Tibetan Buddhism Enters the 21st Century: Trouble in Shangri-la

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Recently both Zen and Tibetan Buddhist groups in the West have been rocked by scandals involving prominent, well established teachers with titles such as Zen master, Roshi, Rinpoche, Lama, Sakyong, and so on—who are understood by their followers and even by non-followers, to be enlightened beings. Importantly, it is the institutions—that is, the leading authorities representing these traditions—who present these leaders as enlightened beings, and this is also how they have presented themselves to a believing public.

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Sidenote

Stuart Lachs (b. 1940) is an independent scholar and long-time Ch'an/Zen practitioner. He is convinced that critical thinking is Buddhist and Buddhism is critical thinking. In the early 1990's, Lachs was introduced to an academic view of the history of Zen that contrasted with the history promulgated by the Zen institution.

He became interested in the scholarly view as a way to explain the disparity he witnessed between how the Zen institution claimed its leaders (Zen masters/roshi) behaved and what he saw first hand. Looking through both the lens of academic history and the lens of the sociology of religion and institutions demonstrates how Zen developed over time, responding to historical settings and necessities.

The institution that grew up around Zen functions to a large extent—as do most institutions—to promote and protect itself, empower its leaders and enable that power to function. Since the mid-1960's, however, Zen has suffered from repeated scandals—scandals that hurt its practitioners, caused others to leave and marred its reputation. Lachs' writings helps his readers understand how the conceptions and mythology of enlightened Zen masters beyond the understanding of ordinary people, Dharma transmission and unbroken lineage and their supporting structures impact Zen students' lives and practice. This article is Lachs' first excursion outside Ch'an/Zen and into Tibetan Buddhism.

This long-read makes use of **numeric endnotes** that open on hover and take you to the endnote at the bottom of the page on click. Clicking the blue thumbnail at the end of the listed endnotes takes you back to where it was inserted into the text.

What convinces masses are not facts,
not even invented facts,
but only the consistency of the illusion.[1]

Buddhism in the 21st century is fairly well established, both in the United States of America and in Europe. This is true for the surviving branches of Buddhism: Theravada, Zen or Chan, and Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism. Recently both Zen and Tibetan Buddhist groups in the West have been rocked by

scandals involving prominent, well established teachers with titles such as Zen master, Roshi, Rinpoche, Lama, Sakyong, and so on—who are understood by their followers and even by non-followers, to be enlightened beings. Importantly, it is the institutions—that is, the leading authorities representing these traditions—who present these leaders as enlightened beings, and this is also how they have presented themselves to a believing public.

In Zen Buddhism, the "enlightened teacher" has enormous control over the student.[2] The teacher in the Zen tradition is certified as enlightened by his or her enlightened teacher, in an unbroken lineage reaching back to the historical Buddha.

This idea of an unbroken lineage of enlightened teachers is a well-constructed myth.[3] Yet at the same time Zen practice, which can have great benefits, depends on the student's unquestioning confidence and trust in the teacher. The dark side to imputing attainment to people who do not really have it has resulted in the steady stream of abuse cases in Zen Buddhist communities, sometimes around extravagant garnering of wealth, but almost always involving sexual abuse.

This article is about similar abuses in Tibetan Buddhism, which, like Zen, offers a path to enlightenment.[4] For followers of Tibetan Buddhism in the West at least, the day-to-day results have been the same as that of the Zen sect of Buddhism. In the Tibetan case, students' absolute submission to the teacher has led to some teachers amassing extravagant wealth, and almost always to wild sexual abuse, arguably even more extreme than in Zen Buddhist communities.

Throughout this paper some people will be identified as a ***tulku***(Wyl., sprul sku).[5] Tulkus are persons who have been identified as the **emanation or reincarnation of a highly respected deceased master**. No matter whether the lineages reach back many centuries or are very recent, this tulku system is an important means by which the teachings of various schools of Tibetan Buddhism continue.[6] **The present day Dalai Lama is the fourteenth Dalai Lama of a lineage that began in 1391**. It should be noted that *lama* (Wyl., bla ma, the **Tibetan equivalent of the Sanskrit *guru*)** is a title for a Tibetan teacher of the Dharma that is different from that of a tulku. Not all lamas are tulkus but most tulkus are lamas. Similarly, not all monks are lamas.[7] When a master dies he leaves some clues on where or how to find his reincarnation. Finding the reincarnated master or tulku can be an elaborate affair, especially in the case of an important master. Usually a group of respected lamas come together to look for clues for finding the young reincarnated master.

The Karmapa, the head of the Kagyü school, is especially known for recognizing tulkus and even masters from other lineages approach the Karmapa requesting him to discover tulkus. For instance, the fifteenth Karmapa who lived into the twentieth century, recognized about 1,000 tulkus during his life.[8] In December 5-8, 1989, the fourth Tulku Conference was held in India. This event was attended by over 350 tulkus from the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and from the Bön religion, and this conference was hardly attended by all tulkus.[9] These numbers show that a tulku is not an extremely rare being.[10]

This paper will look at some of the recent scandals in the Tibetan traditions and examine how they mirror each other through institutional self-definitions, imputed attainments, and institutional guarantees of authority and orthodoxy. **Unquestioned authority is at the core of all these scandals.** I will discuss five representatives of these sanctified lineages, mentioning also a number of other high lamas as they relate to these teachers. We will see how the authenticating process along with the *samaya*—in Tibetan *damtsik* (Wyl., dam tshig)—vows pledged by their disciples empowers these

teachers as enlightened beings, who are viewed almost as superhuman by their followers, and how this process prevents virtually any critical thought about the teacher's actions.[11] This paper will thereby show how hierarchy, vows, secrecy and face-saving strategies indulged abuse.

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble.
Its what you know for sure that just ain't so.[12]

What Are We Talking About?

Three "scandals" involving sex, alcohol, drugs, money and some combination of these elements, have rocked the world of Tibetan Buddhism in the West over the past three years, though these scandals had their origins as long as forty years ago. The teachers, involved with titles that translate as "Earth Protector,"—in Tibetan *Sakyong* (Wyl., sa skyong)— "Emperor," "Moon of Dharma," "Excellent Intellect," "Radiant Holder of the Teachings, (*Ösel Tendzin* (Wyl., 'od gsal bstan 'dzin) in Tibetan)," and so on, were chosen and sustained by esteemed Tibetan Buddhist leaders. This paper examines in substantial but not exhaustive detail scandals involving **Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche**—*Rinpoche* (Wyl., rin po che) means "**Precious One**"—the head of the **Shambhala** International organization, Lama Norlha Rinpoche, the main representative on the eastern half of America of the famous meditation master Kalu Rinpoche, and finally Sogyal Rinpoche, the author of the well known book *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*.[13]

However, to better understand the Sakyong Mipham case, it is important to understand his position in the context of the Shambhala organization founded by his father, **Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. This is important because abusive patterns that were born under Trungpa's leadership of Shambhala continued through a succession of their lineage leaders and senior students.** To this day these patterns of abuse have continued to affect their satellite centers around the world. Hence this paper will look at five scandals: the three already mentioned, but first the **scandals of Chögyam Trungpa and then of his immediate heir, the American Thomas Rich, better known as Ösel Tendzin.** While looking at these five teachers we will naturally look at other highly regarded Tibetan Buddhist leaders as they relate to these five.

Chögyam Trungpa

Chögyam Trungpa (b. 1939 d. 1987) was eleventh in the line of Trungpa tulkus, important figures in the Kagyü lineage, one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Among his main teachers was Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, as well as other respected Tibetan teachers. He **was deeply trained in the Kagyu tradition** and received his *khenpo* (Wyl. mkhan po) degree, a high degree of Buddhist scholarship in Tibetan monasteries. Trungpa was also trained in the Nyingma tradition, the oldest of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism**. In 1958 Trungpa fled his home monastery and went into hiding after it was occupied by the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Trungpa began an arduous escape from Tibet in April, 1959 arriving in India in January, 1960.** Trungpa was head of the Surmang group of monasteries at the time he left. In a word, Trungpa was an important tulku and had highly respected orthodox teachers of Tibetan Buddhism; by the rules of Tibetan Buddhism, he was the real thing.

In 1963 he studied comparative religion at Oxford University. In 1967 along with Akong Rinpoche, also a tulku, they took over a meditation center in Scotland that became Samye Ling, the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Europe.[14] Shortly after the move to Scotland, while drunk and speeding, **Trungpa**

had a car accident that left him partially paralyzed on the left side. This along with other experiences led Trungpa to give up his monastic vows and to continue teaching as a layman. He smoked, drank heavily and openly slept with his female students. He was also known for keeping students waiting for hours for a teaching often arriving with drink in hand. In 1970 he married Diana J. Mukpo, a wealthy 16-year-old English student. He had a break with Akong Rinpoche disagreeing over the way to teach Tibetan Buddhism. Akong favoring a more ordered approach as opposed to Trungpa's so called "**Crazy Wisdom**" wilder way. **Trungpa left Scotland and in 1970 moved to the USA.**

Trungpa was extremely charismatic and had a unique way of presenting Tibetan Buddhism that appealed to his Western students. He was bright, witty, and openly hard drinking which originally appealed mostly to the counter culture and artists, writers, and theater people. For example, poet Allen Ginsberg, the Chilean biologist/philosopher Francisco Varela, and poets/activist Diane di Prima and Anne Waldman were students of his.[15] Another author/journalist student of Trungpa was John Steinbeck IV and his wife Nancy. Steinbeck was the son of John Steinbeck, the Nobel Prize winner who wrote *Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*. Unlike many of Trungpa's followers, John Steinbeck IV and Nancy were able to recognize and face some of the problems generated by Trungpa and his Crazy Wisdom teachings. I will use them as an important source when it comes to Trungpa's life and teaching in the U.S.A. I refer to them as Steinbeck, and quote their book, ***The Other Side of Eden*** in different places in this paper.[16]

Originally, Trungpa's meditation centers were known as **Dharmadhatus**. Now they are known as **Shambhala Meditation Centers**, including major centers in Colorado, Vermont, and Nova Scotia which hold intensive meditation retreats. **In 1974 Trungpa founded Naropa Institute which later became Naropa University, the first accredited Buddhist university in North America**. Trungpa had a string of well-known people teaching at Naropa**. He was one of the first to introduce the esoteric Vajrayana teaching to western lay students. As with other Vajrayana teachers, Trungpa too warned of terrible consequences for leaving the path or in disclosing secrets of the practice.**[17] We shall see more examples of this later in the paper.

Trungpa's original romance with and acceptance by the American poetry world was shattered by two events. In the early 1970's a poetry reading took place at the University of Colorado featuring Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Robert Bly with Trungpa acting as the master of ceremonies as a benefit to help Trungpa's Meditation Center. Trungpa was loaded on saki and kept interrupting the poets with loud noises, some imitating the sound of farts, and yodeling and then hitting a loud gong at the end. Trungpa apologized at the end of the evening—not for his behavior but for the poets: 'I'm sure they didn't mean what they said.' Snyder and Bly kept their distance from Shambhala after this event.[18]

The second event that more deeply soured the poetry community and many others on Trungpa and Shambhala was known as the "Great Naropa Poetry Wars" or the "Merwin Affair." The well-known poet W.S. Merwin and his girl friend, the Hawaiian poet Dana Naone, were not advanced students of Trungpa. However, they were permitted by Trungpa to attend the 1975 three-month long seminary limited for advanced students. Trungpa organized a Halloween party that in usual Shambhala fashion of the time was quite a drunken affair. Merwin and Naone did not want to take part but on Trungpa's orders they were physically forced out of their room amid much violence and brought before Trungpa who ordered his Vajra guards to strip them naked, which they did.[19]

Shambhala under Trungpa's leadership was known for wild parties, heavy drinking, and promiscuous sex. He also popularized the idea of "Crazy Wisdom," the idea among others, that unenlightened people

often do not understand the words and actions of enlightened people. Being a representative of the "Crazy Wisdom" lineage meant that all his outrageous behavior was presented as teaching.[20] Trungpa seemed to have a taste for married women and implied that extramarital affairs were a direct path to enlightenment.[21] Trungpa encouraged his students to cultivate detachment toward our children.[22] Nancy Steinbeck said that her meditation instructor 'once accused me of hiding behind my kids when I refused to leave them with baby-sitters and do volunteer work.'[23]

In spite of his brilliance and creativity which attracted many devotees and no doubt helped many of his students, his involvement with pharmaceuticals soon blossomed into full-fledged addiction that clouded his judgment.[24] The Steinbeck's added that unfortunately, Trungpa presented himself as an authority on areas over which he had no expertise, such as child rearing and family dynamics.[25] His students followed his words leading to many mistakes, 'too many broken hearts, far too much abuse would all trickle down like toxic rain on the heads of those children we so blithely left at home.'[26] In this paper unfortunately the reader will see examples of what this means.

Trungpa used the title Vidyadhara Trungpa Rinpoche which indicates that he was someone who constantly abides in the state of pure awareness.[27] This also meant that he was beyond the understanding of his students and ordinary mortals. He claimed that because 'he had Vajra nature [a yogically transformed and stabilized psychophysiology], he was immune to the normal physiological effects of alcohol,' said one student. The students bought his story. It never occurred to anyone that he was an alcoholic because that was a disease that happened to ordinary mortals.[28] Though it was well known that he was addicted to alcohol, much less well known even to today was his $40,000-a-year cocaine habit [that was in mid 1980 dollars] and, 'the ultimate irony, an addiction to the sleeping pill Seconal. Sleeping pills for the guru who advertised himself as a wake-up call to enlightenment.'[29]

Steinbeck goes on to describe the effects of Trungpa's years of excessive alcohol and drug use. 'In his last year, he'd become so deluded, he would summon his attendants and tell them he wanted to visit the Queen of Bhutan. They would put him in his Mercedes and drive around the block several times. As they led him back to the house, they laughingly asked how his visit went. "Wonderful," he'd reply. "She was delightful." And they called that magic. "He's so powerful," they'd whisper."'[30] **The Steinbecks referred to Trungpa's close students serving him as enablers. They claimed that supplying him with drugs and alcohol was a measure of their devotion, while sneering at those of us who objected.[31] "Whatever the teacher demands, all that I will give," was their vow. They believed that to break that samaya (vow), to refuse to administer to the guru the poison that was killing him, would literally send them to hell.[32]** It should be noted here that Trungpa's disciples expressing their devotion to him by supplying him with alcohol and presumably cocaine as he desired, was in keeping with the view of *samaya*, as represented by three well known Rimpoches: Kalu, Dilgo Khyentse, and Dzongsar Khyentse, as we shall see shortly.

