


Shugs Idan and the Dalai Lama: A Conflict of Political Legitimation Processes?

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he protective deity Shugs Idan, who is nowadays a source of controversy in the Tibetan community, became popular among the Dge lugs tradition after the dissemination of his cult by Pha bong kha Bde chen snying po (1878–1941) at the beginning of the 20th century. The Shugs Idan cult was more widely promoted by the 3rd Khri byang, Blo bzang ye shes bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (1901–1981), a student of Pha bong kha Bde chen snying po, who was the 14th Dalai Lama's tutor.

The controversy about Shugs Idan started in the 1970s after the publication by the 4th Dze smad, Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas (1927–1996) of a small book¹ which recounts stories of important lamas of the Dge lugs pa tradition, as well as some Dga' ldan pho brang officials, who have been punished by Shugs Idan for their practice of certain Rnying ma rituals. The publication of this book made the present Dalai Lama follow the Gnas chung Oracle's advice that he should stop worshipping Shugs Idan personally and generally impose restrictions (*dam drag*) on his worship.² This decision irritated some adepts of Shugs Idan who did not want to quit their practice and, therefore, strongly opposed the present Dalai Lama's authority.

Shugs Idan is regarded by both his followers and his critics as the emanation of Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1619–1656), an important Dge lugs lama of the "Upper Chamber" (*gzims khang gong ma*), a lineage founded by Pañ chen Bsod nams grags pa (1478–1554), at 'Bras spungs Monastery.³ During his childhood, Grags pa rgyal mtshan was proposed as a potential reincarnation of the 4th Dalai Lama Yon tan rgya mtsho (1589–1617), but ended up being selected as the reincarnation of Bsod nams dge legs dpal bzang (1594–1615) of the

¹ Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas 1997. It came to be called the "Yellow Book" shortly after its publication (Dreyfus 1998: 255).

² Dreyfus 1998: 255–259.

³ von Brüch 1999: 182 and Karmay 2009: 507.

Upper Chamber lineage. Grags pa rgyal mtshan died in 1656, and the circumstances of his death were contested.⁴

Nikolay Tsyrempilov notes that the death of Grags pa rgyal mtshan could have been the result of a conflict that divided the adherents of Dge lugs tradition during the rule of the 5th Dalai Lama and later on.⁵ He considers the resistance of some Dge lugs pa—which he calls “Dge lugs pa sectarians”—against the 5th Dalai Lama as an opposition to the “proto-national state” created by the 5th Dalai Lama, which was inclusive of all Tibetan Buddhist traditions.⁶ Tsyrempilov defines the two opposing groups as those defending the interests of the Dge lugs tradition on one side and those defending the interests of the Tibetan state on the other.⁷ Moreover, he writes that the Dge lugs pa who wanted to defend the interests of the Dge lugs tradition were eager to establish a *mchod yon*, or “priest-patron relationship,” with the emperors of the Qing dynasty, who in turn wanted to weaken the 5th Dalai Lama’s regime.⁸

Georges Dreyfus also notes that the rule of the 5th Dalai Lama was resented by some members of the Dge lugs tradition who wished to set up a “purely Dge lugs rule.”⁹ He agrees that the relationship between the 5th Dalai Lama and the Dge lugs clergy had been tense and that Grags pa rgyal mtshan could have been the focus of the opposition to the 5th Dalai Lama within the Dge lugs clergy.¹⁰

However, Dreyfus considers that Shugs Idan originally had nothing to do with Grags pa rgyal mtshan and the narrative of his death. He contends that the narrative of Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s death was written by the 5th Dalai Lama in order to discredit Grags pa rgyal mtshan.¹¹ According to Dreyfus, Shugs Idan is a deity

⁴ Dreyfus 1998: 230 and Karmay 2009: 514.

⁵ Tsyrempilov 2003: 54.

⁶ Tsyrempilov 2003: 55.

⁷ Tsyrempilov writes: “Many followers of the Dge lugs pa tradition thought their sect’s interests more important than Tibetan state interests, which is why they could consider the course pursued by the Fifth Dalai Lama, of rapprochement to the other Tibetan Buddhist sects, if not as a betrayal of the Yellow church, then at least as an adverse situation for the sect” (Tsyrempilov 2003: 56).

⁸ Tsyrempilov 2003: 56–57.

⁹ Dreyfus 1998: 234.

¹⁰ Dreyfus writes: “The events surrounding Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s death must be understood in relation to its historical context, the political events surrounding the emergence of the Dalai-Lama institution as a centralizing power during the second half of the seventeenth century. The rule of this monarch seems to have been particularly resented by some elements in the Dge lugs tradition. It is quite probable that Grags pa rgyal mtshan was seen after his death as a victim of the Dalai-Lama’s power and hence became a symbol of opposition” (Dreyfus 1998: 234).

