Tartan Buddhists:
A Typology for Understanding Participants in a Tibetan Buddhist Organization in Scotland

Abstract
The purpose of this article is to provide a sociological typology for understanding the different types of practitioners within the Tibetan Buddhist organization, Rokpa International, in Scotland. It will be argued that the empirically derived criteria and Weber's (1978) sociological concepts of authority, power and status allow us to understand the tensions and mutually dependent relationship between the different types. In conclusion, it will be argued that, while this typology is not presented as a challenge to existing typologies, this article demonstrates the potential utility of these sociological concepts for understanding the practice and development of Buddhism in the West.

Keywords: authority; participants; power; Scotland; status; Tibetan Buddhism; typology.

Introduction
The purpose of this article is to provide a typology for understanding the range of participants in the Tibetan Buddhist organization, Rokpa International, in Scotland. The first step will be to briefly outline the development of Rokpa in Scotland and explain my research. I will then go on to identify the basis for the categorizations and the sociological concepts to be utilized before expounding the resultant
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typology. In so doing it will be demonstrated how these criteria and concepts help
us to identify the tensions and mutually dependent relationship between the
different types, and to identify the roles each type play in the development of
Tibetan Buddhism in Rokpa Scotland.

Rokpa Scotland (RS)
The focus of this article is on the centres of the Tibetan Buddhist organization,
Rokpa International, in Scotland. The origins of Rokpa International are found in
the Kagyu Samye Ling Monastery at Eskdalemuir, Dumfriesshire. This monastery
and the other centres in Scotland that originated therefrom provide the location
for the research. Samye Ling, founded in 1967 by Dr Akong Tulku and Chogyam
Trungpa (Paine, 2004: 85), is currently under the guidance of Lama Yeshe Losal and
there is now a centre in Dundee and groups are meeting in Edinburgh, Glasgow,
Aberdeen and the Highlands. RS also became guardians of the Holy Island Project —
a conservation and retreat centre off the west coast of Scotland. Furthermore
Samye Ling is now the mother institution for establishments in Europe and Africa
and has been incorporated into Rokpa International which is a charitable
organization founded by Dr Akong Tulku in 1980 (www.samyeling.org). It is the
groups and centres of Rokpa International in Scotland that I refer to as Rokpa
Scotland (RS). 1

RS attracts over 3,000 visitors per year and raises revenue through courses,
accommodation, sales from the shops and tearooms, and donations (McKenzie,
2009). Courses relating to Tibetan Buddhism vary from lectures in public places
such as the University of Aberdeen; weekly meditation and prayer sessions at the
various centres; introductory to advanced teachings and short- to long-term
retreats at the various centres. RS also hosts other courses such as yoga, Reiki,
cookery and gardening. Participants pay a corresponding fee ranging from five
pounds for public lectures to hundreds of pounds for retreats. 2 Similar to Oliver
(1979), I encountered people of various nationalities during my research of RS
including Tibetan, 3 British, South African and Australian.

RS is an important site for researching types of practitioner for two reasons.
First, Samye Ling was one of the first Buddhist monasteries to be opened in the
West (Paine, 2004) and has therefore been exposed to the effects of adaptation for a

1. It is not possible within the remit to provide a comprehensive history of Rokpa in
2. For full range of courses and prices see www.samyeling.org
3. In comparison with other studies such as Numrich (1996) there was only a small
number of ethnic Buddhists and nearly all encountered in this study occupied a monastic
role.

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considerable time. Second, Tibetan monks established RS to cater for a western audience. Lama Yeshe explained at a public lecture at the University of Aberdeen: “The new temple in Scotland was constructed to help people in Scotland find the missing part in their lives. It was not built for Tibetans” (Research Notes, 2004). This is important because centres that are created for the host nation rather than migrant believers are more likely to adapt to the foreign environment (Matthews, 2002: 122). These factors result in a high degree of diversity among participants at RS and it therefore provides an excellent site for researching different types of practitioner.

My Research

My research took place in the branches of the Tibetan Buddhist organization, Rokpa International, in Scotland between June 2004 and September 2005. The study employed a combination of ethnographic methods including participant observations and qualitative interviews.

Overt participant observations took place in Aberdeen at weekly meetings over the research period; in Dundee at two weekend workshops; in Samye Ling at two weekend workshops and at a weeklong retreat on the Holy Island Project. Participation involved taking part in teaching, meditation and prayer sessions and some socializing and helping with chores.

I also conducted twenty formal qualitative interviews and my overt status allowed me to conduct additional informal interviews while participating. These interviews remained informal due to time constraints and the convenience of participants. 4

In addition I carried out a comprehensive literature review and adopted an iterative inductive approach to the process of evaluating existing research and analysing the data. That is, the typology here is both empirically derived from the research data and informed by the existing literature (O’Reilly, 2005: 27). The next step will be to establish how the criteria for categorization emerged.

