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A Comparative Analysis of the Transmission and "Translation" of Tibetan Buddhist Teachings in the American Context

Zurmang Gharwang

A Thesis in the Field of Religion

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

In the history of the transmission and adoption of the practice of Tibetan Buddhism in the American context, two teachers from the Kagyu tradition, His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (Rang byung Rig pa'i rdo rje, 1924–1981) and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (Chos rgyam Drung pa, 1939–1987), taught in America in the 1970s, but took very different approaches. Trungpa Rinpoche, one of the earliest teachers to popularize Tibetan Buddhism in America, took an innovative and unconventional approach in his teaching style. By contrast, H. H. the 16th Karmapa, the head of the Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, took a traditional and conservative approach to teaching Buddhism. Through an analysis of the two "translation styles" of these teachers in their approach to transmitting Buddhist teaching in the American context, this thesis argues that despite their different forms, both teachers retain the core meaning of the teachings in terms of beliefs and practices. This thesis further shows how Trungpa Rinpoche's non-traditional approach paved the way for the receptivity of Americans to the more traditional approach of H. H. the 16th Karmapa.

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Chapter I:

Introduction and Methodology

In the history of the transmission and adoption of the practice of Tibetan Buddhism in the American context, two teachers from the Kagyu tradition both taught in America in the 1970s, His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (Rang byung Rig pa'i rdo rje, 1924–1981) and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (Chos rgyam Drung pa, 1939–1987), but they took very different approaches. One of the earliest teachers to popularize Tibetan Buddhism in America was Trungpa Rinpoche, who adopted an innovative and unconventional approach in his teaching style. Trungpa Rinpoche was also instrumental in bringing the head of the Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa, to teach in America. By contrast with Trungpa Rinpoche, H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa adopted a traditional and conservative approach to teaching Buddhism, primarily presiding over ceremonies that have been carried out for centuries. Through an analysis of the two divergent "translation styles" of these teachers in their approach to transmitting Buddhist teaching in the American context, it will be argued that despite their differences, both teachers retained the core meaning of the teachings, both in terms of beliefs and practices. This thesis will further show that Trungpa Rinpoche's non-traditional approach can be seen as preparatory for the receptivity of Americans to the more traditional approach of H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa.

The use of the metaphor of translation in analyzing Tibetan Buddhist teachings transmitted in a new context for a new audience is informed by the analysis of Enrique

Galván-Álvarez in his article, “Translating the Translator: Identity and Revision in Trungpa Rinpoche’s Buddhism(s).” Galván-Álvarez applies the metaphor of translation in his analysis of Trungpa Rinpoche’s transmission of Buddhist teachings in America. This thesis will elaborate on the metaphor of religious transmission as a form of translation, exploring how any act of religious teaching that is tailored for a particular audience in a particular cultural context, time, and place might be usefully thought of as an act of translation. The different “translation styles” of Trungpa Rinpoche and the Sixteenth Karmapa will be compared using examples of actual teachings given by both teachers, as well as first-hand accounts of their American students who were the metaphorical readers of these translations of Buddhist teachings.

1. Chapter Outline

One of the Buddha’s teachings to monastic communities emphasized the importance of modifying the form to accommodate the time and context in which one lives, but without losing the essential meaning. In general, different translation styles have different virtues. Some translations stick more strictly to the source material, while others favor a freer interpretation, taking into greater consideration how best to transmit the meaning in light of the cultural context of the target audience. This thesis will show how Trungpa Rinpoche’s translation style is more of a free interpretation, in many cases only loosely inspired by the original source material, while the Karmapa’s translation style might be described as a more literal translation, sticking closely to the form, style, and meaning of the source material. But in the case of the Karmapa, some of his activities, like traditional ceremonies conducted in Tibetan, still conveyed something meaningful even when left literally untranslated, demonstrating a place where the

metaphor of translation breaks down. Despite the apparent detraditionalization of Trungpa Rinpoche's approach when compared with H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa's, both teachers transmitted Buddhist teachings in different ways that preserved the essential meaning in a new context, America in the 1970s. Moreover, it will be argued that Trungpa Rinpoche's non-traditional approach in transmitting Buddhist teachings in the American context helped promote greater receptivity among Americans to the more traditional and conservative approach of the Sixteenth Karmapa's teachings style.

2. Discussion of Methodology

This thesis will center on the history of the transmission and adoption of the practice of Tibetan Buddhism in the American context, focusing in particular on two teachers from the Kagyu tradition, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje. Both taught in America in the 1970s, but took very different approaches. The activities of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche in America in the 1970s has been studied from a variety of methodological angles, though the Sixteenth Karmapa has received far less scholarly attention, despite the significant impact his activities had on the American religious landscape. One of the primary aims of this thesis will be to shed light on the role of the Sixteenth Karmapa in the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhist teachings and practice to America, by contextualizing his activities in the history of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's more well-studied activities, and also by comparing and contrasting the approaches of these two teachers and their respective reception in America. Since, as stated, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche has received far more scholarly attention, the literature review that follows focuses on a range of

approaches taken in religious studies, sociology, and cultural studies to Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's activities in America.

In her article, "Chogyam Trungpa and the Shambhalian Vision of an Enlightened Society," Janet Burns examines Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's creation of a new "Shambhala Buddhism" using the methodological lens of Max Weber's sociological approach to the study of religion. Burns treats Trungpa's Shambhala Buddhism as a "new religious movement," outlining how he innovated new teachings that deviated from traditional Tibetan Buddhist teachings, including his idea that an enlightened society would result from practicing the Shambhalian style of meditation. Burns uses Weber's famous typology of "paths to salvation" for analyzing world religions into two types — ascetic religions and mystical religions. While Weber categorizes early Buddhism as a kind of "world-rejecting mysticism" due to the combination of the emphasis on monastic "non-attachment to homelife and material possessions," on the one hand, and the emphasis on "mystical illuminative concentration" on the other hand (Burns 2013, 80), Burns observes that Trungpa's focus on rejecting "physical, psychological, and spiritual materialism" seems in line with the world-rejecting element of the mysticism that Weber used to describe Buddhism more generally. Yet, on closer analysis, Trungpa's response is not to reject the world but instead to embrace action in the world. This can be seen in Trungpa's vision of Shambhala as an enlightened society that followers may participate in creating in this very lifetime. Burns thus concludes that Trungpa's Shambhala path to salvation is a "combination of inner-worldly mysticism and asceticism that has consequences for the social behavior of its adherents" (2013, 82).

While Burns' theoretical approach, as based on Weber's broad, sweeping classifications of religions, provides interesting insights, the methodology for this thesis will not rely on the categories of mysticism vs. asceticism, but will focus more on the particulars of the individual teachers, students, and events as considered in the particular social and religious contexts.

In "Scholars, Sects, and Sanghas I: Recruitment to Asian-Based Meditation Groups in North America," R. Gussner and S. Berkowitz use Asian-based meditation groups as a sociological case study and present the results demonstrating that the psychological and sociological factors influencing Americans to join New Religious Movements is different than previous studies indicated. These findings will help to inform my analysis of the psychological and sociological factors contributing to Americans' joining of Trungpa Rinpoche's Shambhala Buddhist movement, which has been regarded by other scholars as an example of a New Religious Movement.

In "Tibetan Buddhism in America: The Development of American Vajrayana," Amy Lavine examines the way in which Tibetan Vajrayāna Buddhism was adapted to American culture from three perspectives: the sources and means of gaining authority in the tradition, the continuity between traditional Tibetan Buddhist religious practice and Western adoption of these practices, and the availability of Tibetan Buddhism in America. This analysis, which takes a more cultural studies methodological approach, will provide yet another example of how to analyze the particular figures I focus on in this thesis.

In his article, "Keeping It Real!: Constructing and Maintaining Traditional Authenticity in a Tibetan Buddhist Organisation in Scotland," John McKenzie takes a

sociological approach in analyzing the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism in Scotland. He looks at Samye Ling Monastery in Scotland, which Trungpa Rinpoche co-founded with Akong Rinpoche in 1967. Using this community as a case study, McKenzie examines how the idea of "traditional authenticity" and the process of "detraditionalization" are products of social construction. It is clear, however, that McKenzie is foremost a sociologist rather than a religious studies scholar, because his paper includes a number of mischaracterizations of Tibetan Buddhism. This thesis will thus apply some of the useful theoretical tools that McKenzie develops from a religious studies angle, and in a way that is more carefully informed by Buddhist teachings.