The Steinbecks add another disturbing picture to Trungpa's supposed Vajra nature and his claimed ability to transcend the effects of excessive alcohol and drug consumption: 'After his death, a Buddhist teenager asked me, "Did you know that some guys used to pimp for Rinpoche? They'd find him new women to sleep with." (…) **While everyone was busy honoring Rinpoche's courage for being so blatant about his massive indulgences, his henchmen constantly skimmed the various centers for new blood. Women were trained as "consorts." That meant they knew what to do when he threw up, shit in the bed, snorted coke till dawn, turned his attention to other women, and maybe even got in the mood**

for a threesome. Our little band of recovering Buddhists began to ask people if they thought this flagrant behavior constituted religious or sexual abuse. The standard answer you get from the male good old boys who buy into the system because it means their coffers will also be full to feed their own addictions, is that they never, in all their pimping, heard any woman complain plain about sleeping with Rinpoche. (I use that term loosely, because for years he was alcoholically impotent and would devise little sexual games using a dildo known as "Mr Happy" or insisting women masturbate in front of him.)'[33]

He would finally die 'of the most acute alcoholism and drug addiction I had ever seen' and I knew, wrote Nancy Steinbeck, 'because by then I was working in a silk-sheet rehab center in La Jolla, California.[34] 'I saw a picture of him taken a few days before his death. He was bone-thin; his eyes had the haunted look of a madman.'[35]

Victoria Fitch, a member of Trungpa's household staff with years of experience as a nursing attendant gives a more detailed description of Trunga's final decline and death. She also describes how his true condition was kept secret from almost all of Trungpa's students and that whatever claims he made, Trungpa was dying just like countless other alcoholics. Fitch wrote, **'When Trungpa Rinpoche lay dying in 1986 at the age of 47, only an inner circle knew the symptoms of his final illness**. Few could bear to acknowledge that their beloved and brilliant teacher was dying of terminal alcoholism, even when he lay incontinent in his bedroom, belly distended and skin discolored, hallucinating and suffering from varicose veins, gastritis and esophageal varices, a swelling of veins in the esophagus caused almost exclusively by cirrhosis of the liver.'

'Rinpoche was certainly not an ordinary Joe, but he sure died like every alcoholic I've ever seen who drank uninterruptedly. The denial was bone-deep.' she continued. 'I watched his alcoholic dementia explained as his being in the realm of the *dakinis* [*khandroma* (Wyl., mkha' 'gro ma) in Tibetan], that is as guardians of the teachings, visualized in female form.'[36]

An example of the level of wishful thinking and of denial of the effects of years of alcohol and drug abuse on Trungpa among his disciples comes from Walter Fordham, the head of Trungpa's Household, who claimed 'it was safe to say that his level of awareness in the environment was unaffected by his alcohol.'[37]

According to Steinbeck, 'comments from other lamas about Rinpoche [Trungpa] began to seep in. They finally admitted that for years they had feared for his sanity and thought he had been acting irresponsibly, but no one had spoken out.' [38] The Dalai Lama in 1989 told Steinbeck privately 'that he would never trust a guru who claimed, as Rinpoche had, that he could turn alcohol into an elixir.'[39] It seems, at least in this case, for some lamas and for the Dalai Lama, that protecting the status quo of Tibetan Buddhism was more important than the harm caused to real people.

One has to wonder if the Dalai Lama or other lamas had publicly shared their own concerns about turning alcohol into an elixir, or many other concerns they may have had about Trungpa and Shambhala, if many people including Trungpa himself, would have been spared much suffering? One also has to wonder if these concerns about Trunga and Shambhala had been shared if the abuse that has been passed from the leadership, generation to generation and that seems to have infected many Shambhala centers could have been avoided. But raising concerns about Trungpa's actions and sanity would have

raised questions about the unquestionable authority of the tulku system and of the authority of high lamas endorsing the next generation of orthodox leaders.

Trungpa's cremation ceremony took place in May of 1987 attended by roughly three thousand people. Looking back in what seems like a sanitized version of Trungpa's decline and death, but also acting as a smoke screen of things to come, Trungpa Rinpoche's son Gesar Mukpo, half-brother of the new head of the Shambhala organization, that is, Sakyong Mipham, stated: 'My dad … was a drinking madman! How much of a madman are you? How brave are you to really do things? He was a warrior. A warrior with the pen. A warrior with the word. A warrior with the drinking. If you don't like his drinking, he was a fool, he's dead. If you don't mind the drinking thing and think he may have had incredible enlightened wisdom, then you are an eligible candidate for his teachings.'[40] We see here the holding up of alcohol abuse as the way to practice. Mukpo is daring Trungpa's followers to be madmen, which he equates with bravery, warriorship, and a chance for attaining enlightened wisdom. At the time, May 2000, it was not widely known that the Sakyong himself, had alcohol and women abuse problems.

Before taking a closer look at the Sakyong, we first need to look at an intermediate step.

Ösel Tendzin

On August 22, 1976, Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche formally empowered Thomas Rich from Passaic, New Jersey—named Ösel Tendzin by Trungpa—as his Vajra Regent, his dharma heir, successor, and lineage holder in the Karma Kagyü and Nyingma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Trungpa Rinpoche bestowed upon him the rather ornate string of names "Karma, Moon of Dharma, Excellent Intellect, Radiant Holder of the Teachings, Victorious in All Directions."[41] **Thomas Rich was the first Western Dharma student to be a title holder in these lineages. The Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, the revered head of the Karma Kagyü lineage, during his 1977 visit to the United States, confirmed Trungpa Rinpoche's appointment of Thomas Rich, that is, the Vajra Regent as a lineage holder. At the time of Trungpa Rinpoche's death, August, 1987, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, head of the Nyingma lineage, reconfirmed Thomas Rich as Trungpa Rinpoche's lineage holder and empowered him with the highest Maha Ati Abhisheka, giving him the name "Lord of Yogins, Coemergent Accomplishment Vajra."**[42]

Almost like magic, by the words of high lamas, the former Thomas Rich from Passaic, New Jersey was transformed into a lineage holder in both the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, became the leader of Shambhala, the largest sect of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, while being sanctified by the most revered teachers of these sects, capped with a string of exalted sounding names indicating his great spiritual attainment. By any measure of judging, he was crowned by highly respected teachers of Tibetan Buddhism. He too in a word, by the rules of Tibetan Buddhism, like his teacher Trungpa, was the real thing!

Ten years later, in April 1987, Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin assumed leadership of the Vajradhatu community, following the death of his well-known teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The same total deference that Trungpa commanded and was given from his American students was transferred to his Dharma heir, Ösel Tendzin.[43] 'His meals were occasions for frenzies of linen-pressing, silver-polishing, hairbreadth calibrations in table settings, and exact choreographies of servers,' said television producer Deborah Mendelsohn, who helped host Tendzin when he gave two meditation retreats in Los Angeles, but has since left the community. 'When he traveled, a handbook went with him to guide his hosts

through the particulars of caring for him, including instructions on how and in what order to offer his towel, underpants and robe after he stepped from the shower.'[44]

Less than two years later in December 1988, Vajradhatu administrators told their members that the Vajra Regent, Ösel Tendzin had been infected with the AIDS virus for nearly three years. Members of the Vajradhatu board of directors conceded that, except for some months of celibacy, he had neither protected his many sexual partners, many of them students, both male and female, as well as male prostitutes, nor did he tell them the truth about his infection with AIDS. The Regent had a penchant for straight young men.[45] One of the Regent's sexual partners, the twenty-year old son of long-term students, was infected, as was a young woman who had later made love to the young man. The young man would later die from AIDS.[46]

Two members of the Vajradhatu board of directors had known of his infection for more than two years, yet chose to do nothing. Trungpa Rinpoche had also discussed it with him before his death. The Regent added that he came away from that conversation with Trungpa feeling he could "change the karma." 'Thinking that I had some extraordinary means of protection,' Tendzin reportedly told a stunned community meeting organized in Berkeley in mid-December, 'I went ahead with my business as if something would take care of it for me.'[47] Board members had reluctantly informed the *sangha* (community of practitioners) only after trying for three months to persuade the Regent to act on his own. When asked why he did not realize he could infect someone else with AIDS, he replied: 'It happened. I don't expect anybody to try to conceive of it.'[48]

In spite of their supposed pure wisdom, beyond the understanding of ordinary people, it seems that both Chögyam Trungpa and his chosen heir, the Regent Ösel Tendzin suffered from a similar denial of human limitation, as well as ignorance of their own addictive behavior. There is an irony here as Trungpa described Shambhala practitioners as "warriors" not afraid to face the world, not afraid to face reality, not afraid to acknowledge that people are basically good. Yet both Trungpa and Tendzin did not face their own physical limitations and their addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, and power and the affects this would have on their disciples who looked to them as wise and compassionate teachers setting an example of enlightened living. It seemed like these teachers and their devotees did not trust their own eyes and ears, but only their imaginations. It is not unrealistic to say that Trungpa and Ösel Tendzin and many of their followers were living in a self created factory of dreams.

The highest-ranking Buddhist to have spoken publicly on Ösel Tendzin's issue was Kalu Rinpoche (b. 1905 d. 1989), of the Kagyü lineage, a highly respected meditation master known for his compassion and wisdom. He spoke at a meeting of about 100 Buddhists in Los Angeles on December 22, 1988. According to a tape of the meeting recorded by a church member, Kalu Rinpoche, speaking in Tibetan with an English interpreter, said: 'As all of you know, the Vajra regent has contracted AIDS. And people worry very much about the fact that he might have passed this on to many, many people.' Yet he then asked members to show compassion for the regent.[49] However, there was no mention of compassion for people the Regent infected or may have infected or were realistically worried about becoming infected because of having had sex with him or one of his partners. Not only no compassion, but also that worries of the students' questioning Ösel Tendzin's behavior could be detrimental to themselves because this questioning was breaking their *samaya* vows.

One student asked about repairing their *samaya* vows broken by the student's questioning, if even only to herself, the sexual behavior of the Regent.[50] These vows are taken very seriously. We already saw

Trungpa's close disciples because of their *samaya* vows proudly supplying him with alcohol and cocaine as he rushed to early death from abusing his body with just these very substances. So, the *samaya* vow idea is very complicit in the entire set up of unquestioned hierarchy, abuse, obedience, and secrecy.

Kalu instructed that the Regent Ösel Tendzin was their Lama, that they should follow him, that they in fact needed to repair their "broken vows" to the Regent. He instructed that this can be accomplished by first confessing to him and second by making a promise to themselves and to the Regent that they would not develop this kind of attitude in the future. He added to rely on Ösel Tendzin and to accomplish as much virtue as possible. 'You should do whatever you can to be helpful to the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin to bring him joy. In these ways you can clear away any broken *samaya* completely.'[51]

Kalu also forbid any public talk of the Regent's AIDS problem at his Centers and told Shambhala members not to discuss it as 'it was neither helping anyone and was only disrupting their meditation and the harmony of the *sangha*.'[52] Kalu also forbade Lama Ken McCleod, a senior student of his, to speak publicly of Ösel Tendzin, which he obeyed.[53]

Knowing what we now know, it is not surprising that Kalu demanded secrecy. In 1996, June Campbell's book, *Traveler in Space: In Search of Female Identity in Tibetan Buddhism* was published. Campbell in her twenties, as a Tibetan studies scholar, spent many years as a student of Kalu Rinpoche and acted as a translator for him. She also wrote that she was a secret consort of his along with at least one other woman, a teenage Tibetan girl. Campbell said Kalu's sexual life was kept secret aside from one other person though the relationship lasted for years.[54] She wrote, 'it was plainly emphasized that any indiscretion in maintaining silence over our affair might lead to madness, trouble, or even death.'[55] Though Kalu lived many years not as a monk after escaping Tibet, according to Campbell, 'he was afraid of the consequences of revealing his secret life.'[56] Several western scholars seemed to be completely ignorant of the hidden life existing within the lama system; in 1993 Kalu was described as a monk. When the biography of this high lama was written there was no mention of Campbell's name or even references to a metaphorical consort. According to Campbell, 'the Tibetan system was for all intents and purposes a secret society.'[57]

However, in terms of keeping secrecy the reincarnated tulku Kalu (b. September 17, 1990) appears to be very different from his former incarnations. During the question and answer period after a talk he gave in 2011 in Vancouver (Canada), the young Kalu was asked about sexual abuse in Tibetan monasteries. Kalu replied that he was sensitive to it because he himself was a victim of sexual abuse. When the interviewer, Joseph Hooper brought up the concept of "inappropriate touching," the young Kalu laughed edgily. 'This was hard-core sex, he says, including penetration. Most of the time, they just came alone,' Kalu said. Kalu continued, 'They just banged the door harder, and I had to open it. I knew what was going to happen, and after that you become more used to it.' It wasn't until Kalu returned to the monastery after his three-year retreat that he realized how wrong this practice was. Kalu said that by then the cycle had begun again on a younger generation of victims. Kalu's claims of sexual abuse mirror those of Lodoe Senge, an ex-monk and 23-year-old tulku who now lives in Queens, New York.[58]

After his three year retreat the young Kalu wanted to change his tutor which resulted in an argument with the current tutor: 'The older monk left in a rage and returned with a foot-long knife. Kalu barricaded himself in his new tutor's room, but, he says, the enraged monk broke down the door,

screaming, “I don’t give a shit about you, your reincarnation. I can kill you right now and we can recognize another boy, another Kalu Rinpoche!” Kalu took refuge in the bathroom, but the tutor broke that door, too. Kalu recalls, “You think, ‘Okay, this is the end, this is it.'” Fortunately, other monks heard the commotion and rushed to restrain the tutor. In the aftermath of the attack, Kalu says, his mother and several of his sisters (Kalu’s father had died when he was a boy) sided with the tutor, making him so distraught that he fled the monastery and embarked on a six-month drug-and-alcohol-fueled bender in Bangkok.’ [59] The reincarnated Kalu was exceedingly brave to expose some of the hidden underbelly of Tibetan Buddhist monastic life while struggling to make sense of his life. Interestingly, here as in other sexual abuse cases, often the family turns away from the victims.