Criteria for the Typology Construction

It is widely recognized that the transplantation of Buddhism to the West has resulted in a more diverse range of practitioners than found in the East (Baumann,

4. The names of the lay Buddhist participants and interviewees discussed in this article have been changed for reasons of confidentiality while the names of the lineage teachers such as the Abbot of Samye Ling and the group leader of Rokpa Dundee have not been changed due to the public nature of their identity.

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1997; Cadge, 2005; Coleman, 2001; Nattier, 1998 and many others). Consequently there has been a variety of typologies created to facilitate an understanding of these practitioners. Within the remit of this article it will not be possible to provide a full review of these typologies. This article will therefore focus on those which have informed the development of the typology proposed here.

Following Prebish (1979), many authors have utilized the terms “ethnic” and “convert” to distinguish between two distinct types of practitioner in western Buddhist organizations (Cadge, 2005; Nattier, 1998; Prothero, 1996). For example Numrich (1996) found these distinct groups in his study of Theravada Buddhist temples in America. The ethnic or immigrant lay Buddhists focused on socio-cultural events such as festivals while the convert or western lay Buddhists focused on meditation. This distinction also emerged as important in the development of the typology proposed here. However, the absence of a lay Tibetan population in Scotland means this distinction is important in a different way. It largely distinguishes between those ethnic Tibetan Buddhists who occupy monastic positions within RS and western practitioners. This alternative use of the distinction between ethnic and convert Tibetan Buddhists has the added advantage of paying much needed attention to the important role played by Tibetan leaders in the process of transplanting Buddhism to the West (Kay, 2004).

However, this distinction alone is insufficient for understanding the full range of practitioners within Western Buddhist organizations (Bauman, 2002b). Bauman (2002a: 52) argues that the main difference among strands of Buddhism in the West is not one of people and ethnic ancestry but rather that of “the religious concepts held and the practices followed.” So the focus has moved to the division between traditionalists, who try to hold on to the original teachings and retain their authenticity, and modernists, who reinterpret the Buddhist teachings (Bauman, 2002a: 52). For example, the type of Theravada Buddhism that became popular in the West was not the traditional form which emphasized ritual and devotional acts, but one refashioned by western orientalists and Asian modernists which emphasized rational and scriptural elements (Baumann, 2002a: 100). This tension between the traditionalist and modernist approaches has produced a diversity of Buddhist practices within the various schools of Buddhism: “This points to a high degree of eclecticism in Western Buddhist practice by people who combine selected Buddhist ideas and practices with those of their own religious heritage, New Age movements or simply their personal beliefs and preferences” (Wallace, 2002: 35). Within RS it became clear that elements of both modernist and traditionalist practices co-existed within the same organization and indeed within the practice of individuals.

5. For a fuller discussion see Prebish (1999) and Tweed (2002).
However, the existing literature did not provide a clear way of conceptualizing these dimensions of practice.

To understand the distinction between the traditional and modernist elements within RS, Weber's concepts of authority, power and status are useful. Authority helps us understand the degree to which participants follow the traditional authority of Tibetan Buddhism, or follow the rational authority, which dominates western culture. That is, "authority will be called traditional if legitimacy is claimed for it and believed in by virtue of age-old rules and power" (Weber, 1978: 226). This stands in contrast to the rational authority which dominates western culture: "a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands" (1978: 215). Power and status are also useful for understanding the role each type plays in the development of RS. Power in this instance relates to the "the probability that one social actor within a social relationship will be able to carry out his will despite resistance" (1978: 53) and status relates to how effectively participants can make claims "to social esteem in terms of positive and negative privilege" (1978: 305).

The extent to which participants follow the traditional authority and hold power and status within RS can be conceptualized in the relationship participants hold with the lineage. Within the existing literature, tradition and adaptation were core themes in the understanding of western forms of practice and it became clear that Tibetan Buddhist organizations tried to retain control of the adaptation processes within the lineage (Kay, 2004; Newman, 2004; Obadia, 2001; Paine, 2004). However, during the research process it also became clear that RS could not always exercise full control over the practices of the individual practitioners who could potentially adapt teachings outside of the control of the lineage. Therefore, in this research setting, the relationship participants held with the lineage emerged as a useful continuum along which to plot the typology. This typology therefore has the potential to take into account all the different types of participant who come into contact with RS rather than simply focusing on those participants that follow the lineage. As Tweed (2002) identifies, approaches that only take those that follow the lineage into account ignore a great number of important participants within

6. For a fuller discussion of Weber's concept of authority, power and status see Weber (1978) and for a summary of the ongoing critical debate in relation to Weber's concepts see Hughes et al. (2009). However, this critical debate will not be addressed within the limits of this article.

