

A Neo-orthodox Buddhist Movement in Transition: the Diamond Way¹

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With over 600 centres worldwide, the Tibetan Buddhist Diamond Way movement founded and led by Ole Nydahl (*1941) is a fast growing global lay Buddhist movements and the arguably largest convert Buddhist movement in Central and Eastern Europe. Unlike other western Buddhist converts such as Sangharakshita, the founder of the FWBO (now: Triratna), Nydahl and his late wife Hannah (1946-2007) never saw themselves as instigators of a new, specifically western (hybrid or even eclectic) form of Buddhism; instead they have always emphasised the importance of the close, traditional embedment of their teachings within the global Karma Kagyu (bKa' brgyud) tradition. Their Diamond Way might be described as missionary, but does not (or only in a very limited way) fit the label "Neo-Buddhism" or "New Buddhism" (Coleman 2001); instead, it can be meaningfully described as a "neo-orthodox" (in Peter Berger's terminology) or, better, a "neo-orthoprax" Tibetan Buddhist lay movement (see Scherer 2012). Since its practice is traditional and "technical," the Diamond Way does not qualify to be categorised as predominantly "charismatic" in the sense of the "technical-charismatic dimension" of the Anthony typology (Anthony and Ecker 1987: 39-40); however, the movement displays "charismatic" features in the sense that Nydahl's personal charisma is a major factor in its cohesion. Galanter's four psychological elements of a charismatic group (i.e. shared belief system; social cohesiveness; behavioural norms; and charismatic leadership, see Galanter 1989: 5) are broadly applicable to the Diamond Way. Nydahl has drawn criticism from Buddhist and non-Buddhists, academics and non-academics alike for his seemingly unconventional teaching style, his personal life, his political views and his involvement in the ongoing dispute about the identity of the 17th Karmapa, the Karma Kagyu hierarch (Scherer 2009; 2011). In this regard, Nydahl occupies a curious place among the different western Buddhist Teachers of the 20th and 21st century. His missionary activities are clearly linked to his uncompromising devotion to the late 16th Karmapa hierarch (1924-1981), after whose death the Diamond Way transitioned from a limited, grass root convert movement to a player in the politics of global Tibetan Buddhism; during this period Nydahl finally gained recognition as a Lama (bla ma, traditionally acknowledged teacher) and positioned his movement in the schism of the Karma Kagyu school around the recognition of

¹ This chapter is partly based on, revised and updated from my previously published 'Conversion, Devotion and (Trans-)Mission: Understanding Ole Nydahl', in Todd Lewis (ed.) 2014. *Buddhists: Understanding Buddhism Through the Lives of Practitioners*, Blackwell Wiley, London, pp. 96-106 (with permission).

the 17th Karmapa hierarch: Nydahl supports the candidate put forward by the late 14th 'Red Hat' Karmapa or Shamarpa (zhwa dmar pa), Mipham Chökyi Lodrö (mi pham chos kyi glo gros, 1952-2014), Thinley Thaye Dorje ('phrin las mtha' yas rdo rje *1983) against Orgyen Thinley Dorje (o rgyan 'phrin las rdo rje *1985). The latter was recognised by the 12th Tai Situpa (ta'i si tu pa *1954) and gained support outside the Kagyu lineage both by the Chinese government and by the 14th Dalai Lama (*1935). The Diamond Way grew steadily and globally until, in 2007, with Hannah Nydahl's death, the movement entered its current late-charismatic stage.

The Diamond Way teaches neo-orthoprax Karma Kagyu meditation techniques (Scherer 2009), in particular a basic guru-yoga (tantric meditation on the teacher), composed in 1959 by the 16th Karmapa.² The traditional cycle of four preliminary practices ('ngöndro', sngon 'gro) arranged by the 9th Karmapa (1556–1603)³ are practiced on the intermediate level and are advised to be kept up even after completion; from 1986 onwards, the advanced level meditation taught exclusively is a guru-yoga of the 8th Karmapa (1507–1554), which Nydahl received himself in the early 1970s from the 16th Karmapa.⁴ This trajectory is a deliberate yet restrictive selection from the vast richness of Kagyu practices. In personal communication, one particular high Karma Kagyu master called the Diamond Way a Buddhist 'primary school, from which you can graduate to more substantial teachings'.

