

TRACING THE KHYENTSE LINEAGE

JIGME LINGPA (1730?-1798)

According to tradition, the pre-incarnation line of Jigme Lingpa reaches back to the days of the Tibetan Empire in the 8th century, to the Tibetan emperor Trisong Detsen (742-796) and to the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Manjushri. But the line historically begins with the man himself. Based largely in southern Tibet, Jigme Lingpa was active at the hermitage of Chimpu, above Tibet's first monastery, Samye, and enjoyed the patronage of the king and queen of the eastern Tibetan kingdom of Derge. He was primarily famous for revealing treasures—scripture and liturgies that are said to have been concealed by the 8th-century Indian mystic Padmasambhava for future discovery. Of his many names, one in particular became attached to his reincarnation line: Khyentse Öser, meaning “Radiant Wisdom and Compassion.”



Jigme Lingpa received all his treasures through visionary experiences and dreams. He received the Longchen Nyingtik, one of the most influential Dzogchen treasure cycles, during a vision he had in the winter of 1757. Sitting down to meditation during a three-year retreat at Palri Monastery in southern Tibet, he suddenly found himself at the Boudhanath stupa in Nepal. As he circumambulated he encountered a wisdom dakini who gave him a small box, which, she said, was a treasure from Padmasambhava. Still in the vision, he opened the box, overcome by the smell of camphor, and read the first few scrolls of yellow paper, thus beginning the process of translating the scriptures before he began to teach them to the public seven years later.

PATRUL RINPOCHE (1808-1887)

Based at Dzogchen Monastery, he was known to travel across Kham giving public teachings on Shantideva's *Bodhicaryavatara* and the Longchen Nyingtik. His famous composition, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, a commentary on the preliminary practice of the Longchen Nyingtik, is based on the teachings he received from his master, Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu (1765-1842), who was himself a disciple of Jigme Lingpa. Patrul Rinpoche was also a student of Do Khyentse, whom he credited with introducing him to the nature of mind by drunkenly assaulting him. Ultimately he shared with his teacher the designation of being Jigme Lingpa's reincarnation; Patrul Rinpoche was his “speech” incarnation.

DO KHYENTSE YESHE DORJE (1800-1866)



Following Jigme Lingpa's death, his chief disciple, Jigme Trinle Öser, the First Dodrubchen (1745-1821), identified Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje as his master's reincarnation. Do Khyentse became famous for his “crazy wisdom” style of teachings, frequently drinking publicly and even beating his students. He also was known for reviving animals that he himself had slain. Born in Golok, southern Amdo, he was enthroned at Tsering Jong, Jigme Lingpa's seat, where he studied before returning to his homeland to teach. Like his previous incarnation, he served the court of Derge and also the Chakla king in Dartsedo, where he earned the title Do Khyentse: the Khyentse of (Dartse-) Do.

JAMYANG KHYENTSE WANGPO (1820-1892)



Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo was a great master of the Sakya tradition based at Dzongsar Monastery to the south of Derge. As a child, Khyentse Wangpo was identified as the reincarnation of Tartse Khenpo Jampa Namkha Chime (1765-1820) from Ngor, a Sakya monastery in Central Tibet, and only later as Jigme Lingpa's “mind” incarnation. Khyentse Wangpo was born in Kham into a prominent and wealthy family. His father refused to send him to Ngor for training, telling those who sought to take him that he would allow him to enter the religious life only when he was old enough to decide for himself. Sure enough, by the age of 20 Khyentse Wangpo had decided to enter the religious life and left for Central Tibet for training. He took ordination at the Nyingma monastery of Mindroling, and studied at Ngor and many other places before returning to Kham. Khyentse Wangpo is said to have studied with one hundred masters of every tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon. After establishing himself at Dzongsar Monastery in Derge, Khyentse Wangpo developed a close working relationship with Jamgon Kongtrul (1813-1899), who was based at Palpung Monastery, a nearby Karma Kagyu institution, and with the Nyingma lama Chokgyur Lingpa (1829-1870), whose status as a treasure revealer Khyentse Wangpo was the first to affirm. These men, in their openness to explore and learn from all whom they encountered, embodied an ecumenical ideal that had long been valued in Tibetan religion, and their activities in teaching, textual production, and ritual performance forever changed the direction of Tibetan Buddhism. Khyentse Wangpo was such a tremendous presence in Kham that eight separate reincarnations were identified following his death, in the five categories of “body,” “speech,” “mind,” “qualities,” and “activities.” The children were reared at some of the greatest Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya monasteries in Kham such as Katok, Palpung, Shechen, Dzongsar, and Dzogchen, evidence of the ecumenical scope of Khyentse Wangpo's activities.

