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'My Reincarnation': A Buddhist contemplation | 3 stars

Not rated | Time: 1:22

In Italian, Tibetan and heavily accented English with subtitles

Spirituality and family dynamics come together in the subtle documentary "My Reincarnation."

In 1959, amid fierce fighting that resulted in the Dalai Lama's exile, Chogyal Namkhai Norbu fled his native Tibet to resettle in Italy. Soon after, Norbu, a master of the esoteric teachings of Dzogchen, began working to spread his strain of Tibetan Buddhism to the West. He also married and fathered a son, Yeshe, who was subsequently determined to be the reincarnation of a close relative and lama killed during the Chinese crackdown. The film follows Yeshe's slow transformation from corporate success to Buddhist teacher.

Director Jennifer Fox was working as an assistant to the Tibetan teacher when she began to film Norbu and his family in the 1980s. In piecing together footage juxtaposing home life and Norbu's public lectures, collected off and on over 20 years, the filmmaker also examines the evolving relationship between Yeshe and Norbu, as the son seeks a deeper connection to the man he has known more as teacher than father.

Languid and contemplative, the film is typical of the intimate, paired-down aspect of Fox's style, a documentary in which lives accumulate in small moments.

(At the Tivoli.)

Mindy Farabee, Los Angeles Times