This story related by the young reincarnated Kalu raises a few questions. Was no older monk looking out or watching over and guiding the young Kalu? If there was, was it just accepted practice that young tulkus or monks to be would be sexually abused? On what grounds was his tutor picked who so easily was ready to kill Kalu for rejecting him as his tutor? Was there no consequence for the tutor attempting to kill Kalu which also was known by at least a few older monks? As Kalu mentioned after coming out of his retreat, ‘the cycle had continued on a younger generation of victims,’ so it seems that the sexual abuse of young boys by older monks was quite open and seemingly common and accepted practice. It appears there are some deep problems that are internally well known in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries but hidden from the public.

However, it was not only the older Kalu who instructed secrecy. When the editor Rick Fields of the *Vajradhatu Sun,* the official paper of the organization, prepared a short article describing the bare bones of the Ösel Tendzin crisis, he was forbidden to print it. ‘There have been ongoing discussions, both within community meetings and among many individuals, about the underlying issues that permitted the current situation to occur,’ read the banned article. ‘Those issues include the abuse of power and the betrayal of trust, the proper relationship between teachers with spiritual authority and students, particularly in the West, and the relationship between devotion and critical intelligence on the spiritual path.’ In March, Fields again attempted to run his article but this time he was fired by the Vajra Regent. When the board of directors refused to support him, he formally resigned.[60]

With all these major problems in the Shambhala lineage, the Steinbecks had hoped the Dalai Lama or other lineage heads would speak out, but they too maintained silence and offered no consequences to renegade lamas. The Dalai Lama told the Steinbecks, ‘The student has to take the responsibility of examining the behavior of the teacher very carefully, over a long period. You cannot be hasty about these things.’ In a sense, Steinbeck wrote, ‘the Dalai Lama was blaming the student, which so commonly happens in blaming the victim in any abusive situation?’[61]

Steinbeck continued, ‘by deliberately ignoring the situation, in what appears to be a fearful political ploy, these titular deities, these so-called God Kings are adding to the confusion instead of delineating clear moral guidelines. Their concern about the truth leaking out, which might drain their monastic coffers, flies in the face of all the teachings and vows they give concerning “right action.”‘[62]

At the suggestion of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Ösel Tendzin went into private retreat in California but, like the older Kalu Rinpoche, he too urged Vajradhatu students to respect the Regent’s authority as their lama.[63] On October 17, 1989 Dilgo wrote, ‘Those who are experiencing difficulties following the Regent now should realize that it is necessary to do so…’[64] It is necessary, he explained, because Trungpa appointed him and the Karmapa confirmed it. How Ösel Tendzin lived and interacted with people for the

previous ten years did not matter at all. At any rate on August 25, 1990 the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin passed away.

After the death of Ösel Tendzin, Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche and the lineage holders of the Kagyü lineage were all in agreement that the Sawang Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, Chögyam Trungpa's oldest son, should become the lineage holder of Vajradhatu.[65]

Sakyong Mipham

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (b. November 15, 1962) was the head of the Shambhala organization, a global network of over 200 meditation and retreat centers along with extensive real estate holdings. Sakyong; a compound word consisting of *sa*, "earth," and *skyong*, "to protect," that translates as "earth protector," "king," "emperor," or "governor" is considered a Dharma king and lineage holder of the Shambhala lineage. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is regarded as a *chögyel* (Wyl., chos rgyal, in Sanskrit *dharmaraja*) or "king of Dharma", who combines the spiritual and worldly paths. The Sakyong according to the Shambhala view is the earthly embodiment or emanation of enlightened awareness. Though the title Sakyong is associated with the lineage of Shambhala implying an ancient lineage, the first Sakyong was Trungpa, the present Sakyong's father and founder of the Shambhala organization.

Sakyong Wangmo ("Earth Protector Lady") is the wife and partner of the Sakyong or Earth Protector, and mother of their three children. In this capacity, according to the Shambhala website, the Sakyong Wangmo offers strength and delight in home life, which allows the Sakyong the ground from which he can radiate his teachings out to the world. Again, according to the website, this example of family, based on the principles of enlightened society is a profound offering to the larger society. Sakyong Wangmo was empowered by Penor Rinpoche, who was the head of the Nyingma school from 1993 to his retirement in 2001.[66] She comes from an old and distinguished Tibetan family. Her father is the supreme head of the Ripa lineage of Nyingma Vajrayana Buddhism and a living Tertön, or treasure-finder.[67] She too by the rules of Tibetan Buddhism, is the real thing.

Lama Tsultrim Allione, a well-known western woman teacher of Tibetan Buddhism said about the Shambhala organization that, 'the level of institutionalized hierarchy is quite extraordinary,' with the Sakyong functioning 'sort of like a divine king.' His inner circle, with its ministers and attendants, is called the [Kalapa] "court".[68] He has a personal flag that local centers can buy for $350, to fly when he visits.

We saw earlier how Ösel Tendzin also was waited on hand and foot as if he were a divine king with his meals and bathing carefully orchestrated. One might say that Ösel Tendzin and Trungpa in thinking they had transcended all human limitations actually thought of themselves as divine kings of the universe.

The present scandal arose when it was disclosed that the Sakyong had an alcohol abuse problem coupled with sexually forcing himself on young female students. At this time, it also came out that the Shambahla organization has had a long history of sexual abuse even of children by leaders of different Shambhala communities.[69]

In spite of all the high sounding aims and titles, very troubling events occurring for years at Shambhala were to be dramatically exposed on the internet with the publishing of the Buddhist Project Sunshine in March 2018. Project Sunshine was started by Andrea M. Winn who is a second generation Shambhalian, that is, she grew up in this community. She states,

'I was sexually abused as a child by multiple perpetrators in our community. When I was a young adult, I spoke up about the community's sexual abuse problem and was demonized by my local Shambhala Center, ostracized and forced to leave. The shocking truth is that almost all of the young people in my age group were sexually harassed and/or sexually abused. I don't know the statistics on the generations of children after mine. What I do know is that many of us have left the community, and for those who have stayed, their voices have been unheard. Beyond child sexual abuse, women continue to be abused in relationships with community leaders and by their *sanghas*.'[70]

Though Winn does not mention it, one is compelled to ask what the parents of these young people were doing or not doing or thinking, as they had to know this was going on. Was this part of the Shambhala culture and a reflection of Trungpa's ideas on promiscuous sex, child rearing and family dynamics mentioned earlier by the Steinbecks? Winn continues, 'I felt awful on a very deep level. Don't get me wrong. In so many ways I have created a good life for myself. But there has been a deep sick feeling inside of me for all these decades. Shambhala looked wonderful on the outside, and there is no doubt in my mind about the spiritual blessings in these practices. At the same time there has been this incomprehensible sickness.'[71]

As is often the case, the devil is in the details as we shall also see shortly when we look at Sogyal. There are many first-person accounts related about the Sakyong, but lets just look at three cases to get a deeper sense of what was happening.

A second generation Shambhalian, or "dharma brat," wanted to contribute her story at the last minute after she saw the Sakyong's "apology" letter: 'I was sexually assaulted by the Sakyong in the kitchen of the Halifax Kalapa Court after his wife, the Sakyong Wangmo, retired for the night with her first daughter, following the celebration of her first birthday in August, 2011. This experience was traumatic for me. It took place one year after we welcomed Jetsun Drukmo [the Sakyong's wife] home on that very lawn. It also marked the one year anniversary of meeting my then partner, who stood in the same room as me that night and watched, did nothing, turned the other way. As time went on, the community's formal responses and members' processes of relating to this disclosure and fact have overall exacerbated my confusion and suffering and eroded my mind and body's health. The responses and denials continue to trigger me and prevent me from moving on from that harm and I believe are preventing the community from its own "healing".'[72]

Another young woman reported, 'Over many years I had several sexual encounters with the Sakyong that left me feeling ashamed, demoralized and worthless. Like many young women in the sangha, I was deeply devoted to the Sakyong and did whatever I could to serve him and be close to him. I witnessed the steady stream of attractive women that were invited into his quarters.'[73] On another occasion she mentioned being invited to his suite at a dinner party where the Sakyong was encouraging everyone to drink a lot. He then insisted that we take off our clothes. He led one woman into his bedroom while the rest of us danced. After a while his *kusung*(attendant) came out to get me to come to the Sakyong's bedroom. I went into the room and discovered the Sakyong and the woman on his bed having sex. He said to me "She won't come. Do something to help." I stood there stunned and he said "Play with her tits. Do something."'[74]

Another woman mentions the steady stream of pretty young women invited to the Sakyong's suite, and his groping her and attempting to have sex with her when he was completely intoxicated, the Sakyong would 'pull me into a dark corner. He kissed me and groped me while aggressively encouraging me to

come to bed with him.' Most of the time, another woman who had been invited to the party was already present so she refused.[75]

Buddhist Project Sunshine went viral being written about by the print media and Buddhist websites, while the members at centers around the world having had no idea of the troubling behavior of their leader and guru, were shocked by the allegations. Shambhala is a very large organization so most members were only exposed to the Sakyong in formal gatherings or through his writing. Now they were being shown a man out of control, perhaps alcoholic and selfishly abusing scores of young women for roughly two dozen years. They demanded a response.

On June 25, 2018 the Sakyong sent the Shambhala community an open letter of Apology.[76] He begins with,

'To the Shambhala Community:

I write to you with great sadness, tenderness, and a mind of self-reflection. It is my wish for you to know that in my past there have been times when I have engaged in relationships with women in the Shambhala community. I have recently learned that some of these women have shared experiences of feeling harmed as a result of these relationships. I am now making a public apology.'

Though he writes as if he is making an open and honest admission of past abuse, he is only admitting to what has already been made public knowledge by the publication of Buddhist Project Sunshine on the internet and even making it into the *New York Times*.[77] Even that admission seems like a whitewash of what is described in the accounts of the Buddhist Project Sunshine. It is not difficult to imagine that without Project Sunshine there would be no 'honest admission of past abuse.'

The Sakyong's statement 'I have recently learned that some of these women have shared experiences of feeling harmed as a result of these relationships' is less than honest too as he had known that many women felt harmed by his casually using them for sex and then "ghosting" them when he moved onto someone new or if they questioned him about the nature of the relationship. These relationships go back to the early 1990's or earlier—that is, over 25 years ago.

Later in the letter he writes, 'I am now entering a period of self-reflection and listening.' One wonders what he was doing or thought he was doing since August 1990, when he was made the lineage holder of the Vajradhatu organization with the death of Ösel Tendzin. One also wonders what the powerful *samaya* vows between guru and his students imply when by his own admission the Sakyong was not listening or barely listening to his students and was not "self reflecting" on his own behavior. If the Sakyong admits that he was flawed, this also raises the question of how and why he was given so much power and authority by the most senior lamas. Besides, one might wonder why he had been given so much material resources to maintain his family, himself, and the expenses to run the Kalapa Court?

It should be clear, that Andrea Winn with the Buddhist Project Sunshine was not trying to destroy Shambhala but rather, to expose the sickness and harm that she and many others have experienced. She wanted to save Shambhala by injecting openness and transparency into the organization and holding its leaders responsible for their actions. She also wanted to create a place where those abused could receive support, healing, community and where they could feel safe to talk out.

However revealing Buddhist Project Sunshine was of problems with the Sakyong, an even more revealing document appeared some months later on February 6, 2019: A thirty-five page long open letter signed by six long serving of the closest *kusung* (Wyl., sku srung, 'body protectors,' 'attendants') of the Sakyong.[78] In it each signer describes his or her experiences of verbal, physical and sexual abuse in vivid detail. Recollections include female students being 'pushed to rationalize [sex] as a generous offering to their revered teacher,' stories of Mr Mukpo, as the Sakyong is addressed in the letter, hitting his attendants and forcibly biting people; students crying in a circle in their underwear, a culture of fear, and this is just the first of the six reports.

The six authors of the above-mentioned document write of being told to obscure the line between Mr Mukpo's spiritual teachings and his abusive behavior, believing that the teacher's behavior was beyond our understanding. They were asked, they say, to regard such abusive activity as the guru's method of waking us up. In essence, they learned to discredit their own experience.

Ben Medrano, one of the signers writes, 'I was amazed by the opulence, frequency, and duration of his [Sakyong's] luxury vacations.' Medrano was also amazed that Sakyong's and his wife's toiletry and cosmetic budget rivaled his annual salary as a resident physician. On one occasion he writes, 'I recall a sober midday call demanding me to push for the unfeasible purchase of an Audi A8. I vividly remember his infuriated words being: "I want my FUCKING Audi!"'

Allya F. Canepa, another long serving *kusung*, writes of being called to the Sakyong's room and being a *kusung*, she dutifully kneeled by the side of his bed, waiting to see what the Sakyong wanted. She reports: 'I was surprised when he put his hand down my shirt and fondled my breasts and said, "please I just want to sleep," firmly directing my head to his cock. I obliged and shook it off.'[79]

Canepa added, 'in the Vajrayana we are taught that all body fluids, or pieces of clothing, tufts of hair, or leftover food from the guru's plate are blessings gifted directly from the body of enlightenment.' Canepa also writes of 'seeing hundreds of women go in and out of Mr. Mukpo's bedroom and often consoling them afterward.'[80]

It should be clear that the abusive situation with the Sakyong was not just between two consenting adults, as some of his apologists claim, but rather between a so called "tantric master" with the title "earth protector" presented as a "king of truth" being the sole authority, and a disciple, with the sex act promising to give spiritual benefit.