As a neo-orthoprax movement, “transmission” figures prominently in the Diamond Way as a hermeneutical category for claiming spiritual validation, identification and authenticity. Nydahl utilises “transmission” as motifeme (i.e. as minimum structural feature of narrative function); through a hermeneutics of suspicion this might appear as a vehicle of self-stylisation; through hermeneutics of trust, genuine transmission narratives can be viewed as necessary for spiritual claims: charisma itself is insufficient (cp. Caplan 2001: 421-427). Two widely circulated and stylised autobiographical books form the core of Nydahl's legitimisation and transmission accounts. They fulfil the function of hagiographies, which constitute the narrative dimension of the Diamond Way's identitarian cohesion, emphasised

² Nydahl's autohagiographic books curiously do not mention the transmission of this basic meditation. According to Nydahl's later recollection, Karmapa transmitted the practise in 1970 (see Nydahl 2007: 24 [interview from 24 May 2006]; its Tibetan text can be found in KKD 1999; see also Scherer 2009: 36).

³ The preparatory (or: preliminary) practices entail 100,000 or 111,111 repetitions each of reciting the refuge formula and or while doing full body prostrations (to purify the body); reciting the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva (to purify speech and mind); reciting the *maṇḍala* offering formula (presenting the whole universe to all Buddhas in gratitude and filling the mind with countless positive imprints) and of reciting the formula of devotional praise to the gurus (to prepare the student for blessings of the higher tantric meditations).

⁴ See Nydahl 1979: 211; 1983: 194-195; 1985: 216; ²1989: 224; ³1994: 185; in extended form: Nydahl ²1999: 191; ⁴2003: 227-228.

in almost every public lecture given by Nydahl himself. The first of these accounts, *Entering the Diamond Way* (German: 1979, ²1989, ³1995, ⁴2003; Danish: 1983; English 1985, ²1999), contains the foundational narratives of the Nydahls' conversion, spiritual training and mission (German: *Sendung*) narrative 1969-1972. The second book *Riding the Tiger* (German: 1990, ²1994, ³2005; English: 1992) covers the initial charismatic phases of the movement, from Ole and Hannah Nydahl's return to Copenhagen on 7 October 1972 until the early 1990s.

Diamond Way beginnings

A WWII middle class Danish war child, Ole Nydahl (*1941) grew up in the relatively sheltered conditions in Lynby, north of Copenhagen. Nydahl's self-described childhood 'wildness' (Klein 1998: 55, cp. Nydahl 1985: 50, ²1999: 38) continued prominently into early adulthood, when he regularly got into fights and proved to be difficult to handle during his service in the Danish army (1960-1961, Nydahl 1985: 8=²1999: 2). Nydahl ultimately neglected an academic education in favour of motorcycles, boxing and drugs: Experimenting with, among others, cannabis and LSD, Nydahl and his childhood sweetheart and later wife Hannah (1946-2007) started drug smuggling. As a life-long friend of Nydahl put it, "People always forget: Ole was not really a nice person then" (personal communication, 2007). This evaluation balances the hegemonic (auto-)hagiographical reading, in which Nydahl's fierceness is seen as a natural reflection of his conditioning as a protector from previous lives.⁵ This recurring (auto-)hagiographic element intra-textually prepares and corroborates Nydahl's claim from 1980 onwards to be an emanation of the Buddhist protector deity Mahākāla (cp. Scherer 2009: 24-25). Suspicious critics have seen this as an example of Nydahl's tendency to prematurely claim spiritual authority, *hyperbole*, self-mystification and self-aggrandisement. (e.g. Saalfrank 1997: 131-132). Nydahl intertextually legitimises his *metanoia* (reformation) by defining his *Entering the Diamond Way* as "a book in the style of Milarepa's life story."⁶ The *Mi la'i rnam thar* by gTsang smyon He ru ka relates the conversion, reformation and liberation of the notorious black magician and murderer and later famous yogi Milarepa (1040-1123), one of the realised founding figures and a vital link in the transmission lineage of the various Kagyu branches. As a self-proclaimed modern yogi, Nydahl suggests reading his own life story as a modern variation of Milarepa's dramatic transformation.

⁵ See, e.g., Nydahl 1996: 33; 1997: 31; 21999: 2 (not in the 1985 first edition!).

⁶ 'Ein Buch im Stil der Lebensgeschichte Milarepas' (Nydahl ²1994: 118 = ³2005: 127).