7. The lineage is the way in which RS claim to trace their teachings back to the original Buddha through a succession of teachers. Importantly the argument that the lineage may be an invented tradition (Hobsbawm, 1983) becomes irrelevant because it is the way that participants relate to the ideology of the lineage that is important.
Buddhist organizations. He further argues that typologies should take Buddhist sympathizers, those who have some sympathy for but do not embrace Buddhism fully, into account. However, this did not seem sufficient within this research setting because this still left out those participants involved with RS that did not relate to the lineage or Tibetan Buddhism at all. Their involvement was largely secular. Categorizing participants in relationship to the lineage provided one means of taking all the different participants into account. The degree of involvement of the different types of participant provided a means for understanding the relationships different types held with the lineage.

The degree of involvement has been the focus for many typologies (Nattier, 1998; Tweed, 2002; Wallace, 2002). However, Coleman (2001) provides the most useful strategy for conceptualizing this by focusing on the form of involvement. He argues that the best way to approach categorizing the participants in western Buddhist organizations is to look at the different ways people interact with the organization (2001: 187). On the outer edge there are those who have a fleeting acquaintance with Buddhist ideas via representations in popular culture; then there are those who have read books on Buddhism but have not joined a group; moving inwards there are those participants who attend groups and then finally there are those at the centre who are fully committed to Buddhism (2001: 190). This helps to clearly conceptualize degree of involvement in relation to the form of involvement participants have with RS and the extent to which the practice is informed by the lineage. Plotting practitioners in relation to the lineage allows us to more clearly conceptualize the relational position of the different types of practitioner within RS. The advantage of this approach is that, unlike the existing typologies based on ethnicity and degree of involvement (Tweed, 2002), it allows us to more fully identify the effect each type of participant has on the development of Tibetan Buddhism in RS.

To reiterate, the criteria for categorization in this typology are:

1. **The ethnic/convert division**: this simply relates to whether the participant is a Tibetan monk or from the West.
2. **Authority, power and status**: this refers to the degree to which participants view the lineage as the ultimate source of authority and can exercise control over and hold esteem among the participants.
3. **Form of involvement**: this refers to the way in which participants interact with RS.

The advantages of these criteria of categorization are that they allow us to not only see how the different types are mutually dependent but also allow us to identify the tensions that arise. Furthermore this typology also allows us to recognize how the
different types of participant negotiate tensions and provides insight into the role each type plays in the development of RS. The next step will now be to outline the typology based on the criteria derived from the existing literature and the research conducted at RS.

**Typology of Participants in RS**

The criteria established above provided the basis for categorizing the different participants in RS. The typology for understanding the different types of involvement in RS will now be proposed.

**Lineage Trained Tibetans (LTTs)**

This type refers to those ethnic Tibetan Buddhist monks who have moved from Tibet to the West and includes the founder of RS, Dr Akong and the current Abbot, Lama Yeshe. There are also many other LTTs who visit RS. Together they provide teachings throughout the organization and are the only ones that carry out refuge⁸ and empowerment ceremonies.⁹ They oversee the development of the organization and try to regulate any adaptations of Tibetan Buddhism that may be taking place.

LTTs then are the primary power-holders in RS. They man the gateways between the different levels of teaching and in doing so act as guardians of tradition (Giddens, 1996). That is, only those participants who show levels of commitment to the satisfaction of LTTs are given access to the more advanced teachings. For example, access to more advanced teachings is dependent on participants having received certain empowerments. This allows LTTs to monitor the progression of recruits through the various levels of teaching. In so doing LTTs act as agents of socialization into the inner secrets of Tibetan Buddhism and the status that accompanies their possession permits access to the core of the organization (Layman, 1976; Lenoir and Vale, 1999). At the same time, by denying access to those who do not show adequate commitment, they also protect higher levels of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy from potential adaptation outside the control of the lineage holders. However, in denying access to higher levels of teaching, tensions can occur between LTTs and other practitioners. For example, some lay practitioners said that they did not attend RS very often because they found the level of teaching too basic.

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8. “Taking refuge” is a ceremony in which a person formally commits a person to the Tibetan Buddhist path (Paine, 2004: 123).
9. An empowerment is a ceremony wherein a Tibetan lama will confer the blessings of a particular Buddhist deity on participants (Newman, 2004).

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The legitimating attributes of LTTs are:

1. **Degree of training:** all have been extensively trained in Tibetan Buddhism from an early age. For example, the website for Samye Ling explains that Akong Tulku has been trained in Tibetan Buddhism since his formative years.

2. **Status within the tradition:** all hold titles legitimated by the lineage, for example Lama Yeshe, Drupon Rinpoche, and so on.

3. **Status within western secular culture:** many have been successful in secular activities. For example, Akong’s status as a trained medical doctor is mentioned in the foreword to his many books.\(^{10}\)

4. **Ability to communicate with westerners:** this is exemplified in the admiration of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche who was venerated partly due to his ability to adapt Tibetan Buddhist traditions for a western audience (Midal, 2004).