DORING TULKU CHÖKVI NYIMA (1902-1952)

Doring Tulku Chökyi Nyima was an influential teacher to the important contemporary Bhutanese master Lama Pema Tsewang (1926-2009).

ALAK ZENKAR (1943-)

The third Alak Zenkar, Tubten Nyima, has worked tirelessly over the past few decades to preserve Tibetan culture and literature in Tibet.

DILGO KHYENTSE TASHI PELJOR (1910-1991)



Dilgo Khyentse, Khyentse Wangpo's “mind” incarnation, was one of the greatest Nyingma lamas of the twentieth century, a teacher to many of the contemporary Western teachers and translators. Based at Shechen Monastery, he spent much of his youth in studies and isolated retreat, which he was forced to give up when he fled the Communist takeover of Tibet. He settled in Bhutan, where he became a teacher of the royal family, and eventually traveled widely in the West, establishing a retreat center in southern France.

KUNZANG DRODUL (1897-1945)

Kuzang Drodul, a “qualities” incarnation, was based at Dza Palme Monastery. Details about his life, or of his reincarnation, if one has been recognized, are not known.

NGAWANG TUTOB WANGCHUK (1900-1950)

Ngawang Tutob Wangchuk, also a “mind” incarnation, served as the 40th Sakya Trichen, the head of Sakya Monastery.

JAMYANG KHYENTSE CHÖKVI WANGPO (1894-1909)

The “body” incarnation, Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Wangpo (c.1894-1909) was based at Dzongsar, but he passed away in his youth.

DHUNGSEY MINZU SAKYA (1953-)



Better known as David Khon, he is the son of Jigdral Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche, who was himself the son of H.H. Trichen Ngawang Tutob Wangchuk (the 40th Sakya Trichen). He currently lives in Los Angeles.

DILGO KYENTSE YANGSI (1993-)



Dilgo Kyentse Yangsi was born in Nepal on June 30, 1993, and was recognized as the reincarnation of Dilgo Khyentse in December 1995. He is the son of Tsikey Chokling Rinpoche and the grandson of Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche.

JAMYANG KHYENTSE CHÖKVI LODRÖ (1893-1959)



Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö, who was based first at Katok, a Nyingma monastery, and then Dzongsar, a Sakya monastery, was categorized as the “activities” incarnation of Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Wangpo. Chökyi Lodrö is regarded by many as one of the greatest masters to have emerged from Tibet in the past century. He was, like his predecessor, educated in multiple traditions, and was a teacher to many of today's Nyingma lamas, including Sogyal Rinpoche. He established the famous Khamshé Monastic College in the meadows below Dzongsar Monastery, which, now rebuilt, attracts students from across the Tibetan cultural region to study in every tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. His wife, Khadro Tsering Chödrön (1929-2011), whom he married in the late 1940s, was also a renowned teacher and practitioner. He passed away in Sikkin in 1959.

DZONGSAR KHYENTSE NORBU (1961-)



Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu is a teacher and a feature-film director. He is the current head of Dzongsar Monastery in Eastern Tibet.

KARMA KHYENTSE ÖSER (1896-1945)

Palpung Monastery, the seat of Jamgon Kongtrul, also claimed an incarnation of Khyentse Wangpo—his “speech” incarnation, Karma Khyentse Öser (1896-1945), the First Beru Khyentse and the son of a local ruler, was the master to several key Karma Kagyu lamas, including the Fifteenth Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje (1871-1922), the Sixteenth Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (1924-1981), and Kalu Rinpoche (1905-1989).

THE SECOND BERU KHYENTSE (1947-)



The Second Beru Khyentse, Drongsar Khyentse Chökyi Wangpo, was recognized by the 16th Karmapa in 1955. He teaches all over the world.

JIGME KHYENTSE (1963-)

Jigme Khyentse, the son of Kangyur Rinpoche (1897-1975), is a guiding member of the Padmakara Translation Group.



PHOTO OF DILGO KHYENTSE TASHI PELJOR COURTESY OF MATHIEU RICARD / SHECHEN

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