Nydahl's conversion and mission narrative is often denoted as his "three years in the Himalayas"⁷ becoming the "first western students of the great Tibetan master, His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa" (Nydahl 1985: back cover text). His "three years of training" is narratively often constructed in a such way that it invites the comparison (or even implicit identification) with the traditional three-year retreats, which since Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye's 19th centuries reforms (see Kongtrul 1994) is usually seen as a necessary prerequisite for the "Lama" title (Scherer 2009: 35 and footnote 21). In reality, the time both Nydahls spent in the Himalayas and with the 16th Karmapa was shorter, albeit intense.

In his recent Tibetan rnam thar ('liberation story', biography) of the 16th Karmapa (1924-1981), the 14th Shamarpa briefly summarises Nydahl's conversion and subsequent missionary activities (Shamar Rinpoche 2013, 102-105).

In 1968 AD H.H. (the 16th Karmapa) went to the capital of Nepal; at this time he gave refuge and bodhisattva vows to two westerners from Denmark called Ole Nydahl and his wife Hannah Nydahl who were hippies; he made them his students. After they abandoned the usage of drugs H.H. gave them (some of) the *upāsaka* (lay) vows. (...) In 1972 HH told them go back to Europe and proclaim everywhere the four noble truths (...) He told Ole Nydahl that if there was anyone who asked for refuge vows, he would be allowed to give those. (Shamar Rinpoche 2013: 102, my translation)⁸

The following passage mentions Nydahl's rhetorical skills and his subsequent success in gradually establishing approximately 600 dharma centres worldwide, while stressing the ultimate agency of the 16th Karmapa. The brief mentioning of Nydahl focusses for the rest on the establishment of the Copenhagen centre and on Nydahl's support for the Dalai Lama's visit there in 1988. It is noteworthy, however, that the text confirms Nydahl's own account of being authorised to give refuge, which was a milestone for Nydahl to becoming acknowledged as Lama. The function of including Nydahl in the 16th Karmapa's rnam thar is explicated by a concluding reflection in the authorial voice:

⁷ Nydahl 1992: 9; the German original adds "of training" to the years - "Lehrjahre" (1990: 9 = ²1994: 9 = ³2005: 13) evoking a literary genre of the *Bildungsroman*.

⁸ spyi lo 1968 lor rgyal dbang mchog nyid bal yul rgyal sar phebs skabs nub yo rob Dan mag (Danmark) nas yong ba'i o li ni Dal dang khong gi bza' zla hA na ni Dal zhes pa'i hi pi brtul zhugs 'chang ba gnyis la skyabs sdom dang byang chub sems sdom bcas bstsal te slob mar bcug. bzi sman za 'thung sogs yongs su spangs pa'i dge bsnyen sna 'ga' spyod pa'i sdom pa bstsal. (...) phyi lo 1972 lor khong gnyis la rgyal dbang mchog gis khyod rang gnyis nub yu rob kyi phyogs kun tu song nas bden pa bzhi ... sgrogs. skyabs sdom zhu mkhan byung na o li ni Dal khyod rang gis skyabs sdom sbyin chog. (I thank drs. Joost Palenstijn, Rangjung Yeshe institute, Kathmandu, for critically checking the translation from the Tibetan).

If I write (about Nydahl's activity) in the (Karmapa's) liberation story at this time while Lama Ole himself is (still) alive, so that there will be no fault later, it shows that (Nydahl's activity) is also the result of Gyalwa Karmapa's activity. Therefore I have explicitly included this here. (Shamar Rinpoche 2013: 104-105, my translation)⁹