The reader might want to question how the idealized presentation of the past and the words of endorsement of the Sakyong from the highest lamas effected their view of the Sakyong and the whole organization supporting his role? They may want to ask on what the endorsements of high lamas was based, and what it means? Were the students blind followers or were they led down that path through their *samaya* vows? The Sakyong, by his own admission, hardly seemed like the real life model of the "king of truth"—who according to the Shambhala view is the earthly embodiment or emanation of enlightened awareness. Yet another question has to do with the legality of the funding of the Kalapa Court, with money and its allocation coming through different Shambhala corporate entities, some tax free?

Lama Norlha

In 1978 Lama Norlha Rinpoche (b. 1938 d. 2018) founded the Kagyü Thubten Chöling Monastery (KTC) and its Retreat Centers in Wappingers Falls, New York, in the tradition of the previously mentioned Kalu Rinpoche. In addition to a daily schedule of practice, study and work, weekend seminars and special courses were led by resident and visiting lamas. The monastery is also home to a traditional three-year retreat program currently (2019) in its ninth cycle. This program has been a major focus of the monastery since it was initiated in 1982. Lama Norlha also did much charitable work in terms of bringing health care and education for both children and nuns in Tibet.

Over a period of more than 30 years, the monastery hosted two visits from the Dalai Lama, and received blessings from both the sixteenth and seventeenth Karmapas, the heads of the Kagyü lineage, as well as numerous teachings and empowerments from the spiritual heads and other notable lamas from all four lineages of Tibetan Buddhism.[81]

Lama Norlha Rinpoche, who entered a monastery at five years old, was an accomplished meditation and retreat master.[82] He had completed two three-year retreats by the time he was twenty-one. He served as the director of the revered meditation master, Kalu Rinpoche's Dharma centers in the eastern half of the United States. Lama Norlha, like his teacher Kalu Rinpoche, presented himself as living a celibate life but in reality had at least six secret affairs with female students of his over a period of three decades.

On April 12, 2017, KTC, the monastery and retreat center, hosted a Sangha-wide Disclosure Meeting to inform their community that the founder and principal abbot of their monastery, Lama Norlha Rinpoche, had been secretly involved sexually with a number of female students over the last three decades. The disclosure process was initially set in motion by the coming forward of two former female residents of the monastery, who disclosed their sexual relationships with Lama Norlha to a group of senior officials at KTC in December 2016.[83]

Approximately 160 people were present at the Disclosure Meeting, including the two female students, who read aloud statements relating their experiences with Lama Norlha. Zen teacher Jan Chozen Bays acted as a representative and read the statements for three other female students who were not present but wrote that they were sexually involved with Lama Norlha. After the statements were read, a sixth woman came forward saying that she too had been involved in a sexual relationship with Lama Norlha. Most of the women reported they felt the relationship to be detrimental to their psychological and personal well being**. The Disclosure Meeting included a taped apology from Lama Norlha Rinpoche, who did not attend.**[84]

What was not mentioned or at least made public outside of the meeting was how the relationships began and how they ended—by the women or Lama Norlha, were some relationships concurrent, did the women think or were they led to believe they were the only one, and was there a sense of romance between Lama Norlha and the women? What had the women thought the nature of the relationship had been? How did Lama Norlha present what had been happening with the women?

Lama Norlha had since the meeting been removed from the teaching seat. The KTC website describes his status as "retired." He passed away one year later, February 19, 2018 at the age of 79. According to the KTC website, in the final weeks of his life, Lama Norlha Rinpoche was fortunate to receive visits from the Gyalwang Karmapa (the seventeenth Karmapa) and Sakya Trichen Dorje Chang. The day before he

passed away, Rinpoche was blessed with a visit from the Karmapa who bestowed the empowerment of Buddha Akshobya on Rinpoche. Sakya Trichen had bestowed this empowerent a few weeks earlier.[85]

Clearly, Lama Norlha reflects the years of secret sexual activity of his teacher Kalu Rinpoche, who is mentioned above in relation to Ösel Tendzin. At the Disclosure Meeting, Lama Norlha's taped apology mentioned being sorry for any suffering he may have caused. It seems then that he made no effort to pretend that his sexual activity was tantric practice in the quest for enlightenment, at least not for the women who felt it was 'detrimental to their psychological and personal well being.' Then what was its purpose? Prolonging life for an older man as having sex with young woman is widely believed to effect in the East or to inspire his visions. Or was it, perhaps, the ordinary need for close human contact?

It also raises the question of how he could have had at least six relationships, but maybe more, with female students over a period of thirty years living in a fairly closed environment without any of his assistant lamas or perhaps close older students knowing what was going on? Were taking *samaya* vows instrumental in keeping the secret? As Lama Norlha was close to the highest Tibetan Buddhist clergy from the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa down, one wonders who if any of these elite clerics knew of Norlha's secret life? If they did know, it did not seem like it was particularly troublesome for the elite clergy. As there is so much made of mystical power and spiritual insight connected to high Tibetan Lamas it seems fair to ask did something as ordinary as maintaining a secret sex life happening under their noses elude these lamas? And if it did elude them, what does it say about their supposed extraordinary powers and insight? Is it common knowledge among the Tibetan clergy that many lamas have secret sex lives, and that the "secret" is to be well kept to differentiate the clergy from lay people? This leads their devotees to believe that their clergy and lamas live in a sphere of piety which elevates their status above regular people while keeping the hierarchy in place and the donations flowing?

Perhaps a more fundamental question raised by Lama Norlha's actions has to do with his practice, attainment, and elevated status in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy. Lama Norlha entered the Korche Monastery by the age of five and spent his life taking part in and leading empowerments and retreats, fasts, chanting services, Mahamudra practice, leading his followers in offering over a million butter lights, and daily meditation. He supposedly saw into emptiness and realized his true nature.

Yet for thirty years or so he secretly had a need for intimate female companionship. One wonders how the Tibetan system of taking young boys away from their mothers and families and raising them in the all male monastic world, which we have seen can be quite abusive, affects their emotional well being and need for close human contact and their relationship to women. This need appears to have caused Lama Norlha to have a string of secret relationships in which he had to know that in the end some of these women would not feel good about what was happening. It also caused him to live a lie with at least his very devoted students who certainly were some of the people closest to him. This went against the strong elements in Tibetan Buddhism to which he devoted his entire life, against causing harm to others and to selfishness which supposedly truly realizing emptiness avoids. And yet, that is exactly what he did.

Sogyal Rinpoche

Sogyal Rinpoche (b. 1947), comes from a prominent merchant family in the Kham region of eastern Tibet. He is the founder and was the spiritual leader of the Tibetan Buddhist organization called **Rigpa** ("Essential Nature of Mind"), which has a worldwide reach with 130 centers in 41 countries. Sogyal is a Tibetan Dzogchen lama in the Nyingma sect. His bestselling book, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* was printed in 30 languages and has sold more than three million copies.[86]

He starred alongside Keanu Reeves in the movie Little Buddha. Sogyal is a highly successful guru—perhaps the best known Tibetan in the West after the Dalai Lama. Sogyal is regarded by his students as a living embodiment of the Buddhist teachings of wisdom and compassion, yet a man who teaches in a highly unorthodox way, known as "Crazy Wisdom".[87] "Crazy wisdom" was coined by Chogyam Trungpa who Sogyal greatly admired and who he wished to imitate in his rock star life style aspect after seeing him in Boulder, Colorado in the mid 1970's.[88] His center Lerab Ling is said to be the largest Tibetan Buddhist temple in the West.

The organization Rigpa was established quite early on in Sogyal's career in London. News of his sexual predations and misbehavior filtered back to the late Dudjom Rinpoche, then head of the Nyingma sect and one of the world's eminent meditation masters. Sogyal had dedicated his London Centre, Orgyen Chöling, to Dudjom. However, when the latter heard of Sogyal's behavior, he suggested Sogyal give up teaching for a while and return to India to "ripen his practice." Sogyal's response was to remove his center from Dudjom Rinpoche's tutelage and change its name to Rigpa (corresponding to the Skt. *vidya*, knowledge) with himself as head, accountable to no-one except himself.[89]

Lerab Ling ("Sanctuary of Enlightened Action") is Rigpa's international retreat center and home to the newly constructed temple known as The Institute of Wisdom and Compassion. Lerab Ling was founded in 1991 by Sogyal Rinpoche and is located near Montpellier in southern France. From its opening, the Center has been a place of teaching by a who's who of Tibetan Buddhist teachers. They include the Dalai Lama and some of his teachers, and also students of the famous Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, who was the Dalai Lama's principle teacher in Nyingma and Dzogchen Buddhism, and Dudjom Rinpoche among others. The list of distinguished Tibetan Buddhist teachers is too long to list here.[90]

The Dutch investigator Rob Hogendoorn refers to Sogyal's supposed enlightenment as "enlightenment by association." That is, it was assumed by Sogyal's western followers that he was on par with the famous lamas who visited and taught and who he entertained at his Center.[91]

Sogyal supposedly was recognized as a tulku, the reincarnation of Tertön Sogyal, a teacher of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. This is questioned by some knowledgeable Tibetans.[92] He claimed to have studied traditional subjects at Dzongsar Monastery with a number of tutors though his main tutor died when he was a child. Most of his education took place in schools in India. He was trained by French-Roman Catholics at St. Augustine's School in Kalimpong and by English Anglicans at St. Stephen's College in Delhi. According to authors Mary Finnigan and Rob Hogendoorn, Sogyal's credentials as a Nyingma master are at best questionable because of limited training and education.[93]

Whatever else one may say about Sogyal, there is no denying that he was a money machine. At his center Lerab Ling in southern France a week of teaching in 2011 was €500—which entitled participants to pitch a tent and eat vegetarian food. Five hundred people attended the retreat, including reporter

Elodie Emery of *Marianne* magazine—which means that Sogyal attracted more than €250,000 on one occasion. Emery estimates that Lerab Ling pulls in €1m to €1.5m annually in retreat fees alone—in addition to shop sales and donations. Sogyal's global organisation, Rigpa, has websites that include multiple income streams. One of them, the Tertön Sogyal Foundations, targets will bequests.[94] Board members include Pedro Beroy, the managing director of the investment banking division of Credit Suisse.[95]

Following the Rigpa path is extremely expensive. Air France pilot Guy Durand was a career 747 captain. He became deeply committed to practice under Sogyal, rising in the hierarchy to become a Dharma teacher. Guy points out the underlying expenses: 'You have to buy ritual objects and constantly update study material. You pay for courses, study days, statues, food offerings for the temple—the list is endless. You have to sponsor people who can't afford retreats and for those who can, the price is exorbitant. They never stop asking for money—and it's done with subtle persuasion—pretty speeches scripted specifically to make you put your hand in your pocket.'[96] Other former Rigpa insiders confirm that there is relentless pressure to donate money. According to one of them: 'I even heard Sogyal say to one man "just shut up and give me your money."'[97]

Before Sogyal's retirement, in the wake of abuse allegations in 2017, he had been teaching for over 30 years in Europe, America, Australia, and Asia. Sogyal Rinpoche has been accused of sexual and physical assault and abuse, as well as misusing charitable funds to live a high lifestyle, with allegations stretching back to the 1970s.

A Long Time Coming

Within the Buddhist community, Sogyal Rinpoche has long been a controversial figure. For years, rumors have circulated on the internet about his behaviour.[98] In the early 1990s a lawsuit alleging sexual and physical abuse plus one count of assault and battery was settled out of court by mediation in Los Angeles. One of Sogyal's close personal assistants who ran a Rigpa Center in Europe before leaving because of Sogyal's behavior testified that there was a long string of woman coming to Sogyal for help who end up being coerced into sex with him.[99]

On July 14, 2017 a twelve-page letter was posted by eight long term (14-33 years) students of Sogyal who were in positions of power, some of who had been working directly for Sogyal.[100] The letter was also sent to the Dalai Lama, other senior Tibetan Buddhist lamas and approximately 1,000 members of the Rigpa organization:

'This letter is our request to you to stop your unethical and immoral behavior. Your public face is one of wisdom, kindness, humor, warmth and compassion, but your private behavior, the way you conduct yourself behind the scenes, is deeply disturbing and unsettling. A number of us have raised with you privately, our concerns about your behavior in recent years, but you have not changed.

'Those of us who write to you today have firsthand experience of your abusive behaviors, as well as the massive efforts not to allow others to know about them. Our concerns are deepened with the organizational culture you have created around you that maintains absolute secrecy of your actions, which is in sharp contrast with your stated directive of openness and transparency within the Sangha. Our wish is to break this veil of secrecy, deception, and deceit. We can no longer remain silent.'

The letter continues:

‘1. Your physical, emotional and psychological abuse of students

We have received directly from you, and witnessed others receiving, many different forms of physical abuse. You have punched and kicked us, pulled hair, torn ears, as well as hit us and others with various objects such as your back-scratcher, wooden hangers, phones, cups, and any other objects that happened to be close at hand. We trusted for many years that this physical and emotional treatment of students what you assert to be your “skillful means” of “wrathful compassion” in the tradition of “crazy wisdom” was done with our best interest at heart in order to free us from our “habitual patterns”. We no longer believe this to be so…Why did you inflict violence upon us and our fellow Dharma brothers and sisters? Why did you punch, slap, kick, and pull our hair? Your food was not hot enough; you were awakened from your nap a half hour late; the phone list was missing a name or the font was the wrong size…or you were moody because you were upset with one of your girlfriends (…)

‘Your emotional and psychological abuse has been perhaps more damaging than the physical scars you have left on us…your shaming and threatening have led some of your closest students and attendants to emotional breakdowns.’