In particular, this thesis will explore the idea of "traditional authenticity" and the process of "detraditionalization" by analyzing particular teachings given by Trungpa Rinpoche as well as first-hand accounts of teachings and ceremonies conducted by H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa in America.

Guiding questions related to this topic will include: What is it precisely about Trungpa Rinpoche's teaching style in America that might characterize it as "non-traditional," and what is it about H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa's teaching style that makes it "traditional"? Answering these kinds of fundamental questions will require an analysis of the concepts of "tradition," and "traditional," particularly in relation to Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

A central focus in this analysis will be the way in which Trungpa Rinpoche engaged in a process of "detraditionalization" in the course of translating Buddhist teachings into English and tailored it to the American context in the 1970s, while still maintaining that the transmitted teachings maintained "traditional authenticity." For

instance, Trungpa Rinpoche replaced traditional Tibetan religious garb with modern uniforms, resembling those used by the military. He drew from other cultures such as those of British aristocrats and Japanese samurai, while claiming that these non-traditional outer expressions could in fact be the expressions of inner traditional authenticity of Buddhism. This thesis will explore how and in what ways an act of transmitting Buddhist teachings for a new audience in a new context might test the boundaries of what is considered the "tradition," and what is considered "essential" to Buddhism. In other words, how much can be changed in the form of the teachings without changing the essential meaning?

Relatedly, the thesis will also explore the question of whether or not Trungpa Rinpoche's "non-traditional" approach in transmitting Buddhist teachings in the American context help promote greater receptivity among Americans to the more traditional and conservative approach of H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa's teachings style, and if so, how?

Finally, in his article, "Translating the Translator: Identity and Revision in Trungpa Rinpoche's Buddhism(s)," Galván-Álvarez uses the metaphor of translation to explain the process by which Trungpa repackaged and conveyed the Buddhist teachings in the language of American culture of the 1970s. Galván-Álvarez analyzes Trungpa's "highly original process of re-inventing tradition against various forms of criticism and censorship, both in the target and the source cultures" (2013, 111). He uses the metaphor of translation to discuss Trungpa Rinpoche's transmission of Buddhist teachings in America. Galván-Álvarez analyzes three ways in which Trungpa Rinpoche "translated" Buddhist teachings into the American context, using three traditional Buddhist roles that

he played: the role of guru (or teacher), the role of siddha (which means an accomplished practitioner), and the role of terton (which refers to a treasure revealer). Galván-Álvarez also focuses on the ways in which Trungpa not only "translated" Buddhist concepts to suit the American culture he encountered, but he even "founded a new culture," which Galván-Álvarez describes as a kind of "hybrid" (2013, 121). Galván-Álvarez uses the Tibetan Buddhist idea of a terton to frame Trungpa's creative and innovative methods.

Galván-Álvarez's metaphor of re-inventing religious tradition as an act of translation will be a more helpful interpretive model for this thesis, which will compare the way two very different teachers engaged in the act of "translating" Tibetan Buddhist teachings for modern Americans of the 1970s. After all, any act of religious teaching for a particular audience, whether traditional or innovative, might be helpfully thought of as an act of translation in some sense. This thesis will elaborate on this metaphor of religious transmission as a form of translation, exploring how any act of religious teaching that is tailored for a particular audience in a particular cultural context, time, and place might be usefully thought of as an act of translation. This analysis will build on Galván-Álvarez's analysis by extending it to the Sixteenth Karmapa's transmission of Buddhist teachings in America, and where a similar analysis is applied to Trungpa Rinpoche, it will focus on Trungpa's actual written or recorded teachings, rather than analyzing Trungpa's roles as guru, siddha, and terton as Galván-Álvarez does. The different "translation styles" of Trungpa Rinpoche and the Sixteenth Karmapa will be compared using examples of actual teachings given by each teacher, and first-hand accounts of American students of both these teachers who were the metaphorical readers of these translations of Buddhist teachings.

Finally, it should be noted that there is the relative scarcity of source material, both primary and secondary, on H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa, when compared to Trungpa Rinpoche. With regard to primary sources, Trungpa Rinpoche has dozens of English language books published in his name including an autobiography, several biographies, and a number of publications by students presenting their first-hand accounts of their experiences with him. H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa, on the other hand, does not have any English language books published in his name, though there are a few publications by students presenting their first-hand accounts of their experiences with him. There is also an English translation of a biography of H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa, which was originally composed in Tibetan. With regard to secondary sources, there are dozens of journal articles and academic press books treating American Buddhism which address the activities and impact of Trungpa Rinpoche in America, while only a few sources in the secondary literature treat H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa, and often just in passing. This is a major challenge of this project, but it is also an opportunity to bring broader scholarly attention to the activities of H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa in America and to the definite and lasting impact that he had on Buddhism there. Since I have access to materials in the Tibetan language, this will help bring to light more primary sources that can assist in the service of this thesis.

Chapter II.

Historical and Biographical Context

1. Historical background on the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to the American context

Tibetan Buddhism was one of the latest Buddhist traditions to take root in America, with Japanese and Chinese traditions being popularized earlier. There are four main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism: Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug. The first notable figure to preside over a Tibetan Buddhist community in America was Geshe Ngawang Wangyal (1901–1983), of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, who was Kalmuck-Mongolian but trained in Drepung Monastery in Tibet. Having arrived in the United States in 1955, he served as a resident monk for a community of Kalmuck refugees living in Freewood Acres, New Jersey; he taught at Columbia University; and he founded the Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America. He left a substantial legacy by not only bringing two other prominent Tibetan Buddhist teachers to America — Geshe Lhundrup Sopa and Lama Thartse Kunga of the Sakya tradition— but also by training some of the earliest and most influential American-born scholars of Tibetan Buddhism, including Robert Thurman and Jeffrey Hopkins (Prebish 1999, 40).

Deshung Rinpoche of the Sakya tradition arrived in America in 1960 together with H. H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya and remained over twenty-five years, originally coming to participate in a research project at the University of Washington with Professor Turrell Wylie, an early and influential scholar of Tibetan Studies (Prebish 1999, 42). Deshung

Rinpoche (de zhung rin po che, 1906-1987) also left a lasting legacy, as he was involved in the training of many Buddhist studies scholars at and around the University of Washington in Seattle.

Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism arrived in America in 1968, founding the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center in Berkeley, California the following year. He hosted the head of the Nyingma lineage, Dudjom Rinpoche (1904–1987) at his Center in Berkeley in 1972 (Prebish 1999, 43).

But, as Charles Prebish notes, "there can be little doubt that the most famous Tibetan Buddhist in the West has been Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche," who belonged to the Zurmang Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism (1999, 44). Trungpa Rinpoche arrived in America in 1970, founding an extensive international network of Buddhist centers under the Vajradhatu organization as well as a number of secular initiatives organized under the Nalanda Foundation. Trungpa Rinpoche invited the head of the Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rikpe Dorje, to America for a teaching tour in 1973. Both Trungpa Rinpoche and H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa played profound roles in the establishment of Euro-American "convert Buddhism," which became increasingly visible in mainstream American culture. The next two sections will provide introductions to the life and activities of these two seminal figures in the history of Tibetan Buddhism in America.

2. Biographical background on H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa and historical background on the Kagyu Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism

It is difficult to overstate the role that "tulkus," (*sprul sku*) or reincarnated masters, have played in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. These reincarnated masters

serve as the spiritual heads of many Tibetan Buddhist lineages, traditions, and monasteries and are regarded as important religious authorities by their communities. A tulku is an individual who is recognized by a Buddhist community or institution as the reincarnation of a previous master, religious leader, or lama (Tibetan for guru). Such individuals are often believed by their community to have attained liberation or enlightenment, the goal of the Buddhist path. Upon attaining liberation, it is maintained that one has gained freedom from the condition of suffering which involves being forced to undergo continual rebirth within cyclic existence.

