The Kargyupa Sect
Dr. Anakul Chandra Banerjee

A hundred years after Buddha's Mahaparinibbāna discussion arose among the monks in regard to the sexual words of the master and their interpretations which ultimately led to the origin of sects in Indian Buddhism, all aiming to preserve his original teachings. And within a few hundred years after the demise of the Great Teacher as many as twenty sects or more came into existence—although a few of them disappeared shortly after their appearance. But in regard to the origin of Buddhist sects in Tibet, the case has been quite different and about ten sects came into being there in course of time. The Tibetan sects came into existence with a view to preserving the purity of the Buddhist teachings and doing away with the degrading practices, superstitions, beliefs and the like then prevalent prior to the Buddhist doctrines. Waddell writes that the sects "arose in revolt against the depraved Lamaism then prevalent, which was little else than a perverted mixture of demonology and witchcraft. Abandoning the grosser chadgatiasim the new sects returned to celibacy and many of the purer "Mahâyâna notes"—"Buddhist Religion" reserves S.C. Daí'r "progressed more and more, so as to branch out into numerous different sects as a result of the extraordinary growth. These, like the eighteen divisions of the Vaiśhñava school of ancient India were designated after the names of respective teachers and places of origin. Some of the Tibetan Lamas who had derived their religious knowledge from Indian Pandits, feeling great veneration for the theories themselves, named their respective sects after them. They did not follow the Indian patriarchs in their nomenclature, for all the Indian Buddhist Schools were designated after the general sense of their philosophies". Indeed, it was through the efforts of these sects, Buddhism was widely spread and occupied the position it did in Tibet.

1. The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism, pp. 74,75
2. JASBR, part II p. 5
There were no sects in Tibet prior to the eleventh century A.D. Buddhism as already observed, suffered a violent setback for the time-being because of the King Chang-dar-ma’s ruthless persecution.

No sect prior to 11th century A.D. Thus came the great disaster to Buddhism. It was virtually annihilated in Tibet. According to the Tibetan historians the doctrine was rooted out. The period which followed the year of the persecution of the doctrine is one of the darkest in the whole history of Tibet.”

In the 11th century A.D. King Yeshe-s Song who was one of the pious kings of Tibet and to whom Buddhist renaissance owed much much credit, invited Atisa ( Dipankara Srijuna) to come to Tibet to propagate Buddhism there. Since Atisa came to Tibet he corrected, rectified and systematized the Buddhist teachings then prevalent. He reformed the Sangha in Tibet and brought about a great renaissance in the religion.

With his reformation originated the Kadampa sect, the first sect of Tibetan Buddhism as against the unformed sect of Buddhism called Ningma-pa “the old sect” founded by Padmasambhava, better known as Guru Rinpoche. T.W. Shahkina writes that “the teachings of Atisa were subjected to a reformation movement by Drom and, as a result, a new school of Buddhism came into being in Tibet. To distinguish themselves from unformed followers of Padmasambhava, the followers of Atisa and Drom were called Kadampa (one of the doctrines) while the unformed monks were called Nyingma-pa (one of the old).” Thus the Tibetan Buddhists developed into various sects from the time of Atisa. In other words Tibetans traced their heritage to the great Acarya Dipankara Srijuna late sometime in the latter part of the 11th century A.D. “All contemporaneous and later sects without exception were influenced by the teachings of the Kadampa sect.” “No sects” observed Waddell, “appear to have existed prior to Las-Drakpa’s persecution, nor did more than a century and a half later. The sectarian struggle seems to date from the reformation started by the Indian Buddhist monk Atisha”.

1. Tibet: A Political History, pp. 59ff
2. The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamasim, p. 54
Tibetan Buddhism, as we have seen, developed into various sects later on. Most of them are now extinct. Only few of them still survive. We have, however, few details about them.

Of the sects extinct the Kargyu-pa (bKah-rgyu-pa) is one of the important sects in Tibet. In Tibetan, bKah-Rgyud means "the transmission of teachings". In other words, it means the tradition of instructions orally transmitted through a continual series of teachers and disciples. It is thus why it is called "school of successive order". It may also be called "Oral Traditions". Its followers believe in the succession of preceptors handed down through the galaxy of teachers. It traces its origin to Marpa (11th century A.D.), a native of Lho-ling, who visited India and Tibet and studied extensively the tantric texts with a number of eminent teachers there. On his return to Tibet he founded this sect on the basis of the teachings of his teacher Nalupa, the great Indian Siddhārāṇya (master of mysticism).