‘2. Your sexual abuse of students

You use your role as a teacher to gain access to young women, and to coerce, intimidate and manipulate them into giving you sexual favors. The ongoing controversies of your sexual abuse that we can read and watch on the Internet are only a small window into your decades of this behavior.’[101]

Let’s look at some recent accounts.

‘In June 1993, less than a year after the publication of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, a young and beautiful woman in a state of acute distress over the death of her father went to a Rigpa retreat in Connecticut, USA. After one of Sogyal’s lectures she sent him a written question: “How can I help my father now that he’s dead?” Sogyal’s response was to invite her to his room.’ The woman, Dierdre Smith, says she was ‘completely vulnerable. “I might as well have had a notice round my neck saying Abuse Me!” She went on to describe how Sogyal seduced her, wearing her down over a period of hours in spite of her saying that she did not want to cheat on her husband—but Sogyal persisted, insisting that having sex with him would benefit her father’s karma. She eventually became part of Sogyal’s harem.

‘For several months Dierdre put her everyday life on hold and travelled with Sogyal as his servant, sex partner and arm candy. She recounts how the smile on Sogyal’s face and the unctuous charm of his of his public presentation vanished the moment they were hidden from view: “There must have been about 10 women in his inner circle,” she says, and it was our job to attend to his every need. We bathed him, dressed him, cooked for him, carried his suitcases, ironed his clothes and were available for sex. He was a tyrant. Nothing we did was ever good enough.’[102]

What Dierdre may have meant by “to attend to his every need” is described by Mimi, the daughter of the Air France pilot Guy Durand mentioned earlier in this paper who became part of Sogyal’s harem for a time. Besides mentioning Sogyal not using condoms and the sexually transmitted infections the women contracted, she described the level of control and humiliation he exercised over the women.

‘One of the most humiliating things happened to Anna. Sogyal always has diarrhea—his diabetes and his diarrhea make him extremely irritable. We had to wipe his arse each time he took a crap. He also has

hemorrhoids. Someone wiped his arse, then he asked her to stick a finger in and it hurt—so he went into a total fit and called in all the girls. He asked each of us to wipe him to see who was the best. That was the only time I heard him say something nice about Anna—he announced that it was one thing she could do well.'[103]

The eight older students in their public letter in the Sexual Abuse section wrote:

'You have had for decades, and continue to have, sexual relationships with a number of your student attendants, some who are married. You have told us to lie on your behalf, to hide your sexual relationships from your other girlfriends. Publicly you claim that your relationships are ordinary, consensual, and proper because you are not a monk. You deny any wrongdoing and have even claimed on occasion that you were seduced. You and others in your organization claim this is how a Buddhist master of "crazy wisdom" behaves, just like the tantric adepts of the past. We do not believe this to be so and see such claims as attempts to explain away egregious behaviors.

'3. Your lavish, gluttonous, and sybaritic lifestyle.

'Your lavish lifestyle is kept hidden from your thousands of students. It is one thing for you to accept an offering of the best of everything (that we may have) as an acknowledgment of our gratitude for spiritual teachings. It is quite another to demand it from us. Much of the money that is used to fund your luxurious appetites comes from the donations of your students who believe their offering is being used to further wisdom and compassion in the world….

'As attendants, drivers, and organizers for you, most of our time and energy is taken up providing a steady supply of sensual pleasures. You demand all kinds of food be prepared for you at all hours of the night and day by your personal chefs and attendants (who Rigpa pays for) who travel the world with you.' They go on to describe personal masseuses, drivers, … 'on call 24 hours a day and outings for you and your companions to theaters, expensive restaurants, venues to shop and secretive places where you can smoke your expensive cigars.'[104]

This section of the open letter closes with,

'With impatience, you have made demands for this entertainment and decadent sensory indulgences. When these are not made available at the snap of a finger, or exactly as you wished, we were insulted, humiliated, made to feel worthless, stupid and incompetent, and often hit or slapped. Your behavior did not cultivate our mindfulness or awareness, but rather it made us terrified of making a mistake. You tell your students that you spend most of your time engaging in Buddhist study and practice, but those of us who have attended you in private for years know this is not the reality.

'4. Your actions have tainted our appreciation for the practice of the Dharma.

'Please understand the harm that you have inflicted on us has also tainted our appreciation for and practice of the Dharma. In our decades of study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism with you, we trained our minds to view you as the 'all embodied jewel' and the 'source of all the teachings and blessings' of the Buddha Dharma. We trusted you completely. Yet, we struggled for years because your actions did not square with the teachings. Today, for many of us who have left you, the Lerab Ling community, and Rigpa the organization, our ground of confidence in the Buddha Dharma has been compromised (…)

‘In closing we want to acknowledge that most of the public critique of you that is found on the Internet is factual. Some of us, who have held positions of responsibility within Rigpa, struggle with our own part in having covered for you and “explained” away your behavior, while not caring for those with traumatic experiences. Our past motivation to see all the actions of our tantric teacher as pure obscured us from seeing the very real harm that you are inflicting… Our deepest wish is to see Buddhism flourish in the West. We no longer want to indulge in the stupidity of seeing the Guru as perfect at any cost. The path does not require us to sacrifice our wisdom to discern, our ethics and morality, or our integrity, on the altar of Guru Yoga.

‘Our heartfelt wish is that you seek guidance from the Dalai Lama, other reputable lamas of good heart, or anyone who can help to bring you back onto the true path of the Dharma.’[105]

But not everyone accepts the critical view of Sogyal just expressed above by eight of his old and senior students as well as the many other critical first-person accounts of other students intimately involved with Sogyal over a period of many decades.

Did Sogyal Rinpoche Do ‘Wrong’?

According to his Wikipedia entry, Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche (b. June 18, 1961), also known as Khyentse Norbu, is a Tibetan/Bhutanese lama, is an award-winning filmmaker, writer, and founder and supporter of a number of charities. In this paper we will refer to him as Dzongsar. Until the age of twelve Dzongsar studied at the Palace Monastery of the King of Sikkim. Reflecting the unusual non-sectarian tradition of the Khyentse lineage, he counts as his root-masters teachers from all four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism (Sakya, Gelug, Nyingma, and Kagyu). He has studied with several influential contemporary masters, particularly Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche who he considers as his root guru. After leaving Sikkim he studied at Sakya College in Rajpur, India and later attended SOAS University of London.

From a young age he has been active in the preservation of the Buddhist teaching, establishing centers of learning, supporting practitioners, publishing books and teaching around the world. Dzongsar supervises his traditional seat of Dzongsar Monastery and its retreat centers in eastern Tibet, as well as his new colleges in India and Bhutan. He has also established centers in Australia, North America and the Far East.[106]

Dzongsar issued a ten thousand word essay, a strongly worded, heartfelt statement via Facebook, titled ‘Guru and Student in the Vajrayana,’ in which he addresses recent public criticism from students over the conduct of the Nyingma teacher Sogyal Rinpoche. In the essay, Dzongsar gives a detailed account of his perspective on the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition, guru-student relationships, and the future of Buddhism in the modern age, directly broaching many deeply held concerns among Buddhist practitioners around the world.[107]

Guru and Student in the Vajrayana

Dzongsar is very clear to differentiate Buddhist teachers associated with the Theravada and Mahayana traditions of Buddhism from Vajrayana Buddhist teachers connected with Tibetan Buddhism. ‘But there is one thing we must all be clear about. There is a clear difference between Sogyal Rinpoche’s role as a Vajrayana master and his role as a very public Buddhist teacher and head of a non-profit organization. Vajrayana masters are not necessarily public figures. Many aren’t even known to be Buddhist teachers—in the past, some Vajrayana masters earned their livings as prostitutes and fishermen. But unlike the

teacher-student relationship in other traditions, in the Vajrayana, the connection between the guru and the student is sometimes more personal and constant than family.' He then describes some examples of the guru-disciple relationship from early history in India some one thousand four hundred years ago up to the present concluding with an idealized presentation of the previously mentioned Chögyam Trungpa.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Trungpa was the founder of the Shambhala organization, coined the phrase, "Crazy Wisdom," quite openly drank excessive amounts of alcohol and openly slept with his female students. Trungpa died mentally deluded, from a combination of alcoholism, cocaine and drug use. He passed his lineage on to Ösel Tendzin and after Tendzin died, Trungpa's oldest son inherited the lineage, both of who infected the Shambhala organization with their own scandals, whose effects continue to the present (2019).

Dzongsar then asks, 'Did Sogyal Rinpoche Do 'Wrong?'

'Recently, it was alleged by some of Sogyal Rinpoche's students, who also consider themselves to be practitioners in the Vajrayana tradition, that Sogyal Rinpoche regarded abusive behaviour as the "skillful means" of "wrathful compassion" in the tradition of "crazy wisdom."

Dzongsar continued, 'However you describe Sogyal Rinpoche's style of teaching, the key point here is that if his students had received a Vajrayana initiation, if at the time they received it they were fully aware that it was a Vajrayana initiation, and if Sogyal Rinpoche had made sure that all the necessary prerequisites has been adhered to and fulfilled, then from the Vajrayana point of view, there is nothing wrong with Sogyal Rinpoche's subsequent actions. (By the way, 'initiation' includes the pointing out instruction which is the highest Vajrayana initiation, known as the fourth abhisheka.) Frankly, for a student of Sogyal Rinpoche who has consciously received abhisheka and therefore entered or stepped onto the Vajrayana path, to think of labeling Sogyal Rinpoche's actions as "abusive," or to criticize a Vajrayana master even privately, let alone publicly and in print, or to reveal that such methods exist, is a breakage of *samaya.*[108]

The essay seems more a defense or upholding the sanctity and the absolute infallibility of the Vajrayana system than even taking the barest look at or consideration of Sogyal's well documented checkered history going back to the 1970's. There is much literature of first-person accounts available describing Sogyal having sex with a steady stream of young almost entirely western woman with little pretense of it being for anything but his pleasure. We should keep in mind that there is a fundamental link between actions and interests, between the practices of agents and the interests which they knowingly or unknowingly pursue, that the world they create reflects their desires and fantasies.[109]

In Dzongsar's view there is no room in the Vajrayana master system for institutional error or abuse or self interest. In fact, in Dzongsar's view "Abusive Vajra master" is a contradiction in and of itself: either you are a Vajra master and can't abuse by definition or you abuse and can't be a Vajra master by definition. In this view a student, not being a Vajra master, is not capable of judging whether a Vajra master is a true master or not, whether a master is being abusive or giving kindly teaching, albeit in a rough manner.

Self-interest, however, has a radically disruptive function: it destroys 'the ideology of disinterest, the professional ideology of clerics of every kind.'[110] Symbolic interests such as not losing face, not losing your constituency, shutting up your opponent, triumphing over an adverse trend,… are not elements to

consider in Dzongsar's idealized vision of Vajrayana.[111] Nor does the world of fantasies and desires these teachers created around themselves. Dzongsar does not mention the possible decline or change either spiritually, cognitively, or psychologically of a Vajrayana master over time. Nor does he consider the effects of excessive alcohol, cocaine, and drug use have over time as we have seen earlier with Trungpa. A basic Buddhist tenet holds that life is change, but Dzongsar's essay does not allow for any decline in a Vajrayana master's mental or spiritual being, that is, assuming it was at a high level to begin with rather than bestowed on someone to maintain a lineage or some other mundane reason.

Though Dzongsar points out Sogyal's lack of traditional training he is quick to point out and criticize the eight writers for not being able to judge Sogyal's ability and training before signing on to him. He wonders why it took so long for what he referred to as "these well-educated Westerners" to find fault with Sogyal, seemingly oblivious to the complicated nature of a Westerner entering some thing as culturally foreign as Vajrayana practice under the direction of a Vajrayana guru. Taking *samaya* vows which we saw earlier are inviolable and threaten horrible effects if broken, adds another layer of complication.

Mary Finnigan who much to her later regret, was influential in setting Sogyal up in London back in the 1970's, mentions two aspects of Buddhist organizations that can have both merit yet can be used as manipulative tools. One is the injunction against gossip which can help keep the mind calm but also can be used to stifle and keep secret critical comment. Secondly is *samaya*, the bond of loyalty that is one of the key aspects of Vajrayana Buddhism.[112]

It supports the relationship between teacher and neophyte, but it can be deployed unscrupulously as a threat—break your *samaya* and attract dire consequences to yourself and your loved ones. We saw earlier in this paper how Kalu Rinpoche had warned his consorts about the dire consequences of breaking their *samaya* by disclosing his secret sex life. Kalu also warned Ösel Tendzin's students about breaking their *samaya*. We also saw how no lama or long term lay student closely connected with Lama Norlha exposed his three-decade hidden sex life. Now we see Dzongsar threatening Sogyal's disciples with dire consequences. *Samaya* no doubt was a strong factor in keeping Sogyal's students from questioning any aspects of the guru's behavior.

