



SHAMBHALA OFFICE OF CULTURE AND DECORUM

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## **Shambhala Culture Language and Titles**

In Shambhala many of our shared forms, rituals and standards of communication were consciously introduced by the Sakyongs. As in other cultures and societal movements, these forms are a the binding element which help create our culture. Some are unique to Shambhala, and some have come to us from other traditions embodying principles we respect. Our Shambhala culture includes some elements that may cause confusion in other contexts. In Shambhala we aspire to transform these provocative forms by uncovering their potential power and wakefulness. This reveals the inherent goodness that can be found in every situation.

## **Shambhala as a Mandala**

To understand the formal organization of Shambhala events and the manifestations within Shambhala, it is helpful to remember that Shambhala is organized and governed as a mandala.

This is described on our Shambhala websites in our guidelines for introducing our teachers:

The Shambhala community is organized as a mandala, a circular framework that connects the teachers and teachings with the community of practitioners. The legendary kingdom of Shambhala is traditionally painted as a mandala with the ruler at the centre, and the households radiating from and around that centre. The authority of such a mandala, combining sacred and secular roles of teacher and leader, is known in Tibetan as the *tridzin*, or "throne holder". In the Shambhala tradition, this has been a family heritage, passed from one generation to the next.

The first throne holder of the contemporary Shambhala mandala was Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who served as the first *Sakyong* (meaning "earth protector"). The current throne holder is his son and heir, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.

Mandala principle, and the lineage of Sakyongs are integral to the central purpose of Shambhala, which is to create enlightened society. Thus, recent publicity for a major public event addressed by the Sakyong, stated:

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche holds the royal lineage of the ancient kingdom of Shambhala, legendary for its wisdom and compassion. As the sovereign of Shambhala, he has inherited the Buddha's teachings on enlightened society, which offer a radical antidote to greed and aggression.

## **Shambhala Titles**

One of the ways that we work with form within Shambhala is through mindfulness of our speech: having precision and gentleness in our words and in our manner of communicating. Using forms of address and titles for our colleagues, friends and leaders (such as Ms Mandelker or President Reoch for example) can be a mutually empowering practice. By using these we offer respect for the position that person holds, and in turn they are requested to manifest in a way appropriate to their role.

This is a rich and ongoing dance, as we explore the skillful means of what is best for various situations. The intention behind all of the forms is to create a society where all people can experience their own inherent dignity in an atmosphere of grace and kindness.

In order for Shambhala vision to be accomplished, the outer form of our speech and the inner view of what we hold sacred need to be synchronized. If we see the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo as our spiritual and societal leaders, guides and examples, we express that by using their formal titles.

## **Introducing the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo**

What is the appropriate way to refer to the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo when introducing them – or referring to them – at public events? On what occasions is the Sakyong referred to as “Rinpoche” and the Sakyong Wangmo as “Khandro-la”? When are they addressed as “His or Her Majesty”?

Shambhala is governed according to mandala principle, which has both outer and inner manifestations. A primary consideration is whether the event or occasion is an “outer mandala event” or an “inner mandala event”. In both manifestations, the Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo are accorded the courtesies appropriate to lineage holders.

### **For Outer Shambhala Mandala Events**

An “outer mandala event” is any event or occasion attended by newcomers to Shambhala or anyone who has not attended advanced Shambhala programs at the level of the Rigden Abhisheka or beyond. The vast majority of Shambhala events and programs are therefore outer mandala events.

At outer mandala events and occasions, please address or refer to the Sakyong as:

*The Sakyong*, (Earth Protector)  
*Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche*, or  
*Rinpoche*

At outer mandala events and occasions, please address or refer to the Sakyong Wangmo as:

*The Sakyong Wangmo*, or  
*Khandro-la* (wife of a Lama)

Even if you are personally accustomed to using “Your Majesty” when speaking to the Sakyong or Sakyong Wangmo, others will not be familiar with this inner tradition. Therefore, if asking a question at an outer mandala event, please address them as “Rinpoche” or “Khandro-la”.

### **For Inner Shambhala Events and Gatherings**

“Inner mandala events” include advanced Shambhala programs at the level of the Rigden Abhisheka or beyond, events held at or hosted by the Kalapa Court, and meetings or gatherings with the Sakyong or Sakyong Wangmo in their Tenno Rooms.

At inner mandala events, please address the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo as:

*Your Majesty* (when addressing one of them), or  
*His or Her Majesty* (when referring to one of them)

*Your Majesties* (when addressing both of them directly), or  
*Their Majesties* (when referring to both of them).

## **Communicating These Guidelines**

Communications from Shambhala will normally reflect these guidelines. Based on requests from our members and local leaders, we will provide clearer guidance about what level of formality is appropriate for future mandala-wide events. Normally, these will be regarded as outer mandala events. We will also be more diligent about communicating these guidelines so that we can all be consistent in our approach.

## **Beyond Guidelines**

There are occasions that are exceptions to these guidelines. The Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo advise us when they deem it appropriate to present themselves as a “royal family” or “royal lineage” at public occasions. These have included the Enthronement and Empowerment of the Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo, their wedding ceremony (publicly reported as a “royal event”) and the announcement of the birth of Jetsun Drukmo.

## **Additional Resources:**

To read more about this topic, please visit the following:

Re: Specific protocols for the Mukpo Family

[www.shambhala.org/protocol/](http://www.shambhala.org/protocol/)

Re: Biography of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

<http://www.shambhala.org/teachers/sakyong-mipham.php>

Re: Shambhala Vision [http://www.shambhala.org/about\\_shambhala.php](http://www.shambhala.org/about_shambhala.php)

To discuss this topic further, please start or join a conversation on the Shambhala Network under “Shambhala Culture,” or chat with fellow leaders and members.