Buddhist followers believe that, despite the personal spiritual attainment of such individuals, these reincarnated lamas have made a bodhisattva vow or commitment to continue to be reborn in the cycle of existence, manifesting out of compassion for sentient beings in order to guide them to a state of liberation as well as by passing on the Buddhist teachings. There are various systems and customs for recognizing the reincarnation of a previous important teacher or spiritual leader, which vary from tradition to tradition, but in general the reincarnated lama must be verified by another tulku of high status within that particular lineage.

The tulku system of recognizing an individual as the reincarnation of a previous master was not an established institution in Buddhist India, although the tradition of the bodhisattva vow was transmitted from India to Tibet beginning in the eighth century along with a canon of Buddhist teachings, and it was not uncommon for a highly accomplished Buddhist practitioner and teacher to be revered as an emanation of a Buddha. In Tibet, however, the tulku system became institutionalized over time, such that the reincarnations of certain masters—often leaders of particular lineages or abbots of

monasteries—are customarily searched for after their death, recognized as young children, formally reinstated to their former status through an enthronement ceremony, and given special spiritual training and religious education. One of the oldest and most important such reincarnation lines to be initiated in Tibet was that of the Karmapas.

The Karmapas serve as the head of the Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje is regarded as the sixteenth reincarnation of the First Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa (karma pa dus gsum mkhyen pa, 1110–1193), who was the founder of the Karma Kagyu (karma bka' brgyud) tradition and a student of the major Kagyu forefather, Gampopa Sonam Rinchen (sgam po pa bsod nam rin chen, 1079–1153). The teachings that were to form the core of the Kagyu tradition were introduced to Tibet by the great translator of Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Tibetan, Marpa Chokyi Lodro (mar pa chos kyi blo gros, 1002/1012-1097). Marpa travelled to India and studied with a number of Indian Buddhist masters, but his principal teacher was Nāropa (eleventh century), whose principal teacher was in turn the yogi and mahāsiddha (great accomplished practitioner) Tilopa (tenth-eleventh centuries). Tilopa is considered to be the first human in the lineage of this tradition, since he is held to have received instructions in the practice of Mahāmudrā directly from the tantric Buddha Vajradhāra himself.

Marpa had four principal disciples who were regarded as his spiritual sons, one of whom was the renowned yogi Milarepa (mi la ras pa, 1052–1135), and it was Milarepa who was to become the teacher of Gampopa. Although Gampopa was originally a monk in the Kadampa (bka' gdams pa) tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, after becoming a student of Milarepa, he is regarded as responsible for establishing the Kagyu path as a

combination of the Kadampa teachings on the stages of the path (lam rim) with the teachings on Mahāmudrā that he received from Milarepa. Gampopa recognized his student, Dusum Khyenpa, as the first Karmapa and a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, the Buddha of compassion, who is understood by the tradition to have been prophesied by the Buddha in the Samādhirāja Sūtra (Ghosh 1982, 37).

H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje was born at Den Khog in the Kham (khams) region of eastern Tibet near the Yangtse River in 1923 within an aristocratic family named Ah Thub to his father, Tsewang Norbu (tshe dbang nor bu), and mother, Kalsang Choden (kal bzang chos ldan) (Jamgon Kongtrul 1982, 6). Even before his birth, while his mother, Kalsang Choden was pregnant, Dzokchen Tulku Chokyi Dorje (rdzog chen sprul sku chos kyi rdo rje), the head of the Nyingma Monastery of Dzokchen (rdzogs chen), predicted that she was carrying the tulku of the Fifteenth Karmapa Khakyab Dorje (mkha' khyab rdo rje) and advised her to give birth in a cave called "Lion Sky Castle," which was associated with the Indian Buddhist master, Padmasambhava, who had played a major role in the dissemination of Buddhist teachings to Tibet, having come to Tibet in the eighth century at the invitation of the Tibetan King Trisong Detsen (khri srong lde btsan) (742–797?) (ibid.).

Historically, it was a custom among the Karmapas to write a letter before passing which provided instructions for finding the subsequent tulku. After the birth of Kalsang Choden's son, the Eleventh Situ Padma Wangchuk Gyalpo (si tu padma dbang phyug rgyal po, 1886-1952), who was one of the Karmapa's four chief disciples and who occupied a regency position in the Karma Kagyu tradition, opened the letter that had been left by the Fifteenth Karmapa, which is said to have provided a detailed description of the

home where the tulku would be born, whereupon a search party was sent to discover the child (Jamgon Kongtrul 1982, 7). It is said that the description of the tulku's home in the letter precisely characterized the home of Tsewang Norbu and Kalsang Choden, and their son was recognized as the Sixteenth Karmapa.

At the age of seven, the child was sent to receive ordination as a lifetime lay practitioner of Buddhism from Situ Rinpoche and Jamgon Kongtul Rinpoche ('jam mgon kong sprul rin po che) of Palpung (dpal spungs) who is another of the Karmapa's four chief disciples, and about a year later, he was enthroned by Situ Rinpoche as the Sixteenth Karmapa at Palpung Monastery, having been presented with the Vajra Crown and robes of the Karmapa which were brought from Tsurpu (mtshur phu) in central Tibet. Just two months later, the Sixteenth Karmapa performed the Vajra Crown ceremony for the first time at a place called Gyina Gang (gyi na gang) (Jamgon Kongtrul 1982, 7). The "Vajra Crown ceremony," which is also known as the "Black Crown ceremony," is a ritual unique to the Karmapa line of reincarnations. During this ceremony, the Karmapa places the traditional Black Crown on his head embodying the spiritual power and authority of his lineage.

The Karmapa's Vajra Crown has been passed down from one Karmapa to the next during the successively recognized tulkus since the time of the Fifth Karmapa, Deshin Shekpa (1384–1415). The Fifth Karmapa was gifted the crown by the Emperor of the Ming Dynasty in China. The Emperor reported having beheld a vision of a black crown above the Fifth Karmapa's head while he was conducting a ritual ceremony, whereupon the Emperor had a replica made in the image of his vision and offered it to the Fifth Karmapa (Namgyal, in Levine, 2013, 32).

The young Sixteenth Karmapa studied with Kangar Rinpoche (Kang dkar Rin po che), a preeminent Kagyu scholar, who was also a teacher to the renowned scholar from the Sakya tradition, Deshung Rinpoche. At the age of twenty-three, the Sixteenth Karmapa received full ordination as a monk from Situ Rinpoche, in addition to many teachings including the "Treasury of Extensive Teachings" (Bka' mdzod) of Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye ('jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha yas, 1813-1899) as well as transmission for the "Knowing One Liberates All" (Gcig shes kun grol) collection of the Ninth Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje (dbang phyug rdo rje) (Jamgon Kongtrul 1982, 9). His Holiness also received the complete empowerments and transmissions from Tertön Chokgyur Lingpa (gter ston mchog gyur gling pa, 1829-1870). The Karmapa continued to be educated and receive transmissions of the central teachings and practices of the Kagyu lineage as well as other traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

During the 1950s, gradually more severe hostilities developed between the Chinese People's Liberation Army and the Tibetan people, and the Buddhist communities, traditions, and teachings faced serious threat. In 1959, a number of major Kagyu lamas fled from Central Tibet to Bhutan, including Situ Rinpoche and Jamgon Kongtrul, who escaped to Kalingpong, India. Eventually, later that same year, the Sixteenth Karmapa too was forced to escape from his seat in Tsurphu by traveling through the Himalayas to Bhutan for refuge, dressed in the guise of a layperson (Jamgon Kongtrul 1982, 13).

Throughout history, the successive Karmapas had been head spiritual advisors to the kings of both Bhutan and Sikkim, and thus the Karma Kagyu lineage had a close relationship with both these Buddhist countries, who both welcomed the Sixteenth

Karmapa into exile. The government of India also issued an official invitation to the Sixteenth Karmapa, having also welcomed His Holiness the Dalai Lama into exile and assisted with his resettlement. The Sixteenth Karmapa elected to establish his seat in exile in Sikkim, and the King of Sikkim gifted him 84 acres of land at Rumtek where the Karmapa presided over the building of the monastery which would become the new main seat of the Karma Kagyu Tradition, known as Shedrup Chokhor Ling (Jamgon Kongtrul 1982, 14). The construction of the monastery began in 1963 and was completed in 1967, whereupon it housed and educated more than 250 monks.