The Kargyu-pa (bKa-brgyud-pa) has two main schools: the Shangpa-bKa-brgyud (Shangpa-Kargyud) and Dvags-po-bKa’-ud (Dagpo-Kargyud-pa).

(1) The Shangpa Kargyud—was established by the great Yogi and Siddha Khoyung-po-Nalupa (978-1075 A.D.). He spent fifty years in studying sutra and tantra texts in India, Nepal and Tibet. Among his teachers were Nigvu (the eminent of Mahāsiddha Nalupa), Sukhasiddha and Rahuṇa Gupta. He built about a hundred monasteries including his own principal monastery Zhang−Zhong in Shangpa Kargyud Shangs valley and that is also known as Shangpa Kargyud. He taught for about thirty years and had eighty thousand disciples. His teachings were based on the five tantras viz., Samvara, Hayagriva, Mahāmaya, Guhyasamaja and Vajrādhāra. He also taught the teachings of Nigvu and Sukhasiddha as also the doctrine of Mahāmudra. This system is not at present wide-spread as a school.
(11) The Dag-po-khak-gyud (Dagpo Kargyu) — it means the transmission of the order of Dag-po, which is the name of a great scholastic ascetic who lived in the Dagpo valley. It spread widely and is one of the four major schools of Tibet. It may be pertinent to note here that now Dagpo Kargyu is the only Kargyu (bKah-gyud), since Shangpa Kargyu the first one is not well-known — it is now almost Dagpo Kargyu extinct. (Marpa - Lo-tsa - wa, Chos-kyi - lh-ros-kyi - bshi (Chokyi Lodro), is the founder of the school in the 11th century A. D. He studied first with a Bon-mi-thog-ba-ba (Drogon-Lonwa) and then visited India thrice and Nepal four times. He received the teachings of Tatsras from the renowned teachers such as Nyerpa and Māräpa. Specially he obtained the absolute realization of Maha-mudrā meditation from the teaching of Māräpa. In Tibet, he transmitted the teachings of Samvara, Guhyasamaja, Heruka, Mahamaya and other Tatsras to his disciples, so called four pillars, viz., rGyos, Chod-khu-r Do-rje (Ngön-te Chok-ten - Donkhyung), Dpal-ba - rgyal - tsho (Phurba - Dargya), Mdo-Thon - Tsho-pa (Mipham - Tshong-pa) and Mi-la - Bas-pa (Mipham), the great hermit-priest of Tibet. This esoteric doctrine was thereafter orally transmitted to Ralston, the eminent scholar and authoritative historian of Tibet and Tson-Kha-pa, the great Tibetan reformer in whose hands this tradition gained extensive prevalence and unbroken continuity down to the present time.

From this Dagpo Kargyu arose four major subsects and eight minor subsects from one of its subsects latter on. The four major subsects are: Kunra Kargyu (Kumbheling Kargyu), Kags-pa Kargyu, Tshad-pa Kargyu and Sarvepa Kargyu.

(a) Kunra Kargyu was founded in the middle of the 12th century A. D. by Karmapa Dung-sum-chu-Rgyan-pa (Dung-sumkhyen-pa). He studied the various doctrines with Dagpo-Lha-wa and Red-ku-wa. He built monasteries as Kunra Dampa-lings and in Tshur-phu (Tshur-phu) for the great benefit of the people. He died at the age of eighty.

Since Kunra Dampa Khyen the heads of Kunra Kargyu this subsect have been the uninterupted reincarnation of him till the present time. His next reincarnation was Kunra Pekshi. Hence, after Pekshi this
sect was also called the "Black Cap Sect" (Shwa-mag-car). The XVth Karmapa Rigpai Dorje (Rig-pa'i rdo-rje) who used to live at Rumtek, Sikkim, passed away on 6.11.81 in Chicago, USA.

He visited several countries abroad. He established more than two hundred meditation centers in the various parts of the world. His principal monastery in Tibet was the M'tshur-pa in Central Tibet. It should be pointed out here that the Karmapa "seems to be nearly identical with the Karmapa sect of Nepal".

