svatantrika madhyamaka originates with Nagarjuna’s disciple Bhavavivaka. He criticised the interpretation of madhyamaka made by another of Nagarjuna’s disciples, Buddhapalita. Subsequently, Chandrakirti, a disciple of the Buddhapalita, wrote a defence of Buddhapalita and hence became the originator of prasangika madhyamaka.

20. Chogay Trichen says that Tsongkhapa, Khedrupje and Gyaltsab were all students of Sakya lamas. See his History of the Sakya, p.26, Ganesha Press, 1983.

21. Jamgon Loter Wangpo.

22. For a more extensive list of the dates and details of the Kagyu lineage, see Judith Hanson’s translation of Jamgon Kongtrul’s Torch of Certainty, n.7, p.69, Shambhala, 1994. For a more extensive ‘family tree’ of the major Kagyu gurus from Tilopa to the 16th Karmapa and their dates, see Douglas & White’s Karmapa, the Black Hat Lama of Tibet, Luzac & Co, 1976.

23. Lama Jampa Thaye points out that the dates of the lives of both Tilopa and Naropa, taken from Guenther’s “Life and Teaching of Naropa”, and the same dates as given in most Buddhist histories, are untenable: “As evidence regarding Naropa’s dates, one may note that not only was he the teacher of and thus senior to Marpa (1012-1097), he was also the older contemporary of Atisha (979-1053). It is probable therefore that Naropa was born sometime in the second half of the tenth century,” Garland of Gold, n.9, p.98.

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