But this is a complicated topic too big to cover fully here. I will mention just a few aspects of the practice without going into detail, that would **keep "well educated Westerners from finding fault," to use Dzongsar's terminology, with their guru.**

1. **The physical setting: The main altar of Sogyal's temple has a 23-foot high golden Buddha in a highly ornamented surrounding. This golden Buddha looking down upon the students generates emotional feelings and a sense of being part of a respected ancient wisdom tradition now transported to the West.**

2. **The extreme elaboration of rituals: an emphasis on performing rituals generates an emotional response that deepens a person's sense of historical continuity and connection with community and the sacred—the individual emerges feeling purified with a sense of awe and significance.[113] An emphasis on rituals also can strengthen a person's sense of identity. Emotions however can be used and abused by those in power.**

3. **The language: ornate prose so common in Tibetan Buddhism in the names of teachers, monasteries, and Dharma centers leads to hierarchy and strong power differentials. Perhaps the most common honorific Rinpoche means "Precious One." Lerab Ling, Sogyal's main Center in Southern France, means "Sanctuary of Enlightened Action." Then Tibetan teachers have names like "Earth Lord," "Radiant Holder of the Teachings," "Victorious in All Directions", and so on as well as many empowerments (*wang* in Tibetan(Wyl., dbang), *abhisheka* in Sanskrit) that also add spiritual gravitas and more emotional power and attachment the student has to the lama/guru.[114]**

4. **The idea of the guru's infallibility: the power of institutions to define legitimate language, to pass judgment, and most powerfully of all, to define reality. At the same time, an unenlightened student according to "Crazy Wisdom" teaching, cannot judge a Vajra master.[115]**

5. **Training to be dependent on one person: practicing guru yoga under Sogyal, his students were instructed to train their minds to view him as the "all embodied jewel" and the "source of all the teachings and blessings of the Buddha Dharma"—it is not so easy to admit to fault with the guru, to say you have been wrong, or to having wasted much time after many years of this practice.**

6. **Legitimation of abusive teachers by other teachers: Lerab Ling during the summer months hosted teachings and empowerments by a roster of renowned Tibetan Buddhist teachers. The presence of famous and respected lamas teaching at the center and interacting with Sogyal, naturally led people to believe that Sogyal was looked at as being on their level or more, as a peer of these high lamas. The Dalai Lama was the central figure in the two-day inauguration ceremony of Sogyal's monastery Lerab Ling in 2008.**

7. **Fear of spiritualized sanctioning: all of the above takes place in the context of guru *yoga* along with *samaya* vows which generates in the student strong emotional attachment and perhaps most importantly, surrender to the guru.**

It is no wonder that the attachments to Sogyal and to teachers or gurus are so strong in much of Tibetan Buddhism and why there is so much hesitancy for critical discussion and openness and why it is so hard to leave once one pledges *samaya* vows and becomes a disciple of a Tibetan Buddhist guru.

Dzongsar writes, 'The bottom line here is: if both student and guru are consciously aware of Vajrayana theory and practice, I can't see anything wrong in what Sogyal Rinpoche then does to his so-called Vajrayana students—especially those who have been with him for many years. Those students stepped onto the Vajrayana path voluntarily; it's a journey that they chose to make. At least, I assume they did.'[116]

One of Dzongsar's problems here is that he and Sogyal are "Vajra brothers," having received the same initiations from some of the same lamas. In that case, directly criticizing Sogyal would constitute a breach of *samaya* with both Sogyal and their mutual preceptor(s). This is one reason why Tibetan lamas have trouble critiquing other lamas: they tend to be Vajra brothers having received initiations (the Kalachakra for instance) from the Dalai Lama.[117]

This puts the Dalai Lama's remark that "we Tibetans" like to let lamas "make their own mistakes" in a different light.[118] However, in this scenario, there is little concern for the unknowing Westerners the lamas make their mistakes with.

The message we received from Kalu, from Dilgo Khyentse, and now Dzongsar is clear. It is that once accepted by the student, the Vajra Master is to be followed totally on faith with unquestioned devotion, no matter their actions in the world. Any critical thought regarding the master will bring a horrible future in Vajra hells. We should be thankful that Dzongsar states so clearly the Vajrayana view for us!

Everything That Can be Faced Can Be Changed
But Nothing Can Be Changed Until It is Faced[119]

In September of 2018 the Dalai Lama was on tour in Europe during which he was to spend four days in Holland. The Tibetan spiritual leader had agreed to meet four victims of alleged sexual abuse in the Netherlands. The meeting was facilitated by the Dutch researcher Rob Hogendoorn. This was not the Dalai Lama's original plan but there was great pressure put on him to hear the abused's stories as an on-line petition was signed by over 1,000 people. The group had requested the meeting to discuss abuse reportedly carried out by former or current Buddhist teachers in several countries. The three women and one man who attended the scheduled 20-minute meeting were going to deliver twelve written first-person accounts of sexual abuse by Buddhist teachers. The first-person accounts had on its cover page, #MeTooGuru: *Abuse survivors' testimonies, for the Dalai Lama's eyes only.*[120]

'We found refuge in Buddhism with an open mind and heart, until we were violated in its name,' they wrote.[121]

One of those present, a Dutch woman, Oane Bijlsma, told Efe [Spanish] news agency that it was 'a very complicated meeting.'[122] She said that at the beginning the Dalai Lama 'didn't want to hear' about their cases, but added that after ten minutes of conversation he became 'more receptive.' "By the end, Ms Bijlsma said, he was closer to what we were presenting, he stopped trying to convince us that it wasn't his fault and started to listen to what we were saying.[123]

The Dalai Lama stated, 'I already did know these things, nothing new,' he said in response on Dutch public television NOS late Saturday. 'Twenty-five years ago… someone mentioned about a problem of sexual allegations' at a conference for western Buddhist teachers in Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh, he added.[124]

This short meeting in Holland with the Dalai Lama has a few elements that call for closer examining. The conference with Western Buddhist teachers he refers to took place at a time when leading Tibetan Buddhist lamas, the leaders and spokespeople for some of the most active and respected groups in the West were dealing with scandals involving sexual abuse, alcoholism, drug use, and financial misdoings lasting over a period of at least two decades. Aside from the lamas, at least in some groups, in particular Shambhala, senior lay members were also abusing their positions. At that time too, there were widely known scandals around sex and alcoholism occurring in Zen Buddhist groups in the West. Almost every major Zen group in the West had faced scandal.

I think it calls for some questioning why the Dalai Lama, not only the most public but also the moral authority of Tibetan Buddhism can only find twenty minutes to fit into a four-day visit in Holland to hear about major problems of Tibetan Buddhism in the West. But more so, it seems to be poor judgement

that he spent ten of his twenty minutes of allocated time to defending himself as “not being his fault” for the sexual, psychological, and financial abuse of western students by respected Tibetan and other teachers.

What is even more disturbing, his acknowledgement that, ‘Twenty-five years ago… someone mentioned about a problem of sexual allegations at a conference for western Buddhist teachers in Dharamshala.’ Presenting abuse by Buddhist teachers in this fashion trivializes the problem. But this topic of Buddhist teachers in the West drinking excessively and having sexual relations with their students which was breaking many sanghas (group of practitioners) apart at the time was raised at a meeting in Dharamshala, India between the Dalai Lama and twenty-two western Buddhist teachers from March 16-19, 1993.[125] It was a major point of concern that was raised. Besides Tibetan Buddhist groups, the Zen sect at the time was suffering the most from the scandals caused by exposing the behavior of a number of prominent Zen masters. It was one of the earlier issues directly brought up at the Dharamashala meeting.

The Dalai Lama said at that meeting in 1993 that the situation must improve. Then suggested that people speak with the offending teachers and try to get them to improve their behavior. If after a time they did not change, and if there was irrefutable evidence, the Dalai Lama suggested outing them using their name so all would know who they were and they would be shamed.

The Dalai Lama suggested a joint statement be issued between himself and the Western Buddhist teachers addressing the issue of teacher sexual abuse. He was concerned about this issue and made many suggestions for the wording of the statement. Stephen Batchelor was selected as scribe. It took weeks for the Dalai Lama’s private office to ratify the document. When the document was finally returned to the Westerners for publication, it was unchanged except for one thing: the sentence in which the Dalai Lama personally endorsed the text had been deleted. Without his endorsement the text lost much of its authority. It looked like twenty-two self appointed Westerners chose to speak for the Buddhist community. Batchelor felt “used” by the Dalai Lama because he had communicated his concern and offered a solution, but by not endorsing the text, he did not have any responsibility for what it said.[126]

At the 1993 meeting, the trouble explicitly mentioned was about the Zen sect and their teachers, so called Zen masters, so perhaps it was “safe” for the Dalai Lama to suggest outing wayward teachers if they refused to improve their behavior.[127]

However, back in 1989 John Steinbeck IV and his wife Nancy met the Dalai Lama at the lavish grounds of the Heinz ketchup heirs’ estate in Newport, California and asked him, ‘You know about the situation within Trungpa Rinpoche’s community. Our teacher died of alcoholism after abusing his power with female students. His Regent transmitted AIDS in a similar abuse of power to a young male student. Many of us have experienced extreme heartbreak and a weakening of faith and devotion. Can you address this problem so that other students may avoid these pitfalls?’[128]

The Dalai Lama’s reply became a blueprint for the way he and the Tibetan government in exile handled trouble with Tibetan lamas for the next twenty five years. The Dalai Lama replied: ‘I would say that if you are going to follow a teacher, you must examine his behavior very carefully…The student has to take the responsibility of examining the behavior of the teacher very carefully, over a long period. You cannot be hasty about these things.’[129]

While it is true that a student has a responsibility for her or his decision to become a disciple, so does the teacher, the vajra master, supposedly with superior wisdom, have a responsibility not to take students too hastily and certainly, once taking them not to abuse them for their own satisfaction. But perhaps more importantly, what about the highly respected lamas who were leaders of their given sect, who sanctified the teacher, thereby elevating their standing in the religious hierarchy, do they not have a responsibility to the students who at least partially are studying with the abusive teacher because of their blessings—their giving a sort of Federal Drug Administration guarantee of purity and authority? It seems unfitting to blame only the student for a lack of wisdom.

Steinbeck wrote, '"No amount of Tibetan lawyer talk (…) is going to cover up the stench of underlying corruption. He [the Dalai Lama] can blame the student all he likes, but isn't that the same as blaming the victim in any abusive situation?" "How is their cover-up any different from the decades of secrecy in the Catholic Church regarding their priests' sexual abuse of choirboys?"[130]

And:

'Will it be a matter of time before they follow suit with the Catholics in offering apologies?'[131]

Why, we may ask, would the Dalai Lama feel so defensive? One reason may be, that as the public face of Tibetan Buddhism, the sheer scale and scope of the recent scandals exposing forty years of dishonesty and abuse without a word of disapproval coming from him could be seen as a cover-up from on high, as is seen with the Pope in the Catholic Church scandals. Another simple reason is that after giving the advice to western students and teachers back in 1993 to out offending teachers if they would not improve their behavior, he has never mentioned one teacher himself though he was well aware of much of what was going with Tibetan teachers.

In addition, in 1992 the Dalai Lama received a ten-page letter about Sogyal's abuses, the very year he wrote the foreword for *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying.* When the Janice Doe case against Sogyal was settled out of court in Los Angeles in 1994, the Dalai Lama's secretary said that Tibetan Buddhist leaders had been aware of these allegations for years.[132] But even if for cultural and perhaps political reasons he would not mention particular people, to name names, he surely could have avoided their centers, not doing photo ops with them knowing full well that these teachers were using the photo ops as his endorsement.[133]

The most striking example of this was the Dalai Lama flying into southern France on a private plane for a major two day affair to inaugurate the opening of Sogyal's temple complex, Lerab Ling in 2008.[134] Besides many other dignitaries in attendance, but often close to the Dalai Lama was Carla Bruni Sarkozy, the stylish wife of the president of France. Sogyal later informed his spokespeople to reply to criticisms of his behavior with the statement, 'the Dalai Lama endorses me.'[135]

Sogyal well understood that would be the end of the story!

Yet still another question raised is if for twenty-five years the Dalai Lama knew this problem, why was nothing done about it.[136]

Why were offending lamas allowed to take prominent and visible places at the Dalai Lama's talks and presentations?[137]

Why did the Dalai Lama attend Sogyal's temple inauguration being the center of attraction for two days of meeting dignitaries, giving talks and performing rituals while Sogyal with obvious glee danced around him? Anyone attending the inauguration or watching it on YouTube would naturally think the Dalai Lama was fully endorsing Sogyal. On the other hand, not attending the inauguration of the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the West, would have certainly been understood as a show of disapproval. The words of the Dalai Lama have tremendous power. In August, 2017, at the peak of the Sogyal scandal, after the public letter signed by eight senior students, after Sogyal's behavior spread across the internet and into print media, the Dalai Lama finally spoke publicly. He said, 'My friend Sogyal has shamed himself.'[138] A few days later, on August 11, 2017 Sogyal announced his retirement and supposedly went into retreat.

This simple remark was viewed as an overwhelming condemnation of Sogyal. This after forty years of silence and tacit endorsements. It would not have taken very much on the Dalai Lama's part, or other high lamas to reign in abusive lamas but at the least, to warn unsuspecting students. No wonder the Dalai Lama was defensive!

One wonders as the Steinbeck's insinuated back in 1989 when they were talking with the Dalai Lama at the Heinz ketchup estate in Newport, California, how much confusion and pain could have been avoided if the various lineage heads, including the Dalai Lama were more open about abusing lamas, insisted on consequences for errant behavior, and outed unrepentant lamas as was suggested back in 1993 for wayward Zen masters.

One also wonders, as all the Tibetan Buddhist teachers involved in the above-mentioned scandals were respected and orthodox teachers endorsed by other highly respected senior lamas and the main lineage holders of their respected traditions, what are these endorsements based on?

What does it mean if the highest lamas' endorsements were wrong or very questionable at best? What does this say about the understanding and wisdom of these many times reincarnated lamas? Their calls for secrecy and honoring titles in the face of scandal seem more about institutional self protection than anything else? The high lamas appear hesitant to allow for the possibility of even the smallest crack in their self-created wall of infallibility. Yet we all know nothing in human endeavors is really like that.

Like Zen Buddhism that imputed unquestioning authority and enlightenment to its masters/roshis which led to scandal after scandal for the past 50 years or so, Tibetan lamas and Rinpoches are surrounded by an imputed aura of moral perfection and enlightenment, making the case of an abusive lama, at least until recently, almost inconceivable and rarely taken seriously. Even more than is in Zen, the prevalent view is that everything the Vajrayana teacher does or says is compassionate and enlightened activity.[139]

Any resistance or questioning of the teacher's authority or pronouncements are considered arrogant, defending or expressing one's too large ego. Being accused of arrogance or of defending your ego can apply to anyone, that is, anyone except the master. In fact, not seeing the master in this self imputed perfected way is looked at as a sign of being a slow student- not getting it! This also acts as a damper on any student raising a question about the master's behavior.