In the following years, upon the instruction of the Karmapa, numerous lamas of the Kagyu tradition began travelling abroad and teaching throughout the world, founding hundreds of monasteries and dharma centers across Asia, Europe, Australia, Canada, and America. The Sixteenth Karmapa too began to give teachings, empowerments, and transmissions to students across Asia, and in 1974, he travelled outside of Asia for the first time. The Karmapa undertook a five-month teaching tour, visiting America, Canada, and Europe. It was during this tour that the Karmapa forged a special relationship with the Hopi Native Americans during his stop in Arizona, which was heralded as a prophecy-fulfilling event by the Hopis that culminated in the cessation of a long drought (Jamgon Kongtrul 1982, 16). At this time as well, the Karmapa received a donation of 400 acres in upstate New York for the construction of a monastery, which would serve as his North American seat. He was similarly offered 500 acres in France. While in Europe, the Karmapa received an invitation to meet with Pope John the 23rd, whereupon the two religious leaders spent several days together discussing how to foster global religious harmony.

The Karmapa undertook a second international teaching tour in 1977 and a third in 1980. As a part of this tour, the Karmapa was invited by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche to come to the United States. In the following year, while in India, His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa became ill and travelled to America to seek medical care, but passed away in 1981 in Chicago at the age of 59 years old.

3. Biographical background on Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche was born in 1939 in the town of Geje in the Nangchen region of Kham (Eastern Tibet) to his father, Yeshe Dargye and mother, Tungtso Drölma (Trungpa 2000, 25). The Tenth Trungpa Rinpoche Karma Chökyi Nyinje (Chos kyi nyin byed, 1879–1939), who was one of the most important lines of reincarnated lamas in the Zurmang Kagyu tradition in the region of Zurmang, Kham, passed away in 1938. Shortly thereafter, the monks of the Dütsi-til Monastery at Zurmang requested H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa to help them find the tulku, or reincarnation, of this important teacher. Several months later, the Karmapa relayed a vision he had in a letter, wherein he said that the Trungpa tulku was born five days' journey north of Zurmang in a place that sounded like "ge de," to a family with two children, the son being the reincarnated lama (ibid., 26). Subsequently, before an envoy from Dütsi-til could be sent out in search of the child, the Karmapa sent word of a second vision he had beheld, in which he had clearly seen that the tulku's family home faced south, that they owned a big red dog, and that the father's name was Yeshe Dargye.

The search party visited Geje and sent a list of names to the Karmapa of one-year-old children from the village, but the Karmapa rejected them, correctly surmising that they had only surveyed the village for names of children born to prominent families, and

he sent them back there (ibid., 26). This time, they found the home and family that matched the Karmapa's description. Having brought the young boy back to Dütsi-til Monastery in Zurmang, he was administered a test customarily used to verify the identity of young, reincarnated lamas in Tibetan Buddhism. Set before the boy, about thirteen months of age, were a number of items: a pair of similar looking walking sticks and a pair of similar looking rosaries. One item of each pair was a possession of the previous Tenth Trungpa Rinpoche, while the other was not, and the boy was asked to select those items that belonged to him. In each case, he correctly identified the item belonging to the Tenth Trungpa Rinpoche, which was deemed to confirm his identification as the reincarnation of the lama (ibid. 28). He was subsequently enthroned as the Eleventh Trungpa Rinpoche at Dütsi-til Monastery. The Karmapa was present and bestowed upon the child the vows of a lifetime lay practitioner (upasaka) of Buddhism.

The young Trungpa Rinpoche was trained in the Zurmang Kagyu tradition, which traces its origin to the fourteenth century founder, Trung Mase Lodrö Rinchen (Drung rma se Blo gros rin chen, 1386－1423), who was a student of the Fifth Karmapa Deshin Shekpa (De bzhin gshesg pa, 1384–1415), who recognized Trung Mase as the emanation of the great Indian yogi and mahasiddha, Tilopa (c. 988–1069), to whom the larger Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism traces its origins. Thereupon, the Fifth Karmapa transmitted to Trung Mase the teachings that formed the core of the Zurmang Whispering Lineage (zur mang snyan rgyud).

The Second Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Pema Drimé Lekpé Lodrö (Padma Dri med legs pa'i blo gros, 1901-1960) of Shechen (Zhe chen) Monastery in the Dergé (Sde dge) county of Kham, Eastern Tibet, became Trungpa Rinpoche's principal teacher, or

guru (Trungpa 2000, 59). While Trungpa Rinpoche was spending time at Shechen Monastery, Jamgpon Kongtrul recommended that Trungpa Rinpoche study with Khenpo Gangshar Wangpo (Mkhan po Gang shar dbang po, 1925–?), who was a senior monk from Shechen Monastery and who became another important teacher of Trungpa's. Trungpa's own unconventional approach to teaching Buddhism in America might have been influenced in certain respects by Khenpo Gangshar, who is well-known for his unconventional behavior.

When it came time for Trungpa Rinpoche to return to his home monastery of Dütsi-til in Zurmang to resume his responsibilities there, he invited Khenpo Gangshar to come lead the new monastic institute that Trunpga Rinpoche had established there. Khenpo Gangshar presided over Trungpa Rinpoche's education until he gained the title of a Khenpo in 1957. That same year, with the changing times owing to the impending threat of the Chinese Communists, Khenpo Gangshar made radical changes to the structure of the monastic institute, opening up the entire curriculum usually reserved for monks to all individuals including laymen and laywomen, and requested that hermits who were in lifetime retreat in seclusion return to the monastery to assist teaching (Mukpo and Gimian 2006, 67).

Khenpo Gangshar apparently died within two years of coming to Zurmang, but was suddenly resuscitated and, after this serious illness, his behavior is said to have altered dramatically. While before he behaved like a reserved monk, after this episode he began to act in unpredictable ways, renouncing his monastic vows, engaging in a romantic relationship, openly teaching instructions that were ordinarily kept secret due to their profundity, engaging in socially outrageous behavior of various kinds, and

embodying what is known as the "crazy wisdom" approach commonly associated with mahāsiddhas, or great yogis who use unconventional methods as a means of teaching (Hayward 2007, 329-30; Khenchen Thrangu 2011, 5). Then one day, just as mysteriously, he is said to have resumed his former personality and behavior, claiming to have completed the activities that he had returned from the dead to carry out. Not long after, the Chinese People's Liberation Army invaded and occupied the monasteries of Zurmang, and Khenpo Gangshar was imprisoned where he later died at an unknown date.

In 1959, at the age of twenty, Trungpa Rinpoche managed to escape the Chinese occupation of Zurmang and in a nine-month long perilous journey crossed the Himalayas with a group of other refugees, finally arriving in India on January 24, 1960 (Trungpa 2000, 248). During his first years in India, Trungpa Rinpoche began to study English and, together with Akong Tulku (A dkon sprul sku, 1939–2013) Rinpoche and with the help of Freda Bedi, he founded the Young Lamas Home School, a school for tulkus to help carry on the traditional education for these young religious leaders in exile (Prebish 1999, 45; Trungpa 2000, 251).

Trungpa Rinpoche received a Spalding Fellowship in 1963 to study comparative religion, philosophy, and art at Oxford University in England (Prebish 1999, 45; Trungpa 2000, 252). During his time in the United Kingdom, Trungpa Rinpoche founded Samye-Ling in Scotland together with Akong Rinpoche, which was the first Tibetan meditation center in the West. Trungpa Rinpoche was involved in a serious automobile accident, and not long afterwards, he gave up his monastic vows in 1969 and married a young British woman, Diana Pybus, the following year. He then moved to the United States to take up residence at a meditation center in Barnet, Vermont, which later became known as

Karme-Choling (Prebish 1999, 45). During his time in the United States, he founded an international network of religious centers under the umbrella organization, Vajradhatu, as well as numerous secular ventures organized under the Nalanda Foundation (ibid.).