LTTs therefore derive high status from their placement within the lineage and this status is legitimized by the traditional authority. Those participants who follow the traditional authority recognize this status. However, LTTs within RS also derive a sense of status from their ability to succeed in the West and to communicate with a western audience. This has led to some tensions within this type. For example, there was tension between co-founders, Akong and Trungpa, due to the more modernist techniques of the latter. Mukpo (2006) argued that Akong became concerned that Trungpa adapted teachings too far in order to broaden appeal to the western audience. This may have presented the risk of undermining the traditional authority and placed the continuity of Tibetan Buddhism in danger. As Weber (1978: 227) points out innovations within traditions can only be legitimized by the claim that they have always been valid since ancient times but have only now been recognized by the wisdom of the masters of the tradition. Therefore LTTs need to demonstrate that they control any adaptations and to ensure that there is continuity in practice. For example, when significant adaptations take place, like the changing of the rules regulating the ordination of monks described below, authorization is requested from the Dalai Lama (Khandro, 2007). This helps to demonstrate that such changes are in keeping with the philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism.

LTTs, then, exercise a controlling role on the development of RS and on the adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism for the audience in Scotland. Therefore LTTs occupy the most powerful roles within RS and occupy a high status among those participants who value traditional authority. However, there are westerners who

\(^{10}\) For an example see Akong (2005).
have gone through intensive training and can also be seen to hold power and status within RS.

**Lineage Trained Westerners (LTWs)**

This type refers to those western converts who have undergone extensive training in Tibetan Buddhism under the instruction of an LTT and have either been ordained or occupy an elevated lay status. The website for Samye Ling reports of one such nun: she has life-long ordination as a nun and has completed the traditional three-year retreat (www.samying.org). While a lay expert is described thus:

Rob Nairn studied for 35 years under the guidance of Tai Situ Rinpoche, Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche and the Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche. He completed a four-year retreat in 1993 and has published three books on Buddhism, meditation, and the Tibetan Book of the Dead (www.rokpa.org/world/).

The legitimating attributes of a LTW are:

1. *The degree of training in Tibetan Buddhism*: for example, Dundee-born Karma Jiga was the first western monk to be ordained for life by the present Abbot of Samye Ling and has completed several retreats in the last thirty years (www.rokpa.org/world/).

2. *Status of teachers*: gaining access to the highest authority of the tradition is important for this type of participant. For example, Ani Semchi trained for seven years in traditional thangka painting at Samye Ling with Sherab Palden Beru, a great master of the Karma Gadri tradition (www.samying.org).

3. *Status within the tradition*: for example, lay teacher Ken Holmes is described thus on the website for Samye Ling: “With his wife Katia, he has co-translated some of the main Kagyu teaching texts into English, as well as much of the liturgy used in daily practice” (www.samying.org).

4. *Status in secular society*: for example, it is mentioned that an ordained nun teaching at Rokpa Dundee has a PhD in genetics.

It can therefore be seen that LTWs draw a strong sense of legitimate status within RS and relate strongly to the lineage. These LTWs have been so immersed in Tibetan Buddhism that they can teach at the centres and can play an influential role in the development of RS. For example Karma Jiga came out of retreat to spearhead the spread of RS. He explained, at a public lecture:

I had been in retreat for a long time. I was at peace with my own mind and content in my surroundings. There was little to disturb my practice. I did not
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Therefore LTWs can occupy secondary positions of power within RS. Paine (2004) argued that the positioning of westerners in power positions within western Tibetan Buddhist organizations helps to increase the appeal to local audiences. Nonetheless, allowing open access to ordination has caused some tensions in the organization in the past. Some of the first practitioners to be ordained did not uphold the Five Golden Rules\(^{11}\) of Tibetan Buddhism. Dave, a lay resident at Samye Ling, explained: “When Samye Ling opened almost anyone could be ordained. Some of the first monks were experimenting with drugs and having relationships with visitors and there were a few media scandals about drug fuelled parties and sexual exploitation” (Research Notes, 2005).

RS has since implemented a stricter recruitment procedure and it now takes three years to ordain. This allows RS to monitor recruits and weed out any participants who do not abide by the rules. Therefore westerners can access status and power positions with the permission of LTTs but rely on LTTs for training and remain under their supervision. Thus any influence of the carriers of western culture, even when they have gone through intensive training, remains monitored by the lineage. However, LTTs can have more access to achievements that are valued by western culture, such as educational and occupational success, which can accord them a more legitimate status within the wider society than LTTs.

It must also be noted that within this type there is greater diversity than among LTTs. Tensions can exist between the more learned LTWs and juniors indicating the primacy of traditionally acquired status. For example, while on retreat to the Holy Island, I noticed that the group leader constantly chastised the junior monk assisting him for being incompetent. Nonetheless, all have gone through intensive training and, as a result, there would be a high degree of orthopraxy and this type hold a legitimate status within RS among those that value the traditional authority. However, there is even greater diversity within the next type, WLATs.

