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History Of The Karmapas: The Odyssey Of The Tibetan Masters With The Black Crown



Synopsis

Masters of esoteric knowledge and miraculous practices, the lineage of the Karmapas is the earliest of all the recognized incarnate lineages and is said to descend from the great Indian tantric master Tilopa through a chain that includes Naropa, Marpa, and Milarepa. The Karmapas are distinguished by their black crowns, said to have been woven by dakinis and symbolizing the activity of the buddhas. Unlike other Tibetan Buddhist lineage heads, each Karmapa has specific knowledge of his next reincarnation and leaves behind a "Last Testament," a letter to his disciples describing the place and circumstances of their future rebirth, the name of their parents, and so on. At a very young age, each successive incarnation is often able to recognize himself as the Karmapa. In their recounting of the histories of the seventeen Karmapas, the authors reveal the universal and marvelous concealed in the everyday world. Their lively account peppered with anecdotes is the most comprehensive in the West on this subject, with information from Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, French, and English sources.

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Customer Reviews

This book offers a very lively reading with plenty of amazing anecdotes and information about the marvelous everyday life of these great masters. Well researched and beautifully written - full of magnificent photographs and watercolors -, it is profound and accessible at the same time. Anyone interested in Tibet and its form of Buddhism will want to include this book in their "must read" list. A book I would strongly recommend for the Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike. Of all the books I have

read about the Karmapas this is the most inspiring one. I read half the book the first day and didn't want to put it down. The biographies and teachings went right to my heart; I could feel my heart opening as I read the words. Mila Khyentse Rinpoche's brilliant introduction is a real plus. Over the years, I have read plenty of books on reincarnation, but I still learned so much from Rinpoche's explanations. He elucidates from a totally new viewpoint, numerous concepts such as reincarnation, the principle of multiple emanations, the "tulku" system, the education and vision of reincarnated masters, etc.

I wish there was a bit more depth in this volume. I compare it with Glenn Mullin's *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas*, which had more historical depth. However, as a student of Tibetology with a glaring hole in my understanding of the Karmapas, this volume is a good starting point.

This book is one of those treasures that only comes along infrequently. Well written, deeply researched, filled with historical facts, it's a learning process and an interesting read. I heartily recommend it to all who are interested in the history of Tibetan Buddhism or in learning more about the Tibetan hierarchy -- or to those just looking for an interesting Buddhist book to read.

the text provides a rich historical understanding of past social relations and present how important was religious dimensions for their shaping.

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