Chapter III:

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's transmission of Buddhist teachings in the American context

Having arrived in the United States in 1970, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche was one of the earliest teachers to popularize Tibetan Buddhism in America. And as Charles Prebish observes about Trungpa Rinpoche's impact, "There can be little doubt that the most famous Tibetan Buddhist in the West has been Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche" (1999, 44). Although Trungpa Rinpoche himself was well-trained in a traditional monastic context in the Zurmang Kagyu Buddhist teachings in Tibet, he took an innovative and non-traditional approach to his teaching style in America, which developed out of his immersion in the American culture and an understanding of the ways in which the "American mind-set" differed from the traditional Tibetan context. America in the 1970s was a diverse place with people from many different perspectives. Making sweeping generalizations, of course, involves some form of misrepresentation and oversimplification, but the observation of certain general trends can be helpful in understanding any complex phenomenon.

In general, it can be said that most Americans in the 1970s had not been exposed to orthodox forms of Tibetan Buddhism, which includes the doctrines of reincarnation and karma that would have been unfamiliar to most. In an effort to render the core beliefs of Buddhism in a way that would be approachable and palatable to Americans in the 1970s, Trungpa Rinpoche radically reframed many of the Buddhist teachings, as can be seen in his voluminous written works as well as the many available transcripts of his teachings.

To analyze Trungpa Rinpoche's transmission of Buddhism as a "translation style," it can be described as a kind of free interpretation, often only loosely inspired by the original source material. For instance, in *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*, Trungpa Rinpoche presents an account of the six realms of Buddhist cosmology in merely psychological terms, revising what are traditionally understood to be literal realms of existence into which one might be reborn as merely figurative (1988, 1-40). He says,

> The confused mind finds different styles of occupation. Therefore the six realms of the world can be said to be psychological states, rather than external situations such as a heaven above and a hell below. (Nichtern 2016, 133)

Here, Trungpa Rinpoche describes how one might psychologically inhabit any number of these realms as a human even in a single day. He takes inspiration from the teaching that each realm has a predominant destructive emotion, like desire, anger, or jealousy. Trungpa Rinpoche highlights the fact that, as humans, we each experience versions of these mental afflictions through the course of daily life, and our psychological journey of cycling through these destructive emotional habit patterns might be understood by analogy with the traditional Buddhist teaching that we cycle through literal realms of rebirth as a result of our destructive emotions, all of which are rooted in fundamental ignorance about the nature of ourselves and the world. Here we see the blending of the traditional with the non-traditional as a form of detraditionalization. The concepts of states of rebirth are transformed into psychological states, making these teachings more accessible and useful to an audience who was not brought up with the traditional Buddhist belief in karma and rebirth.

Chogyam Trungpa went farther than merely reframing certain traditional Buddhist teachings in purely psychological terms. He also fashioned a new tradition, called "Shambhala Buddhism," which promoted a vision of creating an enlightened society within this very life, rather than focusing exclusively on the transcendent goal of nirvana and enlightenment. Janet Burns, for instance, treats Trungpa's Shambhala Buddhism as a "new religious movement," outlining how he innovated new teachings that deviated from traditional Tibetan Buddhist teachings, including his idea that an enlightened society would result from practicing the Shambhalian style of meditation. Burns uses Weber's famous typology of "paths to salvation" for analyzing world religions into the two types: ascetic religions and mystical religions. Weber categorizes early Buddhism as a kind of "world-rejecting mysticism" due to the combination of the emphasis on monastic "non-attachment to homelife and material possessions," on the one hand, and the emphasis on "mystical illuminative concentration" on the other (Burns 2013, 80). Burns observes that Trungpa Rinpoche's focus on rejecting "physical, psychological, and spiritual materialism" seems in line with the world-rejecting element of the mysticism that Max Weber used to describe Buddhism more generally.

Yet, on closer analysis, Trungpa Rinpoche's response is not to reject the world but instead to embrace action in the world. This can be seen in Trungpa Rinpoche's vision of Shambhala as an enlightened society that followers may participate in creating in this very lifetime. Burns thus concludes that Trungpa Rinpoche's Shambhala path to salvation is a "combination of inner-worldly mysticism and asceticism that has consequences for the social behavior of its adherents" (2013, 82).

Not only did Trungpa Rinpoche offer a unique conceptual framing of the Buddhist teachings for the American audience, but the format of his presentation of Buddhist teachings in America differed radically from the traditional format of a Buddhist "lama," or teacher, dressed in monastic robes sitting atop a throne, reading aloud and providing commentary on a given text, or else presiding over a traditional ritual ceremony. Instead, Trungpa Rinpoche, who had given up his monastic robes and married a British woman, taught in a suit and tie sitting in an ordinary chair. He would often teach using a dialogue or discussion format, engaging in public dialogue with many of the most renowned spiritual figures and cultural icons of the day, including Krishnamurti, Alan Ginsburg, Ram Dass, and many others.

Trungpa's innovative style for presenting the Buddhist teachings did not happen all at once, but in this case a type of detraditionalization happened over time and in stages. If we look at the different stages of this development, we can observe that this new and free style of presentation was shaped as much by the audiences' needs as through Trungpa's creativity. For this reason, we can describe Trungpa's approach as transmission of Buddhism in a loose, rather than literal "translation style," to use Galván-Álvarez's (2013) metaphor and interpretive lens for understanding Trungpa's approach to transmitting Buddhist teachings to a new context. With a loose translation style of the kind employed by Trungpa Rinpoche, the target language and context profoundly shape the style of the delivery of the teachings, while a literal translation style would strive to mirror the form of the original delivery method more faithfully. While both loose and literal translation styles strive to convey the same meaning, their forms may vary radically.

To illustrate Trungpa Rinpoche's loose translation style, two specific stages in the development of his teaching style are described and analyzed below. The first stage is Trungpa's first real effort at teaching Westerners, which occurred mainly in England, and the second stage is the more developed and refined approach, which we see taught in North America. The first stage is informative about why Trungpa may have seen the need for detraditionalization and the second stage exemplifies the more mature form of the loose "translation style" of Trungpa's teachings style.

1. Encountering the West

Forced from Tibet, Chogyam Trungpa, like many Tibetans at that time, took refuge in India. It was here that he first encountered Westerners. He would stay in India from 1959 to 1963. It was during this time that he was inspired to study Western languages so that he could spread the dharma in the West (Trungpa 2000, 251).

In 1963, with the support of the Tibet Society of the United Kingdom and the help of his English language tutor, Chogyam Trungpa received a Spalding sponsorship to attend Oxford University. He would later go on to be the first Tibetan to become Her Majesty's royal subject (Trungpa 2000, 254). At Oxford, he studied comparative religion and philosophy as well as other subjects, including fine arts, to which he took a liking.

While finding his time at Oxford intellectually satisfying, Trungpa felt that this setting was not an appropriate platform to allow him to begin spreading the dharma in the West. He writes,

> But there was also a sense of dissatisfaction. My ambition was to teach and spread the dharma in the West... Nevertheless, there was as yet no situation in which I could begin to make a full and proper presentation of the teachings. (Trungpa 2010, 262)

We might wonder what was deficient about the situation at this time, and it could be that at this stage, Trungpa was concerned with the right setting in which to present the Buddhist teachings and that a more traditional setting, such as a monastery, would have seemed to be more suitable than an academic center like Oxford. Interestingly, much later, Trungpa would be teaching at packed venues in many universities across the United States.

An important step towards fulfilling his ambition of finding a more suitable setting occurred when he received the donation of a Buddhist contemplative center in Scotland, which he would name Samye-Ling Meditation Centre. However, although having the right setting to teach at—a Buddhist center—was an important condition for allowing Trungpa Rinpoche to begin the process of teaching Buddhism to Westerners, it did not prove to be sufficient for fulfilling his vision. Trungpa says, "the scale was small... and the people that did come to participate seem to be missing the point" (Trungpa 2010, 263). For some reason, the students themselves seemed not to be able to receive the transmission. It is at this point that we begin to see a shift in Trungpa Rinpoche's understanding of the mindset of Western students and the growing recognition that a new approach to the Buddhist teachings and a new style of delivery and even different emphases may be required in order to convey the core messages of the Buddhist teachings that he wished to impart.