(b) Piagtru Kargyud (Phag-gru-bka-bshad) — it was founded by Phagmo-Trupa Dorje, Gyatso (Phag-mo-Gya-tsee-rdo-rje) who was born in the southern part of Kham in 1110 A.D. He studied the various teachings under different teachers. Afterwards he learnt the Mahamudra (doctrine of the great Piagtru Kargyud symbol) from Dagpo Lhae at Sgam-po monastery.

He constructed a monastery at a place called Phamo-gru in South Tibet (now known as Denga-Thal-gDan-sa-mThil) to propagate the doctrine and was hence called Phagmo-Trupa. He died at the age of sixtyone in 1170 A.D. He had a large number of disciples which formed many sub-sects later on.

c) Tshalpa Kargyud (Thal-ba-kargyud) — the founder of this sub-sect was Zhang-Dak-matrog (Zhang Darma Grags) who was born in 1122 A.D. His main preceptor was Wongom Tshudims (dBo-lus-Prin Thub-drim) who was a disciple of Dagpo. Later on he founded the Gzing-thang monastery to popularise the doctrine and Tshalpa Kargyud to convert the people. He died at the age of seventyone in 1193 A.D.

d) Barompa-Kargyud (Shab-Kom bKa-bshad) — Darma Wangchug (Dar-Ma-bShab-gphug) was a disciple of Dagpo. He studied all the doctrines, both esoteric andoteric, under him and Barom Kargyud attained all excellent virtues. He built the Barom monastery in the North and hence his tradition was known as the Barom Kargyud.

1. To pay his homage to the XVth Gyalwa Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje, Gyurm-phod Ngagyal, the ruler of Sikkim constructed the first Karmapa monastery at Kalang in Sikkim in about 1730 A. D.
We have seen before that the eight minor subsects issued from the Dapa Karagyupa. But rightly speaking, they originated with the Phagru Kargyud. In other words, they traced their heritage to the disciples of Phagru Trupa. They are:

1. Drikung Kargyud (a'Bri-Gung bKa'-'brgyud) — it was founded by Kyuru Rimpoche (Slyu-Ru-Rin-po-che). He received the teachings of the Kargyud from Phagmo Drotra and became an eminent scholar and a famous monk. His religious discourses were usually attended by a number of his disciples including many monks. He built a monastery in Drikung valley in Central Tibet and hence his tradition was known as Drikungpa. In Ladakh, there are a large number of Drikung Kargyud followers and many monasteries.

2. Taglung Kargyud (tTag-Lung bKa'-'brgyud) — it was founded by Taglung Thangpa Trashi-pal (tTag-Lung-Thang-pa bRas-shi-dpal), who was born in 1142 A.D. He became an attendant of Phamho Trupa who taught him all his doctrines. Taglung Kargyud. He built a monastery at Taglung (tTag-Lung) valley for propagation of Buddhism and to his tradition became known after it.

3. Yamzang Kargyud (gYa'-'brang bKa'-'brgyud) — it was founded by Ye-She-Sang (Ye-She-Sang-pa), a disciple of Pamo Trupa and a native of Minkhear. He got the highest realisation just at the sight of his guru (preceptor). His foremost disciple was Yamzang Kargyud (gYa'-'brang-pa) who built the Yamzang monastery there. He trained many disciples. Their tradition was named Yamzang Karagyupa.

4. Tsephu Kargyud (Khro-phu-bKa'-'brgyud) — originated with two brothers, Rinpoche Gyal-uba and Kunden Roppo, disciples of...

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1. According to some nephew and uncle.
The former built the Throbus monastery. Their nephew was Throbus Lotaswa who was ordained as a monk by his uncle and learned all the teachings from them. He invited many Indian teachers including the great Pandita Sakvanj of Khamtse. He built a temple at Throbus monastery and installed a big image of Maitreya Buddha therein. He also wrote a number of books. Their tradition was thus known as Throbus Kargyu.

(5) Shungeb Kargyud (Shung-Sgeg-Ba’I-mrug-id) — originated with Chokyi Senge (Chos-kyi-senge), a disciple of Phagmo Trupa. He built Nyerbu Shungeb (Nye-rbu-Shung-greb) monastery and gave religious discourses to the people. His tradition was known as Shungeb Kargyud.

(6) Marthang Kargyud (Mar-thang) — This tradition was started by Marpa Rinchen Lodro (Mar-pa-Rin-chen-Lod-ru).