**Westerners in Lineage-Adapted Training (WLATs)**

This type refers to those lay Tibetan Buddhists from the West that practise under the guidance of a teacher legitimised by the lineage. They regularly attend classes,

\(^{11}\) The Five Golden Rules are: 1. To protect life and refrain from killing; 2. To respect others’ property and refrain from stealing; 3. To speak the truth and refrain from lying; 4. To respect health and refrain from intoxicants and, 5. To respect others and refrain from sexual misconduct (www.samyeling.org).

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workshops and go on short-term retreats. Judy, a scientist from Rokpa Dundee, explained of her involvement:

It takes up most of my time when I am not at work. Actually even when I am at work I try to be a good Buddhist. I volunteer at Rokpa Dundee so I am there every night and there at the weekends. So I go to all the meditation classes, workshops, lectures. Rokpa do it and I am there.12

Most of these participants rely on teaching from their immediate teacher and go to other classes suggested by him or her. For example during my participation a small group of participants from Aberdeen, Dundee and the Highlands followed the teachings of Karma Jiga by going to almost every weekly meeting in their area, attending public lectures, going to Dundee for weekend workshops and to the Holy Island for the summer retreat.

WALTs, however, do not tend to read the literature produced by RS and other publishers, unless instructed by their teacher. Stewart, a health and safety officer from Aberdeen, explains why:

Well it was through reading that I got interested in Buddhism and led to my involvement in Rokpa but once I got here I no longer felt the need to read any more. I have a great teacher and he helps me understand what I need to know. Reading can lead you down the wrong path because you do not always understand the bigger picture. My teacher keeps me on the right path.

Furthermore, most of these types of participants do not go to other Buddhist groups or try to develop their spirituality in any other ways. Kevin, an engineer from Aberdeen, explains:

When I came to Rokpa I only wanted to meditate really but after attending for a while I started to think more about my spirituality. So before Rokpa there was no spirituality. So I have not explored my spirituality in other ways and do not feel the need to look elsewhere. I am happy with what I get at Rokpa.

This allows the authority figures within RS to ensure that all teachings come from the same traditional authority. WALTs typically have a strong commitment to their practice and identify strongly with their teacher, the lineage and RS. They value being taught by prestigious teachers, a commitment to practice as prescribed by their teachers, success in secular activities and the freedom to combine commitment to RS with other aspects of their lives. The fact that they interact with the resources provided by RS under the instruction of an LTT or LTW is a strong defining feature. Some WALTs may also occupy influential positions within RS through volunteering. For example, two longstanding members of the Aberdeen

12. All interviews took place between June 2004 and September 2005.

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group deal with the administration of the group and chair the meditation sessions when Karma Jiga is not present. This allows some WLATs to go on to become LTWs. For example, two participants identified as WLATs became ordained during the course of my research and would now be identified as LTWs. However, most are not as intensively trained as LTWs and as a result there is a greater diversity of practice found within this type than within LTTs and LTWs. Within WLATs there are varying degrees of commitment as differing levels of practice and forms of involvement are incorporated into the lives of the individual practitioner. However, this can lead to some tensions.

Some WLATs would like to further their involvement but cannot due to the lack of resources provided by RS. Arlene, an Aberdonian pensioner, identified a lack of facilities as a limitation in her involvement:

I go to classes on Monday night and I go on retreat to the Holy Island once per year and maybe another two retreats in Dundee for a couple of days. I love meditation with my teacher and I will travel down to Dundee if he is doing a lecture. I would like to do more but there is not a temple in Aberdeen and I cannot always travel.

However, limitations can also originate in participants’ greater commitment to the secular priorities of western culture. Jane, a psychologist from Dundee, prioritizes work: “I would like to go to all the classes at Rokpa Dundee but I cannot go every week. I have a very demanding job and sometimes work quite late or am just too tired to go.” While Irene, a secretary from Glasgow, has a greater commitment to her familial obligations:

I like to go to meditation meetings on Wednesday and prayers on Friday and to go on retreat once per year and try to go to teachings. I also like to do some private practice but I cannot always do it. There are lots of disruptions in my life because I have a young family. So there can be periods when I do not practice at all.

However, this can also lead to conflict with those LTTs and LTWs in control of RS, demonstrated by the following email sent out by Karma Jiga, the leader of Rokpa Dundee, Aberdeen and the Highlands:

It has been brought to my attention that Rokpa Dundee lost £4000 last year. Rokpa Dundee is the foundation of all the other meditation groups. If it fails then all the other groups fail too. It is noticeable that many in the groups are willing to let me travel but are unwilling to attend workshops and those that do only come at the last minute and do not book their places. You need to make a commitment to the classes and workshops as they are the foundation for the future.