During its early stages, the Diamond Way grew indeed from the singular mission of a devoted convert to a notable vehicle of Kagyu globalisation. After the death of the 16th Karmapa in 1981, Nydahl established himself as a serious voice among the global, traditional and monastically dominated Karma bKa' rgyud. His missionary drive led to Nydahl's characteristically extensive travel schedules beyond his original focus on Denmark, Germany and Austria; e.g. in 1988, he travelled around the globe three times (Nydahl ²1989: 244); in the 1980s Nydahl started to venture deep behind the Iron Curtain and the Diamond Way grew in the U.S. and Central/South America. By the beginning of the 1990s had emerged as a recognised Buddhist teacher, a Lama. Nydahl's authorisation and spiritual legitimisation as an authentic Karma bKa' rgyud teacher is one of the recurrent themes in the Diamond Way hagiographic narratives. Given the background of the Tibetan hagiographic rnam thar ("liberation narratives") genre, this is rather unsurprising: the construction of authenticity, transmission and spiritual lineage is one major component of a rnam thar. It seems evident that Nydahl's spiritual development was not finished when he was thrown into the depths of Buddhist missionary work in the west. The first charismatic phase was certainly not only a period of teaching but also and predominantly one of learning. Nydahl was finally formally acknowledged as a "Buddhist Master" by the lineage holder Shamar Rinpoche in August 1983 (reproduced in Nydahl 1983: [219]; 1985: 4; ²1989: 6; ³1995: 206; ²1999; [iv]; omitted in ⁴2003). Still, it is plausibly possible that Karmapa had already called Nydahl a "Lama" – as Nydahl himself insists, but that Karmapa, out of consideration for the traditional branches of his school, did not do so officially or outside the Diamond Way circles. The usage of the title "Lama" in the authorship of Nydahl's books begins in 1992; since 1995, the usage of "Lama" by higher Lamas in reference to Nydahl has been documented.

The global schism and Diamond Way expansion (1992-2007)

⁹ da lta'i | char bla ma o li ni Dal nyid 'tsho bzhin pa'i skabs 'dir phyis skyon du ma song bar rnam thar du 'khod na rgyal dbang karma pa'i mdzad don gyis grub 'bras kyang mtshon par mngon pas zhar du bris so.

Nydahl's successful recognition by the tradition as a legitimate teacher was finalised during a period of great tribulations and schism for the global Karma Kagyu community shortly mentioned above around the recognition of the 17th Karmapa. The external validations by the two poles of power in the politics of transnational Tibetan Buddhism – the Chinese government and the Tibetan Government in exile - resulted in the majority of the Tibetan population accepting Situpa's candidate Orgyen Thinley as the 16th Karmapa's reincarnation; yet, the global Karma Kagyu followership was less clearly convinced and found itself in the middle of a religious and political power struggle and schism. Throughout the conflict Nydahl loyally supported the senior lineage holder Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, who enthroned Thaye Dorje as the 17th Karmapa in Delhi in 1994. This allegiance proved crucial and has continued alongside the growing global support for Thaye Dorje, despite strong partisan polemics and scholarly contention, especially in the U.S. (cf. Scherer 2009: 28-29). The global schism certainly stabilised Nydahl's position as a charismatic and authenticated lay teacher; politically, he had rendered himself indispensable. The schism also sped up the formal modernisation within the Diamond Way. Increasingly, the practice of the preparatory meditations (sngon 'gro) was emphasised in Diamond Way centres; only the mantra phases of the traditional sngon 'gro texts were recited in Tibetan and *pūjā*'s chanted in Tibetan were generally phased out; the traditional prostrations in front of the altar upon entering the meditation hall were scrapped; Buddhas and Bodhisattvas received western names; finally, also the Tibetan refuge formula was exchanged with translations. During this third charismatic phase (1992-2007), the Diamond Way continued to expand globally. As of 2003, increasing travel activities in Central and Southern America and the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe had allowed the movement to grow to more than 400 centres worldwide. Courses in Central and Eastern Europe regularly drew thousands and, since 1987, the teaching of the kLong chen snying thig Phowa or "Conscious Dying" had become increasingly important and almost a trademark of Nydahl (see Scherer 2009: 37). Tibetan rituals called "blessing empowerments" (*rjes gnang*), which lack the serious commitments of tantric practice initiations (Skt. *abhiṣeka*, dbang), were frequently given by Lamas loyal to Shamarpa and especially by the influential Bhutanese Drukpa Kagyu Lama Lopon Tsechu Rinpoche; he also supported the Diamond Way by building a considerable amount of stūpas at Diamond Way centres throughout Europe (see Preschern 2011). Karmapa Thaye Dorje visited Europe for the first time in January 2000 and was received by a large Diamond Way following in Dusseldorf (Germany).

At the same time early signs of late-charismatic consolidations emerged; gradually, the wealth of possible Tibetan Deity Yoga practices for the relatively few serious practitioners who went beyond the extensive preliminary cycles of meditation was reduced to the single, aforementioned 8th Karmapa guru-yoga practice. So-called “traveling teachers” were appointed to teach in the Diamond Way centres. Initially only a dozen, their number grew steadily to over 30 in 2003; by 2010, there were 232 (see Scherer 2011); a homogeneous, streamlined and conformist movement emerged, in which Nydahl grew less and less patient with both spiritual and personal diversity.