It would be natural to think that a new approach to teaching a subject might happen through trial and error, that through experimenting with presenting different topics to students in the UK, a new approach to teaching Buddhism for this new audience would emerge. However, at this point, Trungpa interestingly looks to the tradition as a

source of innovation. In 1968, Trungpa returned to the east and began a ten-day retreat in a sacred retreat site as part of a visit to Bhutan. Reflecting on this time, Trungpa says,

> During my retreat, I was able to reflect on my life and particularly how to propagate the Dharma in the West. I invoked Guru Rinpoche and the Ka-gyu forefathers to provide vision for the future. (2010, 264)

Here, we see Trunpga Rinpoche invoking the tradition at the same time as he is innovating a new way of communicating these teachings. With his prayer at this sacred site of the tradition, it is as if Trungpa wishes to seek permission, authority, and blessings of his spiritual forefathers before embarking on his new path of the innovative presentation style that he developed for the Western audience. In so doing, it seems as though Trungpa Rinpoche is attempting to diffuse any tension between innovation and authenticity. Thus he seeks the sanctioning of his detraditionalization process from tradition itself. At the same time, his new vision seemed to ask him to step out of the comfort of tradition. He says, "I began to realize I would have to take daring steps in my life" (2010, 264).

Central to this new vision of teaching dharma to the West was the idea that the elimination of what he called “spiritual materialism” would open the way for a presentation of genuine dharma (Hayward 2008, 6). In his book *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, Trungpa Rinpoche describes spiritual materialism as follows:

> Walking the spiritual path properly is a very subtle process; it is not something to jump into naively. There are numerous sidetracks which lead to a distorted, ego-centered vision of spirituality; we can deceive ourselves into thinking we are developing spiritually when instead we are strengthening our egocentricity through spiritual techniques. This fundamental distortion may be referred to as spiritual materialism. (1973, 1)

Trungpa Rinpoche taught that the ego can appropriate anything for its use, even the spiritual path that aims to undercut the ego itself. If the ego takes control of the very

path we embarked on to overcome the ego, then, Trungpa Rinpoche contended, one would end up merely mimicking a false form of spirituality rather than genuinely practicing the dharma, by focusing on one's exterior appearance and activities rather than on transforming one's mind. According to Trungpa Rinpoche, one who has succumbed to spiritual materialism will prioritize, for example, wearing spiritual beads and attending teachings, rather than making an earnest effort at meditation. Trungpa observes that, "whenever teachings come to a country from abroad, the problem of spiritual materialism is intensified" (Trungpa 1973, 20). Trungpa Rinpoche observed that when a new culture encounters a new tradition, there may be a fascination with and romanticization of the form over the meaning. Since the fascination with form over substance undermines the genuine adoption of a spiritual tradition, addressing this kind of "spiritual materialism" became a central element in Trungpa Rinpoche's new approach to teaching Buddhism. Interestingly, it was by modifying the form that Trungpa Rinpoche sought to shift the focus to the substance of the teachings. It was by detraditionalizing the form of the Buddhist teachings to a certain degree, by blending it with elements of Western culture to "normalize" it for the new target audience, that Trungpa Rinpoche sought to emphasize the meaning and substance over the form.

Trungpa returned to the UK and the Samye Ling meditation center with this new vision for teaching dharma in the West. However, there seems to have been some resistance to his new approach from the other Tibetan teachers at Samye Ling, who took a more conservative approach to the tradition, and Trungpa would eventually have to leave the meditation center.

At this time, another significant event occurred that was to shape the form of Trungpa's presentation of Buddhism and push him further towards a more unorthodox presentation. Trungpa had a car accident that left him paralyzed on his left side. Trungpa says, "in spite of my pain, my mind was very clear; there was a strong sense of communication—finally the message had got through—and I felt a sense of relief and even humor" (Trungpa 2010, 264). It is at this point that Trungpa felt that the robes of a monk were an obstacle to his being able to communicate his message. This new way of communicating the Buddhist teachings also required a new physical presentation, one that removed some of the cultural barriers between the teacher and the audience. Trungpa saw giving up his robes as an act of serving his mission of helping to disseminate the teachings of Buddhism (Trungpa 2000, 255). This was a very visible form of detraditionalizing the presentation of Buddhism. It is at this time that he starts to believe that North America might be more open to, and have greater potential for, receiving the teachings of Buddhism in the way that he was communicating them.

2. Moving to America

It was in North America that Trungpa Rinpoche would fully develop his new way of teaching the dharma with an emphasis on calling out the mistake of thinking that the form of a religion could stand in for spiritual realization. He considered his first students in the United States to be hippies, and although they may have been undisciplined by monastic standards, they had a certain open-mindedness that enabled him to work with them in a way that he had found difficult before. He comments, "Here too people still seemed to miss the point of Dharma, though not in the same way as in Britain, but in

American free-thinking style" (Trungpa 2010, 266). He continued to challenge his students to see and reject their own versions of spiritual materialism.

Importantly, these innovations are not justified through a criticism of tradition, but through a claim that there are new needs brought about by the circumstances of a specific audience in a particular time and place in history. Someone who wants to justify their break with a tradition might claim that there are problems with the traditional way of teaching. For example, they might claim that the tradition has deteriorated and become overly focused on rituals, or that it has become dominated by a hierarchical priestly class at the expense of parishioners. But Trungpa Rinpoche's detraditionalization is not a rejection or critique of the tradition, but a recognition of the unique needs of particular audiences.

Although it was Trungpa Rinpoche's initial experience that Buddhist communities in America seemed to miss the point of the dharma, an encounter with Suzuki Roshi's Zen Buddhist community, which he described as a "breath of fresh air," demonstrated to him that it was possible to transmit authentic Buddhism in the West (2010, 269). It was perhaps the encounter with Suzuki Roshi's community that influenced Trunpa Rinpoche to focus his teaching instruction on the practice of pure sitting meditation (śamathā and vipaśyanā). This traditional style of formal meditation would accompany Trungpa Rinpoche's dharma lectures, which focused on the topics that warned against spiritual materialism and presented the core teachings of Buddhism as "translated" into the American context, unmoored from more traditional texts and formulations. This combination of practice and lectures became very popular, and Trungpa Rinpoche created an organization that would grow to have centers across the

country. It was this blend of traditional sitting practice with a more modern lecture that described Trungpa Rinpoche's more developed teaching style at this stage.

As Trungpa Rinpoche's teaching activities expanded, he would continue to try to balance the need not to be confined to a traditional presentation of the dharma with the need for authenticity. He initiated creative endeavors in order to create a "Buddhist culture which would transcend the cultural characteristics of particular nationalities," and at the same time he initiated programs of advanced Buddhist studies based on the works of traditional masters of the Kagyu lineage (2010, 271). Trungpa Rinpoche seems to have considered his experiment quite successful and comments that at this point, "my relationship with my students had become entirely natural, and the flow of communications between us was effortless" (2000, 261). It was at this point, in 1974, that Trungpa Rinpoche invited the head of the Karma Kagyu tradition, His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa, to teach in America.

As we will see in the next chapter, His Holiness the Karmapa presented the Tibetan Buddhist teachings in a far more conservative and traditional style, which might be likened to a more literal or strict style of interpretation, to continue with Galván-Álvarez's metaphor of translation for the transmission of religious teachings to a new culture. The Karmapa's visit would prompt further developments in Trungpa Rinpoche's community due to the expectations of the traditional protocol for hosting a lineage head and conducting ceremonies within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Yet even in this case, as Trungpa Rinpoche encouraged his students to adopt a higher degree of formality, he advised them to manifest that formality according to their own American cultural norms rather than adopting Tibetan cultural conventions. For example, he advised the men

(many of whom were formerly “hippies”) to wear suits and ties out of respect for the Karmapa rather than Tibetan garb (Hayward 2008, 118). Once again, in keeping with his message of avoiding spiritual materialism by focusing on the substance over the form, Trungpa Rinpoche emphasized signaling respect for the Karmapa as the meaning signified by respectful attire. And yet again, in his characteristic style, Trungpa utilized a modification in the traditional form (from Tibetan cultural formalities to American suits and ties) to help draw attention away from the form while at the same time underscoring the meaning carried by the form.