This points to the important financial contribution WLATs make to the development of the organization. However, I did not notice any increase in attendance.
immediately following this email and Jiga never reiterated this matter at face-to-face sessions during my participation. Nonetheless, those who returned after an absence often paid more than asked for when attending classes. For example, Julie, a nurse in Aberdeen, had been absent from classes for several weeks. On return to the group she paid £20 for an evening meditation session instead of the usual £4.50. She explained that she wanted to compensate for her lack of contribution. This allowed LTTs and LTWs to exert their authority while avoiding direct conflict and WLATs could resolve any guilt they may have by putting money into the organization’s coffers.

Despite these conflicts, given that WLATs practice under the guidance of lineage teachers, there is a fair degree of cohesion within their practices and continuity with the practices of both LTTs and LTWs. Thus they can access minor influential positions in the organization and hold some status within the organization. However, the next type is even more diverse and continuity is not always evident.

**Westerners Adapting Lineage Training (WALTs)**

This type refers to those western participants who have an interest in practising Tibetan Buddhism but may not want to follow the guidance of a teacher. WALTs may attend some lineage teachings and read some of the literature produced by RS. Ewan, a retired headmaster from Dundee, who mixes an interest in RS with his involvement with the Catholic Church and a variety of alternative therapies, illustrates this when he says: “I like to go to some of the teachings and meditations but I read a lot of books on my own. I also like to go on retreat but have been on different kinds – Christian, Zen and such like.” Others pick and mix from RS teachings in a way typically associated with the New Age (Cush, 1996; Heelas, 1996). Maureen, a disabled woman in her late fifties, on a workshop in Samye Ling explained:

> I am a New Age Buddhist. I started reading about Buddhism in the late sixties amongst many other things. I was on the happy hippy trip and dabbled in a lot of alternative stuff and I have combined all these things into my own belief system. However I do go to meetings and teachings at Rokpa from time to time.

Isaac explains his involvement, a very superficial involvement, again typically associated with the New Age (Heelas, 1996):

> I sometimes like to go to Rokpa meetings. But it is just for a bit of a laugh really. I mean it’s quite trendy so I have made a little shrine in my bedroom and give the Buddha a kiss every now and then and do my own kind of chanting. It’s just a fashion accessory really. I have no real conviction or any intention in taking my involvement any further. I will probably move on to the next trend soon. The Kabala is looking good.
Thus, while these practitioners may attend lineage adapted teaching, these participants are also far more likely to read books on Buddhism and mix elements of the belief system with other beliefs and practices than WLATs. Rather than subscribing to the traditional authority of the lineage they tend to adapt Tibetan Buddhism to the priorities of western individualism and locate the ultimate authority within the self. They are therefore more likely to adapt the teachings to suit their individual needs. Therefore WALTs do not relate strongly to the lineage nor hold any status in RS. This results in a great diversity among WALTs and tensions between them and those more involved with the organization.

Some WALTs’ commitment to western individualism lead them to reject certain aspects of RS. Ewan does not subscribe to the guru aspect of RS:

> The aspect of Rokpa that I do not particularly like is the aspect of the guru being the one that you look to for guidance. I do not believe in that. I think individuals are able to decide for themselves. So I am not going to put my spiritual life in the hands of any guru. For that reason I do not feel I fully belong.

Others object to what they see as their exclusion from the inner Tibetan Buddhist culture. Maureen explained her feelings:

> I do not value most of the teaching. I can hardly believe that the people who go there sit open-mouthed week after week listening to the same old stuff. I know all that stuff. I enjoy listening to some of the more prestigious teachers and would like it even more if they would tell me about techniques but mostly they do not. So I do not go very often.

Therefore WALTs may be interested in learning about Tibetan Buddhism at RS but do not necessarily want to do so under the guidance of a lineage teacher and can therefore potentially adapt teachings outside the control of the lineage. This can lead to conflict with those in authority positions. WALTs are often portrayed by power-holders in RS as a danger to themselves, unless they are under LTT or LTW authority. A LTW explained, at one meditation session in Aberdeen:

> You should not just play around with meditation or come and go when you please. Try a bit of this and a bit of that. This is a very serious matter. Used in the right way meditation can be a powerful tool for development but used wrongly and without commitment it can be very dangerous and lead to mental health problems. That is why you need the instruction of a reliable teacher.

They can also be perceived as a threat to the identity of WLATs. Chris, a regular attendee at Rokpa Aberdeen, categorized as WLAT, explains her attitude towards Isaac:

> Isaac has come and gone over the years and there are many others like him. I am not sure why they bother really. I guess they might think it’s fashionable. It’s not
a game. I guess we are open to everyone but I do not particularly want to be surrounded by people who come here because it’s trendy.