It is widely recognized that sexual abuse is to a large extent about power. That seems to be the case with the teachers discussed in this paper. Trungpa often had sex with the wives and girlfriends of students, and at the snap of a finger could have disciples forcibly stripped naked whether they agreed to

it or not. A close disciple of Sogyal stated that Sogyal slept with the wives of some of his students, that is, aside from seducing other women, married or single who came to him for spiritual counseling. This is on top of the physical abuse and humiliation he dealt to his dakinis. The Sakyong we saw also seduced many young women, some involved with other men and ghosted them when he was finished with them. The Vajra Regent liked straight men who had no previous homosexual experience, in one case it was a young man less then half his age who he infected with HIV. The teenage Kalu tulku while in the monastery, was raped for roughly two years by a group of older monks, and when he returned from a three-year retreat he recognized the next young boys attacked by them. When he wanted to change tutors, the rejected tutor attempted to kill him, while dismissing him as being easily replaceable.

From these cases it is clear that imputing spiritual attainment to people, be they lamas, or Rinpoches or tulku or whatever title they carry, who almost certainly have not reached the perfected levels imputed to them, leads to much confusion, pain and suffering. This is true at the least for the students, and given some time, public scandal will tarnish the name of Buddhism. The same goes for assuming that large Tibetan Buddhist institutions and monasteries are inherently pure. It appears to be true with Buddhism just as it does with other religions, that keeping secret and covering over abuse only makes matters worse and more widespread.

Things are clearly changing. There is no more room under the rug. Tibetan Buddhism is no better at policing itself than any other institution. The power of the internet keeps powerful institutions from controlling public dialogue. The voice of students who no longer are afraid to speak out publicly has shone light on the secrecy that many Buddhist teachers have been hiding behind. Of course, the "#MeToo" movement is an empowering and driving force, knocking open the doors of secrecy. Now that the dark underbelly of Tibetan Buddhism is being exposed and hopefully faced, it can be changed for the better.

♦

Footnotes

1. Hannah Arendt, in the film Hitler's Hollywood.
2. See a number of my papers at *The Zen Site*. Also, see Lachs, Stuart (2017). Modernizing American Zen Through Scandal: Is the Way Really the Way? in Havnevik, Hanna*et al.* (editors), *Buddhist Modernities: Re-inventing Tradition in the Globalizing Modern World* (pp. 282-295). New York: Routledge.
3. Modern scholarship has shown that the Zen propagated idea of an unbroken chain of enlightened masters going back to the Buddha is a myth. See, McCrae, John (2003).*Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (pp. 1-21). Berkeley: University of California Press. Many other scholars have written on this, Alan Cole, Griffith Foulk, Bernard Faure, Martin Schlutter, Robert Sharf, Albert Welter, et cetera.
4. In Tibetan Buddhism, the lineage is based on (re)incarnations or emanations of earlier great masters, who are verified by highly regarded Tibetan teachers.

5. Throughout this text, Tibetan words are italicized and transcribed according to Turrel Wylie's (Wyl.) system published in 1959, but only on their first appearance. Wylie, Turrel (1959). A standard system of Tibetan transcription. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 22 (pp. 261-267).

6. Estimates for the number of tulkus and tulku lineages vary greatly. 'From the twelfth century onwards, all four of the major sects of Tibetan Buddhism followed the example of the Karmapa sect and recognized the institution of reincarnations, which led to the emergence of numerous incarnations in almost all monasteries. At the peak of this development, at the turn of the twentieth century, there were believed to be well over ten thousand such reincarnations in Tibet.' Michael, Franz (1982). *Rule By Incarnation: Tibetan Buddhism and Its Role in Society and Stat*e (p. 43). Boulder: Westview Press. The *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* states: 'There were some three thousand lines of incarnation in Tibet.' Buswell Jr., Robert & Lopez Jr., Donald (2014) *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (p. 847). Princeton: Princeton University Press. The vast majority are men, though there are a small number of female tulku lineages. Also see, Author unknown (2004). Tulku. *Wikipedia.org*, March 8, 2004 (last accessed January 9, 2019). High profile examples of tulkus are the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, and the Karmapa.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Lama Kunsang, Lama Pemo & Aubèle, Marie (2012). History of the Karmapas: Recognizing a Tulku. *Snow Lion Catalog and Newsletter*, 26 (1), number 97, Winter 2012 (p. 1, 11, 22, 23).

9. Samdup, Tsenten (1989). Tulku Conference in Sarnath December 5-8, 1988. *Snow Lion Catalog and Newsletter,* 4 (1), number 7, Spring 1989 (p. 2).

10. If the highest estimate of 10,000 tulkus were really living in Tibet before the Chinese occupation in 1950, at an estimated population of three million, then one in every three hundred Tibetans was a tulku. If the conservative estimate of 3,000 tulkus is more accurate, then one in every thousand Tibetans was a tulku.

11. See, Kapstein, Matthew (2014). *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (p. 89). Oxford: Oxford University Press: 'In tantric Buddhism, the most crucial relationship is that between guru, or lama, and disciple. The disciple pledges body, speech, and mind to the teacher who bestows consecration upon him, and ones's oath to the teacher is inviolable.' This oath is referred to as *samaya*vow, which we shall see plays an extremely important role in Vajrayana Buddhism and in the scandals discussed in this paper.

12. The line is the opening to the film The Big Short, falsely attributed to Mark Twain.

13. Sogyal Rinpoche (2008). *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (Revised and updated edition). London: Rider.

14. The first Tibetan Monastery in the West was founded in 1958 by Geshe Wangyal in New Jersey in the USA, who immigrated to serve the Kalmuck Mongolian community. In 1967 he bought land and built a new monastery in Washington, New Jersey. Jeffrey Hopkins and Robert Thurman, well known Tibetan Buddhist scholars, studied with Geshe Wangyal.

15. Perry, Andrew (2011). Bringing Chogyam Trungpa's "Crazy Wisdom" to the screen—A conversation with filmmaker Johanna Demetrakas. *Lion's Roar*, November 23, 2011 (last accessed February 3, 2019).

16. John Steinbeck IV & Nancy Steinbeck (2001).*The Other Side of Eden.* Amherst: Prometheus Books.

17. Stephen Butterfield (1994) *The Double Mirror: A Skeptical Journey into Buddhist Tantra* (p. 11). Berkeley: North Atlantic Books. Also see, Matthew Kapstein (2014). *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (p. 86). Oxford: Oxford University Press: 'Tantric practice must be grounded in unswerving devotion to a qualified teacher, without this, only its outer form survives.'

18. Kashner, Sam (2004). *When I Was Cool: My Life at the Jack Kerouac School* (p. 49). New York: Harper Collins: 'Consulting I Ching Smoking Pot Listening to the Fugs Sing Blake.'

19. Much has been written about this. See, Clark, Tom (1979). *The Great Naropa Poetry Wars* (designed and printed by Graham Mackintosh), November 1979. Also see, Marin, Peter (1979). Spiritual Obedience: The transcendental game of follow the leader. *Harper's Magazine*, February 1979 (last accessed July 8, 2019), for an overview of Trungpa and his followers. For a description of the "Merwin Affair," see pp. 51-53. For another condensed version of the "Affair," some reactions by Ginsberg, and the atmosphere around Trungpa, see Woods, Robert (pseudonym of Tom Clark), '"Buddha-gate": Scandal and cover-up at Naropa revealed,' *Berkeley Barb.* 28 (13), number 698, March 29 – April 11, 1979 (pp. 17-18, 21).

20. Steinbeck, p. 29

21. Steinbeck, p. 39

22. One could argue that Trungpa practiced what he preached here leaving his son Ösel Mukpo, the future Sakyong Mipham with his mother in a Tibeten refugee camp in India while he went to England and then a little later leaving him again to go to America after Ösel Mukpo was in England.

23. Steinbeck, p. 39

24. Steinbeck, p. 40.

25. Steinbeck, p. 40. Trungpa was not alone in this behavior, the author of this paper is familiar with a number of Zen teachers who also assumed the all-wise role.

26. Steinbeck, p. 40.

27. According to Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, the Sanskrit word *vidyadhara* (in Tibetan *rigdzin*, Wyl., *rig 'dzin*) indicates someone who constantly abides in the state of pure awareness of *rigpa*-knowledge that comes from recognizing one's nature. See also, Vidyadhara, Rigpa Wiki (last accessed July 8, 2019).

28. See, *Tibetan Buddhism in the West*. Katy Butler's (1990) article 'Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America' appeared in *Common Boundary Magazine*, May-June 1990 (pp. 14-22). It

dealt mostly with teacher abuse and its effects in the Shambhala community but also mentioned similar troubles with Zen groups and teachers.

29. Steinbeck, p. 211. For a first person report of Trungpa's cocaine use and child rape by one of his seven young wives trained to serve him see, Dharma Wheel (last accessed January 20, 2019). It also has come out recently that there was child sexual abuse at a number of Shambhala centers. See, Buddhist Project Sunshine (last accessed July 8, 2019).
30. Steinbeck, p. 211.
31. Steinbeck, p. 211.
32. Steinbeck, p. 211.
33. Steinbeck, p. 212-213.
34. Steinbeck, p. 32.
35. Steinbeck, p. 210.
36. Katy Butler (1990), Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America. *Common Boundary Magazine*, May-June 1990 (pp. 14-22).
37. Remski, Matthew (2018). Pema Chödrön on Trungpa in 2011: "I Can't Answer the Relative Questions". Matthewremski.com July 20, 2018 (last accessed October 26, 2018.
38. Steinbeck, p. 211.
39. Steinbeck, p. 32.
40. See, Way Back Machine (last accessed July 6, 2019). Thompson, Jesse (2000). The Dharma Brats: Growing up Buddhist in America. *Nexus*, May-June 2000.
41. *The Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin Library and Archive* (last accessed October 28, 2018).
42. See, Rigpa Wiki (last accessed July 8, 2019): *Abhisheka—wang* (Wyl., dbang) in Tibetan— 'refers to the Vajrayana ritual which awakens the special capacity for primordial wisdom (Tib. *yeshe*) to arise in the mind of the disciple. It is called 'empowerment' because when we receive it, we are empowered to follow a particular spiritual practice, and so come to master its realization.'
43. Trungpa seemed drawn to upper crust British ways. He had his students who served as maids and servants address him as "Your Highness" while they dressed in British style maids' outfits. See, Kapstein, Matthew (2014). *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (p. 89). Oxford: Oxford University Press: 'In Tibetan societies, the deference of social inferior to superior, junior to senior, mundane to sacred, spiritually immature to spiritually advanced, and so forth is very strongly marked.' In spite of his "Crazy Wisdom," Trungpa was bringing Tibetan social mores of deference to superiors to the United States of America.
44. Butler, Katy (1990). Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America. *Common Boundary Magazine*, May-June 1990 (pp. 14-22).
45. Steinbeck, p. 246.

46. Steinbeck, p. 246.

47. Butler, Katy (1990). Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America. *Common Boundary Magazine*, May-June 1990 (pp. 14-22).

48. Zaslowsky, Dylan (1989). Buddhists in U.S. Agonize on AIDS Issue. *New York Times*, February 21, 1989 (p. A14).

49. Zaslowsky, Dylan (1989). Buddhists in U.S. Agonize on AIDS Issue. *New York Times*, February 21, 1989 (p. A14).

50. Breaking of *samaya* vows can lead to all sorts of trouble, madness, and even death—some believe not only for yourself but also for family members. *Samaya* can support the teacher-student relationship but it can also be used unscrupulously as a threat to keep people quiet and in line.

51. For an abridged version of Kalu Rinpoche's talk see, Facebook Dzogchen Meditation Center, December 20, 2017 (last accessed July 6, 2019). The full talk given in Los Angeles on December 22, 1988 was posted on the Chronicles of Chogyam Trungpa but was recently (March, 2019) removed. Kalu added, 'Regarding Ösel Tendzin and his attainments, students are often unable to see the full enlightenment or the miraculous powers of their teachers.'

52. This remark is part of the full talk that has been removed from the Chronicles of Chogyam Trungpa website.

53. See, Mendelsohn, Deborah (1989). Correspondence. *The Sun*, July 1989, published on line at *The Sun Magazine* (last accessed April 12, 2019).

54. Campbell, June (1996). *Traveler in Space: In Search of Female Identity in Tibetan Buddhism* (p. 98). London: Athlone. This source will be quoted as *Traveller in Space*.

55. *Traveller in Space*, p. 102

56. *Traveller in Space*, p. 104

57. *Traveller in Space*, p. 98

58. Hooper, Joseph (2012). Leaving Om: Buddhism's Lost Lamas. *Details Magazine*, August 1, 2012, archived by the Way Back Machine (last accessed April 12, 2019). Senge was abused, he says, as a 5-year-old by his own tutor, a man in his late twenties, at a monastery in India.

59. *Ibid*. The young Kalu also made a ten minute video discussing his life as a tulku, titled 'The Confessions of Kalu Rinpoche' (last accessed 26 December 2018). In the video he remarks, 'Its all about money, power, controlling…' the video has received over 200,000 hits.

60. Butler, Katy (1990). Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America. *Common Boundary Magazine*, May-June 1990 (pp. 14-22).

61. Steinbeck, p. 253.

62. Steinbeck, p. 254. Also see, Finnigan, Mary (2011). The Buddhist organizations that are thriving during the debt crisis. *The Guardian*, February 18, 2011 (last accessed November 21, 2018). For example, the seventeenth Karmapa, Orgyen Trinley Dorje visited the North America for the first time in 2008. About 2,000 people gathered at a monastery in Woodstock, New York to catch a glimpse of him. They paid $200 each—a total of $400,000. In October of 2011, 1,500 people flew to Tenerife for a three day teaching of Namkhai Norbu, a master in the Dzogchen tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The cost was 150 Euros excluding, flights, accommodation and subsistence—225,000 Euro total for the three days.