Several events hailed the end of expansion and the beginning of the newly emphasised consolidation: with the death of Lopon Tsechu Rinpoche (10 June 2003), Diamond Way lost one of its most charismatic traditional supporters. Two months later (31 July 2003), Nydahl had a serious parachute accident and left health care professionals fighting for his life for several weeks, with months of rehabilitation following. One year after the accident, a potential organisational crisis was narrowly avoided, when Nydahl's (additional) intimate relationship of 14 years with Caty Hartung (*1965) ended: Hartung who had grown into the organisational manager of the Diamond Way, remained and still remains as its “institutional face”. The final and most decisive incision occurred with the death of Hannah Nydahl on April 1, 2007 after long illness; a very private person, she had left the extrovert activities to Ole Nydahl while working in the background: the Diamond Way had clearly entered the ongoing, consolidating late-charismatic period.

Observations on a late-charismatic movement in transition

Nydahl's recipe for the westernisation and globalisation of Tibetan Buddhism can be characterised by "neo-orthodox re-packaging" of traditional content (Scherer 2011) with a mixture of modernist features, old boys' charm and apparent hedonist wrappings.

Viewed in the light of the Tibetan rnam thar genre, Nydahl's life story can be regarded as a modern example of established metanoia- and “Crazy-Yogi”-narratives found within the Karma Kagyu tradition (see Scherer 2009; 2011). Some aspects of Nydahl's teachings are directly linked to biographical “scars”: his unconventional path towards authenticated spiritual validation as a Lama is directly connected to his propagation of a lay Buddhism based on idealism and friendship. Furthermore, establishing and building up centres is hagiographically argued to be more important than undergoing formal training (which Nydahl himself lacks) and is also presented as a means to achieve equivalent levels of spiritual realisation while compassionately working for the benefit of humanity. Interestingly,

rhetorically placing charismatic leadership and Buddhist activity above meditation retreats has a prominent Tibetan precursor in, i.e., Lama Zhang (g.Yu grags pa brTson grus grags, 1122-1193), the founder of the Tshal pa bKa' brgyud (Yamamoto 2009).

Nydahl's mixing of personal *habitus* and teachings has led to the Diamond Way being termed “life-style Buddhism.” Further, Diamond Way criticism has focused on the extent hedonism evidenced by the enjoyment and propagation of high-adrenalin sports such as motorcycling, bungee-jumping and sky diving; and on the prevalent militaristic appearances, right-wing political views and fierce Anti-Islam rhetoric (Scherer 2009). In particular, the ever present hetero-machismo and (hetero-)sexual promiscuity within the Diamond Way has drawn strong criticism (Scherer 2011). Nydahl’s mixing of his sexual life with his teaching activities even sparked a short internal, semi-public disagreement with the late 14th Shamar Rinpoche in the summer of 2010 (primarily via shared e-mail correspondence); Nydahl felt slandered by a statement on the website of the lineage Lama, which contained some misunderstandings. Nydahl has routinised his charisma by leaving organisational power to a limited group of administrators (called 'the pool') headed by his former intimate partner Cathy Hartung and by appointing more than 200 auxiliary ('travelling') teachers (Scherer 2012; since 2014 called "Diamond way teachers"). While this group includes a few experienced meditators and perhaps even one or two traditionally trained Buddhist teachers, most of Nydahl's support teachers have no or no significant Buddhist education; no significant retreat experience; and have been appointed by Nydahl as personal choices based on closeness to himself and the vague criterion of "life experience"; in many cases they appear to simply regurgitate Nydahl's own teachings. Yet, these auxiliary teachers are not performing any core functions of a Tibetan Buddhist teacher (lama), such as giving refuge. Still, Nydahl has been criticised for this non-traditional practice and the apparent cronyism as propagating “Buddhism light.” (Scherer 2009 and 2012), a charge Buddhist modernists are regularly facing from traditionalists or parochialists.¹⁰

The Diamond Way's late charismatic phase is marked by increasing consolidation, institutionalisation and a strong in-group pressure to conformity. Due to growing external criticism, Nydahl has adopted a more rigid approach concerning his followers in matters of political activism ("no politics in the centres") and conduct codes for social media. In particular the support teachers are expected to close ranks: In 2010, Nydahl publicly revoked the authority of one particular “traveling teacher” to teach in Nydahl’s name, because this