However, some of these participants can be viewed more positively than others. For example one WLAT, Stewart, said of Ewan mentioned above:

I know that Ewan is not strictly speaking a Buddhist and goes to different groups. However, I also know that he is serious about his practice particularly meditation. So as long as he is serious about that then I think he is okay and I like having him around. He seems to talk a lot of sense so I think he has learned from the right sources.

Thus, because WALTs do follow certain aspects of the teachings and adopt some of the practices, they could be seen to be incorporated into the lineage-based authority structure to some extent and some continuity in practice can be found among this type and the first three. They may also make an important financial contribution to the organization. During my research I saw many participants making occasional appearances with some turning up once or twice but never appearing again. This may indicate the continuing material reliance of high status LTTs and LTWs on low status WALTs. Thus this type may make a financial contribution for the development of the organization in a similar vein to WLATS. To some extent therefore these types are particularly similar to WLATS and as such can be perceived by WLATS to pose a threat to their status. This is because, in a social milieu, it can be more difficult to distinguish your identity from those that share similar characteristics (Jenkins, 1996). However WALTs cannot access higher teachings nor power positions within RS because they are denied such privilege by those in authority positions. Therefore the potential threat posed to the organization by the greater commitment to values of western culture remains limited.

So far the types of participant described have focused on those who interact with the teachings and adopt some Tibetan Buddhist practices. However, there are those participants who do not adopt any of the practices.

Non-Lineage Trained Spectators (NLTSs)
This refers to those participants who visit the centres but do not have a specific interest in becoming involved in a spiritual or religious sense. Included in this category are people who visit the various centres on a purely social basis. For example, while on retreat on the Holy Island Project I met a couple from Edinburgh who explained their presence:

We come to the Holy Island every year for a walking holiday. It is so beautiful and peaceful here and there is a great hill to climb running across the middle of the island. We do not get involved with the Buddhists though. I mean we chat and things but we don’t participate. We are just not interested in organized religion.
NLTS also refers to those who read about Tibetan Buddhism from a personal or academic interest. They may attend public lectures and some classes put on by RS and/or study Tibetan Buddhism at university. For example, in my doctoral research I attended many RS classes but was only interested from a sociological perspective.

However, social visitors do not always remain as NLTSs and there are various ways in which participants can extend their interest. Dorothy began her involvement as a NLTS at Rokpa Dundee but went on to become a WLAT:

Well I was at the hairdresser downstairs and saw the sign for the Tibetan Centre and thought I would have a look around. I found the décor quite striking and stopped for a cup of tea. Then Judy came over and told me about a workshop at the weekend and I thought I would go along. That was about a year ago now and I have been going ever since.

Similarly, some moved from an academic interest into a more active involvement. Stewart explains:

Well, my interest in Buddhism began at university when I was doing a course in philosophy. When studying for this course I came across books on Buddhism and finally got round to buying one. I really liked what I read so I did a search on the Internet and found Samye Ling. So I went along and everything else just started from there.

Therefore this type remains important for the sustainability and development of RS because it allows RS to make contact with potential new recruits and provides a source of income. For example, during the research period I spent well over one thousand pounds to fund my participations in RS. It is important to note, however, that NLTSs hold neither power within the organization nor status recognized by the traditional authority. In consequence some tensions existed.

Some NLTSs expressed their continuing commitment to western culture in their complaints about not being allowed to smoke or drink alcohol on the Holy Island. Graham, an occasional visitor to the island to enjoy the peace, explained: “I like coming here but I am a smoker and enjoy a drink. You are not allowed to do that here so I can only really stay for a short while.” Lama Yeshe explained at a lecture that anyone breaking any of the Five Golden Rules at Samye Ling or the Holy Island Retreat would be asked to leave. However, during my participation at these centres I did not observe any flaunting of the rules and therefore witnessed no explicit conflict. Indeed it seemed that most participants complied with these rules willingly and any rule-breaking must have taken place in private.

Some NLTSs, however, felt the need to protect a conventional identity within western culture that could be compromised by an involvement with RS. For example, one woman visiting Samye Ling with a friend did not want to be filmed by a television crew as she did not know how she would explain her presence at a

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Tibetan Buddhist monastery to her friends. When asked why, she said, “Well they might think I am a religious weirdo or something if they saw me in this place. I do not mind coming along but I do not want people to think I have converted or something.”

There also some tensions between RS and the academics involved. For example, during my retreat to the Holy Island the group leader explained why there were wild horses on the Holy Island:

Edinburgh University wanted to see if horses could survive in the wild in Scotland. So they came to the island with the horses and observed them for a few years. Then they reached the end of the experiment and tried to take the horses off the island but they would not go. So out they came with the guns but I would not let them shoot the horses. There is no killing on the Holy Island. So off they went not too happy and the horses are still here.