63. This is a common trope in Tibetan Buddhism, where "retreat" can mean anything from intense solitary practice to hide from view.

64. 'Letter to the Sangha from His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche', October 17, 1989, available on line at *The Chronicles of ChogyamTrungpa Rinpoche* (last accessed July 6, 2019).

65. Statement to the Sangha from His Eminence Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche. August 26, 1990, available on line at *The Chronicles of ChogyamTrungpa Rinpoche* (last accessed July 6, 2019).

66. Penor Rinpoche recognized the action film star Steven Seagal as a tulku of a 17th-century Buddhist master named Chungdrag Dorje. See, Sweet, Matthew (1999). Steven Seagal: Top Action Hero and Tibetan Lama'. *Independent magazine*, November 14, 1999 (last acccessed July 8, 2019).

67. Author unknown (no date). Sakyong Wangmo: Invoking the Mother Lineage.*Shambala.com* (last accessed April 11, 2019)

68. Lama Tsultrim Allione is an American woman born in Maine in 1947. She is a well-known author and teacher of the Karma Kagyü lineage. In January 1970, at the age of 22, she became the first American ordained by the 16th Karmapa. See, Author unknown (date unknown). Lama Tsultrim Allione's Biography. *Tara Mandala* (last accessed July 8, 2019).

69. Andrea Winn is founder of Buddhist Project Sunshine which broke open discussions of sexual abuse in the Shambhala organization. She wrote, 'I was first sexually abused when I was around seven, and again by multiple men during my teen years.' Whitaker, Justin (2018). Healing a Heart and a Community: Andrea Winn and Project Sunshine. *Buddhistdoor.net*, March 28, 2018 (last accessed 8 July 2019). She later added that that the shocking truth is almost all the children in her group were abused by older men in the group. See, Winn, Andrea (2018). Project Sunshine: Final Report. *Andreamwinn.com*, February 15, 2018 (p. 7) (last accessed July 8, 2019).

70. Winn, Andrea (2018). Project Sunshine: Final Report. *Andreamwinn.com*, February 15, 2018 (p. 7) (last accessed July 8, 2019).

71. Winn, Andrea (2018). Critical information that the Shambhala community needs to know. *Andreamwinn.com*, March 24, 2018 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

72. Winn, Andrea (2018). Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 2: Final Report. *Andreamwinn.com*, June 28, 2018 (p. 18) (last accessed 8 July 2019).

73. *Ibid.* p. 17.

74. *Ibid.,* p. 17.

75. *Ibid.,* p. 13.

76. The full text of this letter can be found at Author unknown (2018). Shambhala leader makes public apology. *Lion's Roar*, June 25, 2018 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

77. Newman, Andy (2018). The "King" of Shambhala Buddhism is Undone By Abuse Report. *New York Times*, July 11, 2018 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

78. Whitaker, Justin (2018). Further abuse accusations against Sakyong Mipham, head of Shambhala Buddhism. *Patheos: American Buddhist Perspectives*, February 17, 2019 (last accessed July 8, 2019). The article gives a good condensed version of the 35-page letter and places it in the context of scandals in Tibetan Buddhism. It also has a link to *the letter* of the Kusung (last accessed July 8, 2019).

79. Morman, Craig *et al.* (2018) An Open Letter to the Shambhala Community from Long-Serving Kusung, p. 27.

80. *Ibid*. p. 27.

81. Information taken from the Kagyü Thubten Chöling website (last accessed October 10, 2018.

82. Atwood, Haleigh (2018). Lama Norlha Rinpoche, founding abbot of Kagyu Thubten Chöling dies at age 79. *Lion's Roar*, February 22, 2018 (last accessed 8 July 2019).

83. Deveaux, Tynette (2017) Kagyu Thubten Choling addresses sangha about Lama Norlha Rinpoche's sexual misconduct with students. *Lion's Roar*, July 15, 2017 (last accessed 10 October 2018).

84. *Ibid*.

85. See, Kagyü Thubten Chöling website (last accessed April 17, 2019.

86. See, Brown, Mick, Sexual Assaults and violent rages…Inside the world of Buddhist teacher Sogyal Rinpoche. *The Telegraph*, 21 September, 2017 (last accessed October 15, 2018).

87. *Ibid*.

88. Finnigan, Mary & Hogendoorn, Rob (2019). *Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism: The Rise and Fall of Sogyal Rinpoche* (p. 66). Portland: Jorvik Press.

89. The term Rigpa can be talked about in many ways—knowledge is a simple translation. See, Author unknown (2004). Rigpa. Rigpa Wiki, February 16, 2007 (last accessed July 8, 2019). See also, Whitaker, Justin (2017). Further Tibetan Buddhist thoughts on Sogyal/Rigpa. Patheos: American Buddhist Perspectives, September 7, 2017 (last accessed October 27, 2018). This article is unique in that Tibetan leaders of a branch of the Nyingma sect are openly and directly critical of Sogyal.

90. See, Author unknown (2006) Lerab Ling. Rigpa Wiki, December 20, 2006 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

91. Hogendoorn, Rob (2018). The Making of a Lama: Interrogating Sogyal Rinpoché's Pose as a (Re)incarnate Master, a paper presented to the panel From Rape Texts to Bro Buddhism: Critical Canonical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Sexual Abuse Scandals in Western Buddhism, during the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Denver, November 17-20, 2018.

92. Whitaker, Justin (2017). Further Tibetan Buddhist thoughts on Sogyal/Rigpa. Patheos: American Buddhist Perspectives. September 7, 2017 (last accessed February 17, 2019): 'However, Sogyal Lakar is not universally accepted as an incarnation of gTértön Sogyal. Chhi'mèd Rig'dzin Rinpoche and Künzang Dorje Rinpoche both held it to be impossible. They quoted many other Lamas including Düd'jom Rinpoche, Chatral Rinpoche, and the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa as holding this view.'

93. Finnigan, Mary & Hogendoorn, Rob (2019). *Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism: The Rise and Fall of Sogyal Rinpoche* (pp. 23-30). Portland: Jorvik Press.

94. Emery, Elodie (2011). "Pas si zen, ces bouddhistes…". Marianne, 15-21 October 2011, 756 (pp. 72-77). There are five Tertön Sogyal Foundations, one in France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. See, *Terton-sogyal.org* (last accessed January 12, 2019). The Rigpa Fellowship in England is under investigation by the British Charity Commission (last accessed July 8, 2019).

95. Finnigan, Mary (2011). The Buddhist organisations that are thriving during the debt crisis. *The Guardian*, November 18, 2011 (last accessed October 18, 2018).

96. Finnigan, Mary & Hogendoorn, Rob (2019). *Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism: The Rise and Fall of Sogyal Rinpoche*(pp. 91-92). Portland: Jorvik Press.

97. *Ibid.* p. 92.

98. See, Brown, Mick (2017). Sexual Assaults and violent rages…Inside the world of Buddhist teacher Sogyal Rinpoche. *The Telegraph*, 21 September, 2017 (last accessed October 15, 2018).

99. *Ibid*.

100. Standlee, Mark *et al*. (2017). Public letter from eight senior students of Sogyal, July 14, 2017 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

101. Standlee, Mark *et al*. (2017). Public letter from eight senior students of Sogyal, July 14, 2017 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

102. Finnigan, Mary & Hogendoorn, Rob (2019). *Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism: The Rise and Fall of Sogyal Rinpoche* (pp. 81-82). Portland: Jorvik Press.

103. *Ibid*. p. 96.

104. Standlee, Mark *et al*. (2017). Public letter from eight senior students of Sogyal, July 14, 2017 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

105. *Ibid*.

106. Author unknown (2005). Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche. Wikipedia.com, August 30, 2005 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

107. Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse's essay on Facebook was reproduced in its entirety by Lewis, Craig (2017). Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche Issues Public Statement on Recent Criticism of Sogyal Rinpoche. *Buddhist Door Global*, August 15, 2017 (last accessed October 21, 2018).

108. *Ibid*.

109. Bourdieu, Pierre (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power* (p. 16). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

110. *Ibid*.

111. *Ibid*.

112. Finnigan, Mary & Hogendoorn, Rob (2019). *Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism: The Rise and Fall of Sogyal Rinpoche* (pp. 81-82). Portland: Jorvik Press.

113. See, Kapstein, Matthew (2014). *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*(p. 89). Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also, Kakar, Sudhir (2010). The Uses of Ritual. in Brosius, Christiane & Huesken, Ute (editors) *Ritual Matters: Dynamic Dimensions in Practice* (p. 203). London: Routledge.

114. Empowerment refers to a ceremony in which a lama, on the basis of his own spiritual attainments and understanding of the proper rituals that have been handed down in an unbroken lineage for hundreds and even thousands of years, places a recipient in connection with a particular Tantric deity or deities. The result of this teaching "empowers" a recipient to visualize that deity and recite the deity's mantra. See, Author unknown (date unknown). What are empowerments? Ewam Choden Tibetan Buddhist Center (last accessed January 10, 2019.

115. Bourdieu, Pierre (1991). Rites of Institutions. in *Language and Symbolic Power* (pp. 117-126).

116. Lewis, Craig (2017). Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche Issues Public Statement on Recent Criticism of Sogyal Rinpoche. *Buddhist Door Global*, August 15, 2017 (last accessed October 21, 2018).

117. Kapstein, Matthew (2014). *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (p. 89). Oxford: Oxford University Press: 'By entering into a teacher's circle, you become similarly bound by oath to your fellow disciples, who thus become "vajra brothers and sisters."'

118. Steinbeck, p. 253

119. Taken from the film, James Baldwin: I Am Not Your Negro.

120. Hogendoorn, Rob (2018). The Making of a Lama: Interrogating Sogyal Rinpoché's Pose as a (Re)incarnate Master, a paper presented to the panel From Rape Texts to Bro Buddhism: Critical Canonical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Sexual Abuse Scandals in Western Buddhism, during the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Denver,

November 17-20, 2018. See also, Hogendoorn, Rob (2018). The Dalai Lama's Clarion Call. Tibetan Review, December 6, 2018 (last accessed December 6, 2018.

121. Author unknown (2018). Dalai Lama meets alleged abuse victims. BBC News, September 14, 2018 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

122. The major multimedia news agency in the Spanish language and the world's fourth largest wire service after the Associated Press, Reuters, and Agence France-Presse.

123. Author unknown (2018). Dalai Lama meets alleged abuse victims. BBC News, September 14, 2018 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

124. Mees, Anna & De Vries, Bas (2018). Dalai lama over misbruik: ik weet het al sinds de jaren 90. NOS.nl, September 15, 2018 (last accessed April 12, 2019). The Dalai Lama's remarks can be watched through this link.

125. Much of the conference can be watched on line through this link: 'The Western Buddhist Teachers Conference with H.H. the Dalai Lama', The Meredian Trust (last accessed July 8, 2019).

126. See, Batchelor, Stephen (2011). *Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist* (pp. 195-211). New York: Spiegel & Grau.

127. Tenzin Palmo and Stephen and Martine Batchelor at the meeting referred to Tibetans but only Chögyam Trungpa's name was given. He, of course, had already passed away.

128. Steinbeck, p. 212. John Steinbeck IV and his wife Nancy were very active in the Shambhala organization. Over time and witnessing Trungpa's drinking, drugging, and sex addiction along with Ösel Tendzin's out of control sexual behavior became a leading critic of Shambhala. John and Nancy describe Shambhala in detail in their book, *The Other Side of Eden.* The Steinbecks seemed to be totally disappointed with the Dalai Lama and other lineage heads who maintained their silence about renegade lamas. Steinbeck, p. 254.

129. Steinbeck, p. 253.

130. *Ibid.*, p. 254. See also, Sheriff's office investigating misconduct allegations at Colorado Buddhist retreat. *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, December 18, 2018 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

131. Steinbeck, p. 254.

132. Hogendoorn, Rob (2018). The Dalai Lama's Clarion Call. Tibetan Review, December 6, 2018 (last accessed December 6, 2018).

133. Tibetan social conventions include a taboo against criticizing lamas. The Dalai Lama is constrained by this and so too are the majority of other lamas teaching in the west.

134. Author unknown (2008). The Visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Lerab Ling 2008. Rigpa Video (YouTube), January 2, 2009 (last accessed July 8, 2019).

135. Sogyal Rinpoche & Rigpa: An interview with the former director of Rigpa France, Olivier Raurich, *Diffi-Cult*, March 9, 2016 (last accessed July 8, 2019). Also see, Finnigan, Mary &

Hogendoorn, Rob (2019). *Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism: The Rise and Fall of Sogyal Rinpoche* (p. 104). Portland: Jorvik Press.

136. See, Brown, Mick (1995). The Precious One. *The Daily Telegraph Magazine*, February 2, 1995 (pp. 20-28): 'In a unique manifestation of his disapproval, The Dalai Lama withdrew from participation in a Living and Dying Conference scheduled by Rigpa to take place in California. The conference was canceled.'

137. Finnigan, Mary & Hogendoorn, Rob (2019). *Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism: The Rise and Fall of Sogyal Rinpoche* (p. 104). Portland: Jorvik Press: 'When I asked why Sogyal was usually a guest speaker at events with the Dalai Lama, like the Kalachakra Initiation, Chhimed Rigdzin, an official in the Dalai Lama's office, responded, "We don't invite him." I pointed out that they don't refuse him either.'

138. See, Brown, Mick (2017). Sexual Assaults and violent rages…Inside the world of Buddhist teacher Sogyal Rinpoche. *The Telegraph*, 21 September, 2017 (last accessed October 15, 2018).

139. Dapsance, Marion (2014). When Fraud is Part of a Spiritual Path: A Tibetan Lama's Play on Reality and Illusion. (last accessed July 8, 2019) in Van Eck Duymaer van Twist, Amanda (editor). *Minority Religions and Fraud: In Good Faith* (pp. 171-186). Farnham: Ashgate. This paper gives an in depth and disturbing presentation of Sogyal's organization and practice instructions to his followers.

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