Marthang Kargyud

(7) Yerpa (Yelpa) Kargyud — this tradition was established by Yerpa Yeshe Tsogyal (Yel-bras-ye-shes-tsong). He Yerpa Kargyud built Shar Doje Dongkha (Shar-De-je-rDzong) Lho-Yelphu (Lha-yel-phug) and Chang Tanga (Byang-ta-rTag) monasteries for propagation of his teachings.

(8) Drukpa Kargyud (Drung-pa-Ka’I-mrug-id) — this tradition was established by Phagmo Trupa’s disciple Tsangpa Drukpa Kargyud (Tsang-par Drung-pa). Later it divided itself into three schools, viz., the middle Drukpa, Lower Drukpa and Upper Drukpa.

(a) The Par-Drukpa (Middle Drukpa Kargyud) (Par-drung) — Lhag-drap Padma Do-pa (Lha-ga-rjes-pa-Pa-dma - Do-pa) was a highly enlightened disciple of Phagmo Trupa. He built a monastery at Nagphu (Na-phu). Among his disciples, Tsangpa-Gyurme (Tsang-pa-gyuR-me) was a famous teacher. He built Longkor (Rlung-khor) and Balung (Balung) monasteries.
Then he went to a place called Namycling (gNam-sgam-Gyi-gtshe) to build a monastery. Along with his party when he arrived there they saw huge Drula (a'Brug—Dragons) flying into the sky with roar. He took it to be a good omen. And he called the name of the monastery as Drula (a'Brug) and Druk Sewa Chang chub Gon as also Namdruk (gNam-a'Brug). For that is why this tradition was known as Drul and his followers as Drupas. There is a Tibetan proverb which means as follows.—

"Half of the people are Drupas Kagyudpas, and half of the Beggars are Druthbochas (Siddhas)"

Later on, in this tradition appeared many disciples. Among them there was Padma Karpo (Padma dKar-po), also known as Rin Khyen (Rin-mkhyen—Sarvajna), who founded the Sung Ngag Choling (gSang- Ngags Chos-ling) monastery near the border of Astan (in Tibet) and it became the seat of the Druk-chheni incarnations. Tibet apart, this sub-school is very popular in Bhutan. It is because of this Bhutas is called Druk (a'Brug).

(b) Med-Druk (Snyad-a'Brug — lower Druk)—Longpa Darma Wangchuk (Lobsang-sgron-Mus-mtha-dbang-phug) was a disciple of Tsangapa Gyare and others. He led a very humble and disciplined life. He built Wuri (dByin-Ri) monastery and then made Sang-Ri as his seat.

Med-Druk (tsen-dzin). His tradition was known as Med-Druk.

(c) Tod-Druk (gSnyed-a'Brug — Upper Druk) - Gtsangapa Gongpo Dongje (gSems-dbang- pa gGongs-pa-Dong-po) was a distinguished disciple of Tsangapa Gyare. He had many disciples. Later in this tradition Barabina Gyabshe Punzang (barBa-Ri - BasGyal)

Tod Druk mTshen — dpal-bshang) wrote numerous works. Ogyenpa Kucherpa who was a disciple of Odshampa was a great Siddha and visited Bhutan, Yunnan, Odiyana (Ujjain) and China. Among his disciples were Karmapa Kangchung Dongje (Rtags-Byings-Do-dbyer), Khashampa (mKhas-gChir-pa) and Togden Dargen (gTag-po-Don-Zla-rgyug).

At present among all the Kagyudpa sub-schools Karma Kagyud (Darma Karmagwang) is the most widely spread sub-school and comes first, the Drupas Kagyud comes second and Drikung Kagyud coming third.
Lastly, the Kargyudpa generally follows the tradition of Kadampa on doctrinal matters. But they further practise the four Tantras, viz., Kriyatantra, Caryatantra, Yogatantra and Ajuttavatanastra of the New Translation Tantras. Its special teachings are Nar-Cho-drub of Mahasiddha Naropa and the Mahamudra teachings of Mahasiddha Maitripa.

1. The six aspects of instructions of Naropa are: Tumo (Heart-Yoga), Gyulu (Maya—body), Milam (Dream), Osel (Radiant Clarity), Paro-Bardo (Intermediate stage between death and birth) and Phowa (Transference.)