There were also some participants who objected to my presence as a researcher during my involvement with RS (McKenzie, 2009). Furthermore I was only allowed access to certain areas which placed limitations on my research. For example, I did not get access to long-term retreats, more advanced teaching or get the opportunity to formally interview LTTs.

NLTSSs, then, play an important role in the development of RS because they provide a source of income for the organization and allow RS to make contact with potential recruits. At the same time they do not present a threat to the continuity of Tibetan Buddhism as they do not have contact with or access to the higher level of teachings and are therefore unable to adapt the philosophy outside the control of the lineage. However, conflicts can occur between NLTSSs and those more involved with Tibetan Buddhism, and within NLTSSs as their involvement with RS conflict with their secular priorities and conventional identities.

Conclusion

This article set out to provide a typology for understanding the different types of participants within Rokpa Scotland. The interaction between the existing literature and the empirical data derived from the research provided the criteria for the typology. These were identified as ethnic/convert and traditionalist/modernist distinctions; the degree of involvement and the types were plotted in relation to the lineage. Weber’s concepts of authority, power and status were also identified as useful for understanding the nature of the different types. This typology then allowed us to clearly identify the roles each type played in the development of RS and to identify the tensions and mutually supportive relationship between the different types within the research setting.

LTTs refer to Tibetan migrants who hold monastic positions. They are the...
primary power-holders within the organization and their status is recognized by those who value traditional authority. Their role within the organization is to provide a range of teachings for the other types of participants and to monitor the adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism for the western audience to ensure continuity. They also acted as guardians of the tradition by regulating access to the higher teachings. Tensions, however, have occurred among the modernists and the traditionalists within this category and between LTTs and other types.

LTTs represent those western participants who have gone through extensive training and have been given access to the highest teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. They either occupy a clerical position or are recognized as a lay expert. This training confers status on these participants which again is recognized by those who value traditional authority. LTTs can therefore occupy secondary power positions within RS but remain under the supervision of LTTs. Their role in the organization is to broaden the appeal to the local audience and provide teachings for those participants who are less learned in Tibetan Buddhism. They still, however, rely on LTTs to gain access to the highest teachings. There can be some tensions in this category between senior and junior LTTs and with other types.

WLATs indicate those westerners who follow the teachings of LTTs and LTTs and recognize the traditional authority located within the lineage. Typically they follow a specific teacher, attend classes, workshops and retreats conducted by that teacher and go to other events at the instruction of their teacher. They can also occupy minor influential positions within groups and centres through volunteering and some WLATs can go on to become LTTs. However, they remain under the supervision of LTTs and LTTs. Tensions can occur as RS cannot always provide the resources to satisfy the desires of WLATs and, while this type value traditional authority, there can often be tensions between their commitment to Tibetan Buddhism and their commitments to the concerns of western culture. Therefore tensions can occur as WLATs cannot always participate at the level desired by their teachers. Nonetheless, this type supplies a steady income for the organization and provides an avenue for some to further involvement in the organization.

WALTs refer to those westerners who may want to learn about Tibetan Buddhism but may not want to do so under the instruction of a teacher. So they may attend classes, workshops, retreats and read the literature produced by RS and in so doing provide RS with a steady income. However, they do not necessarily recognize the traditional authority and status of the teacher. They are therefore more likely to combine aspects of Tibetan Buddhism with other religious traditions and individual beliefs outside the control of the lineage. In so doing they present a potential threat to the continuity of Tibetan Buddhism. However, the LTTs and LTTs do not allow these types full access to the teachings. This can cause tensions
as WALTs can feel excluded from what they see as the inner Tibetan Buddhist culture. Furthermore, tensions can occur between WALTs and WLATs as the latter can view the former as a threat to their religious identity.

NLTSs represent those participants who come into contact with RS for academic or social reasons but are not interested in practising Tibetan Buddhism. As such they visit coffee shops, holiday at the retreat centres, attend some teachings and read literature. However, they do not recognize the status of LTTs and LTWs nor the traditional authority. Nonetheless, NLTSs provide a source of income for RS and allow the organization to make contact with potential recruits. Furthermore, their access to teaching is restricted by LTTs and LTWs. This can cause tensions as western cultural values clash with traditional values and some other types may see the presence of NLTSs as an invasion of their privacy.

Thus the typology allows us to see how tensions occur between those who value the traditional authority located within the lineage and those who value the rational authority located within the wider western culture. It also allows us to more clearly identify the specific roles played by the different types in the development of RS and to understand the interdependency and the relational position of each type within this research setting. Finally, while this typology is not presented as a challenge to existing typologies, it points to the potential utility that the sociological concepts of authority, power and status, and the relationship participants have with the lineage, has in their construction. It also presents a possible opportunity to expand upon the discussion and debates surrounding Weber’s concepts of authority, power and tradition. I therefore call for other researchers to test these hypotheses to further both our understanding of the practice and development of Buddhism in the West and our understanding of these important sociological concepts.

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