¹⁰ See, e.g. Soucy (2010: 51) regarding criticism of Thich Nhat Hanh by traditional Vietnamese Buddhist.

teacher had reportedly emphasised a more Tibetan form and style of practice in the teachings he gave. Other prominent eccentric and/or critical voices were either silenced and marginalised or publicly ostracised. Since 2007, less personality cult-oriented Diamond Way students have been reporting of an uncomfortable atmosphere of 'Ole-normative' suspicion, fear and peer pressure in several of Nydahl's centres and groups: late-charismatic paranoia appears to surface at least in some parts of the movement. Conformism and institutionalisation appear to resist even the rare counteracting attempts by Nydahl himself: For example, in 2009, Nydahl failed to shake up developing the hierarchisation among the exponentially growing number of "Traveling Teachers" (see Scherer 2011).

A set of major changes occurred in the summer of 2014. After a string of health problems Nydahl announced on 10 June 2011 that he will discontinue offering his trademark phowa courses (teaching phowa is traditionally seen as a strain on health of the teacher). Further, the death of Shamar Rinpoche on the following day impacts the whole Karma Kagyu community significantly, including the transitioning late-charismatic movement, adding further insecurities for its future. End of July, Nydahl added a further layer of routinisation of charisma by appointing two of his Diamond Way teachers to special *ombudsmen*, a new, powerful position: They are supposed to "know, and master, the conditioned world with lightness and our [sc. Nydahl's] vision of healthy human development. Their general role will be to strengthen the human side, answer questions that our Diamond Way teachers do not cover and bring necessary issues to the lama." (Nydahl, letter to students worldwide, Amden 30 July 2014).

The post-charismatic future of the Diamond Way will largely depend on its positioning towards the Karma Kagyu tradition. Nydahl has fostered (or at least: tolerated) a personality cult around him, which is openly breeding sectarian tendencies and calling for a stronger break from the Tibetan tradition. Questioning the authority of the Karmapa, such 'Ole-ist' (Nydahl-centred) sectarianism has already surfaced undisguisedly in August 2012, when at the Europe Center, one of Nydahl's closest students, a prominent 'travelling teacher', directly challenged the authority of the then present 17th Karmapa hierarch in what seems to have been a warped expression of misunderstood Nydahl-guru-devotion. In contrast to Nydahl's (and his 'pool's') harsh reactions to non-conforming independently thinking 'travelling teachers', Nydahl in this case only pressed his student to give a half-hearted apology: Nydahl-loyalty clearly appears to trump the loyalty to Karmapa and the broader Karma Kagyu tradition. These occurrences are an indication that at least a small core of 'Ole-ists' might attempt to institutionalise an Ole-Buddhist sect and break away from the Karma Kagyu fold

in the post-charismatic future, while others will have to negotiate the return of the Ole-movement under the authority of the Karmapa. If pressed to speculate further on the post-charismatic fate of the Diamond Way, I suspect that not too many (maybe only 10%) of the Diamond Way followers – naturally mainly those who might lose privilege and influence – may want to support 'Ole-ism' after his death; a substantial part, whose membership mainly depends on Nydahl's personal charisma, comradeship and shared (white, middle-class, heterosexual privileged) hedonism will simply fall away; perhaps 40% of followers will 'graduate' to more traditional teachers and more substantial teachings.

Whether the recent developments within the Diamond Way are viewed as cultish or simply prudent completely depends on the observer. Based on a hermeneutics of suspicion, one might perceive an authoritarian leadership here and an attempt to consolidate by creating conformism and silencing internal dissidence and the toleration of (present and future) personality cult based sectarianism; all these features are commonly connected with "cults." Based on a hermeneutics of trust, one could argue that, in late-charismatic periods, the consolidation of a movement necessarily entails creating and solidifying the highest possible cohesion and communal vision in order to carry the movement through the tribulations after the charismatic leader's death. Irrespective of the observer's view, the struggle between orthodox idealists and neo-Buddhist sectarians, coupled with multiple other factors such as relations and cooperation with the Tibetan Karma Kagyu hierarchy, the nature and scope of the spiritual authority granted to Nydahl's Diamond Way teachers, ombudsmen and administrators, as well as regional and global cohesion and identity among Nydahl's centres will be of key interest as the final pages of the Danish Lama's hagiography and the future of his legacy are written.

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