Chapter IV:

H.H. the Sixteenth Karmapa's Transmission of Buddhist Teachings in the American context

Trungpa Rinpoche invited the head of the Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rikpe Dorje, to America for a teaching tour in 1973. At that time, the Sixteenth Karmapa toured America, visiting different Buddhist establishments across the country and meeting with Buddhist teachers from various traditions as well as representatives and other dignitaries. While there is a dearth of secondary literature about the Karmapa's visit to America and his influence on American Buddhism, we have numerous first-hand accounts of his impact. These resources will be drawn on to demonstrate how the Karmapa's approach to transmitting Buddhist teachings to the American context can be understood as a strict translation style by contrast with Trungpa Rinpoche's loose translation style.

While in America, His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa presented and conducted himself in the traditional way expected of a high lama from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, albeit in a land which had relatively recently encountered Buddhism. The emphasis that the tradition places on the ceremonial role of a high lama can be seen in the account of the Karmapa's second trip abroad by Kongtrul Rinpoche, another high-ranking Tibetan lama from the Karma Kagyu school who wrote a biography of the Karmapa's activities. Kongtrul says,

> His Holiness bestowed many teachings and performed the Vajra Crown ceremony, besides fulfilling the various other spiritual needs of individual disciples. At the same time, he initiated the establishment of some twenty new centers and performed the consecration ceremonies for the construction of several monasteries. (1982, 17)

This describes not only a very traditional approach to presenting Tibetan Buddhism, but also what might be described as a very strict, or literal, style of translation.

For Trungpa Rinpoche's community in America, this literal and conservative approach would mean exposure to a more traditional version of Tibetan Buddhism and a steep learning curve of the tradition's expectation of how a high-ranking Tibetan lama is to be hosted. As Hayward describes,

> when His Holiness arrived at the airport in New York, Rinpoche prostrated to him right there on the tarmac, and from that moment on Rinpoche went into an energy state that we had never seen before. Everything changed… His Holiness finally arrived in Boulder, with his entourage of monks blowing their gyalings, instruments like Tibetan oboes. Rinpoche, wearing a Tibetan outer garment, lead His Holiness into Karma Dzong carrying burning incense in the traditional way. His Holiness gave many teachings and abhishekas—blessings or empowerments. (2008, 114)

While Trungpa Rinpoche's students were used to his more Western style of presenting Buddhism by means of a typical group meditation session and teachings delivered in a lecture format, the Karmapa's presentation of Buddhist teachings was much more likely to take the form of granting blessings for Buddhist temples and centers, conducting ceremonies, and giving empowerments. For example, the Karmapa would commonly conduct the refuge ceremony by means of which a person becomes a Buddhist, as well as the Black Crown ceremony, which, as described above, is a ceremony for which the Karmapas are famous and is considered one of the most sacred ceremonies in all of Tibetan Buddhism.

This encounter with this more literal style of transmission of Buddhism had a significant transformative effect on Trungpa Rinpoche's organization. This effect is described by Hayward as follows:

> Altogether, Rinpoche showed a completely new, devotional aspect of himself. Everything he did demonstrated his tremendous sense of devotion and respect, and he treated the Karmapa with the greatest of dignity. He even bent his shoulders in the traditional Tibetan style of humbleness when he spoke to him. This was a turning point for Rinpoche's students, because we began to realize how to show love and respect for a great teacher and so we saw how we could really show our own love and respect for Rinpoche. Up until that time, we had been so casual—calling him "the Rimp" and dropping in on him whenever we felt like it. But after the first visit of His Holiness Karmapa, our way of relating to Rinpoche, as well as his teaching style, began to change. During his Naropa Institute summer courses, while he occasionally wore a suit or sports coat he also wore baggy pants with colorful suspenders and short sleeved sport shirts. But this was to be no more and that summer was the occasion for many of us to purchase our first suits. The era of casualness was over and he was more formal with his students as well as in teaching… The Karmapa's visit was a major turning point in the life of the sangha, and in Rinpoche's teaching in the West altogether. (2008, 118-119)

Trungpa Rinpoche, who had engaged in the project of detraditionalization described in the previous chapter, now led the way for his students towards an encounter with a more traditional presentation of the teachings. This encounter transformed the organization in such a way that both traditionalized it and, at the same time, continued the detraditionalization. An example of this process can be seen in the formality that surrounds the hosting of a high lama; traditionally, when meeting a high lama, one wears formal attire, and so here this tradition was taken up but with a twist. The formal attire was not Tibetan formal clothing but Western suits.

It is important to note that it is possible that it was this very detraditionalization project that Trungpa had undertaken, and his loose style of transmission, which now made it possible for the students to be open to the transformational encounter with the tradition and the more literal style of transmission. It is also possible that because the detraditionalization looked to the tradition for its inspiration (as discussed in the previous chapter) that this transformational encounter with the tradition was even possible. In a

way, it could be said that with the Karmapa's visit, Trungpa Rinpoche's detraditionalization project, sourced from and inspired by the tradition, advanced even further. As, Galván-Álvarez notes,

> An absolutely crucial event in this process of obtaining acknowledgement was the visit of the Karmapa, the head lama of the Karma Kagyu school equal in rank to the Dalai Lama, to Trungpa's centres in 1974. The Karmapa was both favourably impressed by Trungpa's success in gathering and training students and somewhat reassured that his eccentricities were in line with tradition, if not with convention. At the same time, Trungpa also made great economic and organisational efforts to show the Karmapa that despite the fact that "traditional Tibetans [. . .] proclaimed that he had gone off the rails" (Hayward 2008, p. 119) he had not forgotten to show respect for and devotion to his teachers and abide by the formalities of the Kagyu lineage. The visit seems to have had quite an impact on Trungpa's following, since it was one of the first occasions on which they were asked to dress formally. This was meant to show the Karmapa that Trungpa had not been dragged into hippy debauchery but instead had transformed his hippy students by introducing them to the formalities of Tibetan Buddhism. (2013, 119)

The Karmapa's visit had a transformative impact not only on Trungpa's organization, but the entire scene of Tibetan Buddhism in America.

The Sixteenth Karmapa was perhaps most well-known in America for the Black Crown ceremony, during which he holds the traditional Black Crown to his head. The Karmapa reached many people in this way. On his second visit to America in 1977, he bestowed the Black Crown Ceremony to over 10,000 people in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and Boston (Levine 2013, 154). Throughout the centuries there are, in fact, numerous reports of many visions of Karmapas wearing the black crown in the absence of a physical hat, for all of the Karmapas are said to "manifest the Inner Black Crown" as the "everpresent…spontaneous manifestation of ultimate wisdom" (Namgyal, in Levine 2013, 31). But during special ceremonies, the Karmapa will place the physical crown to his head, and during one such ceremony, one American student reported that

she felt “blessed by a disturbingly deep penetrating glance from the Karmapa’s seemingly fathomless eyes” and she observed that many of the others present were affected by “involuntary movements during meditation” and some “were thrown into exotic forms of whirling trance” (Levine 2013, 93). This is an example of the Karmapa transmitting the Buddhist teachings via the means of ceremonial performance in much the same way that had been conducted for hundreds of years in Tibet and without the need for adaptation based on the new place or the new audience. In these circumstances, there seems to be no need for a type of detraditionalization.

Using the metaphor of religious transmission as a form of translation in the case of H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa, one could describe the Karmapa’s “translation style” as a kind of strict, literal interpretation by comparison with that of Trungpa Rinpoche. Where Trungpa Rinpoche reframed Buddhist teachings and concepts in terms that were more familiar to the American context, the Karmapa, for the most part, presided over traditional ritual ceremonies such as empowerments, and gave teachings in the traditional style of the Tibetan monastic setting. Still, the Karmapa made efforts to bridge the gap between the Tibetan and American contexts and participated in a number of multi-faith activities, including teaching at the Hindu ashram of Muktananda as well as visiting the Native American reservations of the Hopi and Navaho.

