

Present day Tibetans' views on reincarnate lamas

Dawa Cairen

abstract

Tibetan reincarnate lama has already existed for more than eight hundreds years. The reincarnate lama is the highest religious practitioner in Tibetan Buddhism. An incarnate lama is someone that has gone through the process of reincarnation in order to carry on the religious status and position of the reincarnate lamas.

This article relies on a combination of questionnaires and interviews in an attempt to understand present day Tibetans' basic opinions of and attitudes towards reincarnate lamas.

This study employs survey and intensive interview as its data collection methods to investigate Tibetan's general perspective on and attitude to reincarnate lamas. reincarnate lama is a special group among Tibetan religious elite. In fact, there are at least three aspects of reincarnate lamas research: Institutional research, identification research and social impact research. The content I am going to talk to you today is basically an identification or recognition-level research.

There are five parts in the paper: First is about the situation of religious affiliation of contemporary Tibetans. The second part is about the deeply rooted idea of believing Living Buddha. In third part, we talk about the social functions of authority of Living Buddha. In the fourth part, the changing identification perspective of Living Buddha is discussed. The final part is the summarization of the study.