

**At the heart of the Shambhala mandala:
The lineage of Sakyongs**

*Note prepared for the Shambhala Congress by Richard Reoch,
based on conversations with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche*

In spiritual traditions, the central figure is both a teacher and a protector. In the Shambhala buddhist tradition, these roles manifest in the lineage of Sakyongs. In the same way that the Buddha and the ancestral sovereigns of Shambhala joined heaven and earth, it is the Sakyongs who fuse these energies in their own being to provide the central energetic focus of the Shambhala mandala.

The energies of the Sakyongs have multiple manifestations. As “earth protectors”, the Sakyongs are the sovereigns and root teachers of Shambhala society, pointing out and protecting the ground of being. As such, the Sakyongs are chökyongs, or dharmapalas, manifesting also as the Makkyi Rabjam, supreme commander of the Dorje Kasung.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche holds the title of chögyal or dharmaraja, a “king of truth”. He is the sole holder of the Shambhala buddhist lineage and the root teacher of Shambhala buddhism. “Root” in this context has the meaning of “unadulterated.” His role is to provide the wang,,lung and tri of the teachings: giving the empowerments, blessings and teachings of that lineage. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche received the title Sawang, and thereby inherited the Shambhala lineage directly from the Druk Sakyong, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He also received the complete mahamudra lineage from him. As the tülku of Mipham the Great, he holds the complete dzogchen lineage. He is thus the holder of three tantric lineages: mahamudra, dzogchen and Shambhala.

As both temporal and spiritual leaders, the Sakyongs are the ruling monarchs of the Kingdom of Shambhala. In the highest teachings of Shambhala, the “secret court” at the heart of the kingdom is the realm of the cosmic mirror whose radiation is the Great Eastern Sun, beyond all fabrication. The “inner court” is the realm of the twenty-five Rigidens of Shambhala. The “outer court” is where the energy of the Rigidens manifests in the Sakyongs. Understood in this way, the Rigidens send the Sakyongs as embodiments of the Shambhala teachings and the Sakyongs are the nirmanakaya tülkus of the Rigidens. Their role is to bind the Shambhala community into a container for those teachings and thus manifest a society of basic goodness for the benefit of all beings.

For many individuals, the Sakyongs may play the role of personal teacher, or guru, and vajra master. Occasionally the Sakyongs have direct personal contact with their students, most frequently when giving teachings. But their continuity of the relationship does not need personal contact, since the karmic connection between vajra masters and their students exists without dependence on conventional appearances. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has pointed out that a distinctive feature of the Shambhala mandala is that, like sacred architecture, it is perpetually reflecting the enlightened energy of the lineage and the teachings of the Sakyongs. Within this, the Sakyongs’ teachings are supported by the

acharyas, teachers and meditation instructors within the mandala – and are ultimately present in the inseparable wisdom and compassion of all the beings throughout the mandala.

An even broader role of the Sakyongs is to serve as the root of blessings for the entire mandala, offering to all the sacred space of Shambhala, within which multiple relationships between teachers and students are nurtured and in which the wisdom traditions of the world are welcomed.

As the root teachers of Shambhala society on a global scale, the supreme accomplishment of all Sakyongs is the blossoming of enlightened society, in which the dignity and wisdom of the human person flourishes within a culture of compassion, fearlessness and sanity.

The relationship of the Sakyongs to the Shambhala mandala is described by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche in his recent *Treatise on Society and Organization*:

The Sakyong is the center of the Shambhala mandala. The center of the mandala manifests as the Kalapa Court, the seat of the Sakyong and the heart of his government. The energy generated within the Court radiates outwards through the teachings, culture, and structure of the mandala. The energy that is generated towards the Kalapa Court is harnessed by the organization... When the organization can extend the energy of the Court as the basis of inspiration throughout the mandala, the members of the community look in and around themselves for solutions, realizing their responsibility to motivate themselves and to communicate with others.