Although one might describe the Karmapa’s transmission of Buddhist teachings with the analogy of a literal translation, there are cases in the context of the Karmapa’s activities in America where the metaphor of religious transmission as a kind of translation breaks down. For instance, the Karmapa regularly conducted traditional ceremonies, such as tantric empowerments, during his time in America. These rituals

were conducted in Tibetan following the same traditional ritual texts that have been used for many centuries in Tibet. Thus, in the case of these kinds of ceremonies conducted in Tibetan, the religious transmission was neither figuratively "translated" for an American audience nor even literally translated into English. Nevertheless, these kinds of ceremonies can still be understood as a type of religious transmission which had a definite spiritual impact on the attendees, as testified by numerous first-hand accounts of American students.

Another example of a case where the metaphor of translation breaks down is the occasion of the Hopi Native Americans, when the Hopi elders recognized the Karmapa's visit, during which he gave a traditional empowerment ceremony of the Buddha Chenresig, as bringing the end of a long drought with a "deluge of rain" falling for the first time in seventy-five days. They claimed that the Karmapa fulfilled one of their prophesies, which said that "When religion in the west declines, those from the East wearing Red Hats will become true friends of the Hopi people" (Levine 2013, 152). This prophesy can be interpreted as referring to the tradition of the Karmapa, since red hats are the traditional hats of the Karmapa's Kagyu Buddhist tradition.

The Sixteenth Karmapa's manner transmitting Buddhist teachings in the American context is helpfully understood as a strict or literal translation style when seen through the lens of his impact on Trungpa Rinpoche's organization and also the first-hand accounts of people who attended his ceremonies. These accounts describe how American students were deeply impacted by the Sixteenth Karmapa's traditional presentations of Buddhism, such as the Black Crown ceremony, which were often left both literally and figuratively "untranslated" and nonetheless had a profound impact on a

new audience. The Sixteenth Karmapa left a lasting impact on Tibetan Buddhism in America, establishing a North American seat in 1978 in Woodstock, New York, called the Karma Triyana Dharmacakra, which continues to flourish as a principal center of Karma Kagyu teachings in the West (Prebish 1999, 46).

Chapter V:

Comparative Analysis of Trungpa Rinpoche and H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa's "Translation Styles" in Transmitting Buddhism in the American Context

It is clear that the "translation styles" of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and H.H. the Sixteenth Karmapa differed greatly. An act of transmitting Buddhist teachings for a new audience in a new context test the boundaries of what is considered the "tradition," and what is considered "essential," to Buddhism. In many ways, Trungpa Rinpoche tested the limits of the tradition, and according to some he passed beyond those bounds. Galván-Álvarez describes Trungpa Rinpoche's "highly original process of re-inventing tradition against various forms of criticism and censorship, both in the target and the source cultures" (2013, 111). For instance, according to one of the Sixteenth Karmapa's American students, Didi Contractor, the "Karmapa seemed quite disturbed about the way in which Chogyam Trunpga Rinpoche was modifying the traditional teachings to fit into the West and about the effect that the West was having on him. I later heard that as a result the Karmapa was quite strict with the young Shamar and Situ Rinpoches, hoping to protect them from the corrupting influence of the West" (Levine, 2013, 92). One cannot accept hearsay of this kind as an authoritative claim about the Karmapa's opinion about Trunpga Rinpoche's approach. Nevertheless, it is indicative of the awareness among American Buddhist students during the 1970s of the very different approaches of these two teachers, as well as of the fact that Trunpga Rinpoche's approach was controversial in many circles.

Trungpa Rinpoche's non-traditional approach to transmitting Buddhist teachings in the American context helped promote greater receptivity among Americans over the

more traditional and conservative approach of the Sixteenth Karmapa's teaching style. Prior to inviting H. H. the Karmapa to teach in America, Trungpa Rinpoche imparted many teachings to his American students, exposing them to key Buddhist concepts and teachings in a way that was decontextualized from many of the Tibetan cultural elements that accompany more traditional transmissions. This mirrors a similar phenomenon that one may observe with the migration of other religious movements that have initially incorporated elements of local culture to assist with adoption, and ultimately moved toward more orthodox positions.

A core question for those concerned with notions of "authenticity," "purity," and "tradition," is the cost of the initial process of "detraditionalization" by pioneers of new religious movements in new contexts. In other words, how much can be changed in the form of the teachings without changing the essential meaning? This question will likely find no clear-cut answer with universal agreement in any large global religion. Nevertheless, if we return to the example of Trungpa Rinpoche's teaching on the six realms of existence as psychological, it is clear that in this case, the essence of the teaching was not lost. The point of understanding the dominant mental afflictions of the realms, even within the most traditional framing of the teachings, is really a universal psychological message, one that applies to any sentient creature, about the nature of destructive emotions and our destructive cyclical psychological habit patterns.

Moreover, as argued in Chapter Three, Trungpa Rinpoche's approach of "cutting through spiritual materialism" may be understood as using detraditionalization of the form of the tradition as an attempt to preserve the authentic meaning of the tradition. In other words, the core principles of the tradition were prioritized by detraditionalizing the

form in which they were conveyed to be more compatible with the target culture. Thus, Trungpa Rinpoche may be regarded as focusing on the substance of the tradition over the form by reframing the core principles using language and conceptual frameworks more familiar to the conventions of the target culture. If this kind of effort of detraditionalizing the form in order to preserve the substance and meaning of the tradition is successful, as it arguably seems to have been in Trungpa Rinpoche's case, then a "loose" translation style of this kind can potentially (and perhaps counterintuitively) remain more faithful to the meaning to be transmitted than a more conservative, literal approach. This is because a highly conservative and literal approach to the transmission of a religious tradition into a new culture may risk resulting in misunderstandings on the part of new practitioners, who may mistake cultural elements of the vessel for its contents.

Despite the fact that the Karmapa took a far more traditional and conservative approach when transmitting Buddhism in America, in what has been described above as a strict translation style, his approach did not fall into this pitfall of overemphasizing the traditional form at the expense of obscuring the meaning. Rather, the Karmapa focused on the meaning, or essence, of the teachings, by engaging and connecting with individuals directly, often without using words at all, as in the case of his Black Crown ceremony, which according to the first-hand accounts surveyed above, left profound impacts on attendees in what was described by some as a kind of mind-to-mind transmission. Thus, many of the Karmapa's activities in the West, like traditional ceremonies conducted in Tibetan, still conveyed something meaningful even when left literally untranslated, demonstrating a place where Galván-Álvarez's metaphor of translation breaks down.

As shown above, rather than criticizing the tradition to justify his innovations, Trungpa Rinpoche instead focused on the unique needs of the target audience, and in this way drew on an idea that is already a core concept within the tradition known as "skillful means" (upāya). The concept of skillful means is employed in different contexts, but one of its central uses is as a hermeneutical device used to explain why the received discourses of the Buddha (the sūtras) contain conflicting teachings by appealing to the fact that in each of his discourses, the Buddha was speaking to a different audience and taking into consideration their different capacities, backgrounds, and levels of preparation. Accordingly, a skillful Buddhist teacher is considered to be one who is able to communicate the teachings in a way that is appropriate for the particular audience, meeting their unique needs sometimes in unique ways.

Moreover, one of the Buddha's teachings to monastic communities emphasized the importance of modifying the form to accommodate the time and context in which one lives, but without losing the essential meaning. In general, different translation styles have different virtues. Some translations stick more strictly to the source material, while others favor more free interpretation, taking into greater consideration how to best transmit the meaning in light of the cultural context of the target audience. This thesis has shown how Trungpa Rinpoche's translation style is more of a free interpretation, in many cases only loosely inspired by the original source material. By contrast, the Karmapa's translation style might be described as more literal, sticking closely to both the form, style, and meaning of the source material. Despite the apparent detraditionalization of Trungpa Rinpoche's approach when compared with H. H. the Sixteenth Karmapa, both teachers transmitted Buddhist teachings in different ways that preserved the essential

meaning in a new context, America in the 1970s. Moreover, Trungpa Rinpoche's non-traditional approach in transmitting Buddhist teachings in the American context helped promote greater receptivity among Americans to the more traditional and conservative approach of the Sixteenth Karmapa's teachings style.

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