¹¹ Dreyfus 1998: 239.

belonging originally to the Sa skya tradition,¹² and the narrative of Shugs ldan as an emanation of Grags pa rgyal mtshan was a late invention of Pha bong kha Bde chen snying po because he felt some resentment against the 13th Dalai Lama who imposed restrictions on the dissemination of the Shugs ldan's cult.¹³ For Dreyfus, Pha bong kha promoted Shugs ldan as the protector of the Dge lugs tradition's purity only as a measure against the non-sectarian (*ris med*) movement.¹⁴

I will show in this article that the link between Shugs ldan and Grags pa rgyal mtshan is not a late invention by Pha bong kha, but something which appeared much earlier, around the mid-18th century, together with other alternative narratives of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's posthumous fate. We can therefore wonder if the narrative of Shugs ldan's origin should not be understood in light of the opposition that Tsyrempilov describes in his research.

To answer this question, I will first go back to the 5th Dalai Lama's narrative of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's death and then present the earliest narrative of Shugs ldan's origin in order to show that this narrative was an attempt to rehabilitate Grags pa rgyal mtshan and give a different version of his posthumous fate. Finally, I will discuss the political contexts in which these two narratives were written in order to show that they are related to two different political regimes: one centered on the Dalai Lama as the sacred ruler of the Tibetan state, and the other centered on a *mchod yon* relationship between the Dge lugs tradition and the Qing dynasty.

1. The 5th Dalai Lama and Grags pa rgyal mtshan's Death

The "official" narrative of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's death is found in the 5th Dalai Lama's autobiography. The 5th Dalai Lama writes that on June 17, 1656, Grags pa rgyal mtshan became suddenly affected by a *gnyan tshad* disease.¹⁵ The 5th Dalai Lama then began preparations to

¹² Dreyfus 1998: 241.

¹³ Dreyfus 1998: 251.

¹⁴ Dreyfus 1998: 252–253. The *ris med* movement was initiated by 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820–1892) and 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899) who compiled the teachings of the Sa skya, Bka' brgyud and Rnying ma traditions in order to preserve them from the Dge lugs hegemony and sectarian proselytism. The term *ris med* is a short form for *ris su bcad pa med pa* ("impartial, unbiased,") and defines a non-sectarian approach towards all Tibetan Buddhist traditions. See Samuel 2003 and Deroche 2018.

¹⁵ *gnyan tshad* is a combination of *gnyan nad* ("infectious disease") and *tshad pa* ("fever"). *gnyan* also refers to a group of spirits producing this infectious disease. On spirits and diseases in Tibetan culture, see Samuel 2007.

give him a blessing (*rjes gnang*)¹⁶ to dispel obstacles, but the Regent Bsod nams chos 'phel¹⁷ sent someone from Lhasa who told him that it could be contagious, and therefore it was inappropriate to visit him.¹⁸ Grags pa rgyal mtshan recovered for a few days, but the illness later resumed. The 5th Dalai Lama then went to give him the blessing, but because Grags pa rgyal mtshan was under the influence of a malevolent spirit, he had lost consciousness, and the blessing was ineffective. Grags pa rgyal mtshan died on July 4, 1656.¹⁹

Around August 1656, the 5th Dalai Lama writes that the Gnags chung Oracle advised him not to stay in the vicinity during Grags pa rgyal mtshan's funeral. Therefore, he stayed at the Potala for one week doing various practices.²⁰

In the middle of 1658, the 5th Dalai Lama writes:

The Great Dharma Protector said, "last year when we were at the hot spring of Stod lung, I told the Regent through the two disciplinarian monks that the stupa of the Upper Chamber, which had been affected by malevolent spirits, should be moved elsewhere. But instead of simply taking the silver pieces out and placing them [somewhere], they were left unmoved, and this mistake caused illnesses. Now the disturbance is much greater, so the Upper Chamber has to be moved."²¹

¹⁶ *rjes gnang* is a kind of tantric initiation, or empowerment. It can also be given as a blessing to dispel obstacles (*rkyen sel gyi rjes gnang*).

¹⁷ The text gives the title "*Sde pa*," which means "governor" and was given to the official in charge of a province, or of a monastic estate, as was the case for Bsod nams rab brtan at 'Bras spungs Monastery. With the rise to power of the 5th Dalai Lama in 1642, Bsod nams rab brtan became the *Sde srid* of Tibet, that is the Regent, or Prime Minister. In his autobiography, the 5th Dalai Lama keeps referring to him with the title "*Sde pa*."

¹⁸ *nyer lnga nas gzims khang gong sprul pa'i sku gnyan tshad kyis glo bur du bsnyun par rkyen sel gyi rjes gnang la yong dgos tshul byung ba ltar gtor chas gra bsgrigs pa'i 'gro rtsis yod thog/ lha sa nas sde pas mi gnang pa'i 'go nad yin 'dug pas da lam mi 'gab ces* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 366).

¹⁹ *gzims khang gong du phyin mgon po'i rjes gnang bar chad kun sel phul kyang 'byung po zhig gis brlams pa'i thugs dran mi zin 'dugs pas phan thogs med pa'i tshe bcu gsum gyi tsha rting khar zhin brjes snang* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 367).

²⁰ *chos skyong chen pos sprul pa'i sku'i pur bzhu'i dus nye skor du bsdad pa mi 'gab pas po ta lar song gsung ba bzhin nyer gnyis la 'ongs zhag bdun gyi bar 'phags pa mched kyi drung du mchod pa smon lam bzlas brjod sogs dge sbyor la brtson par byas* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 369).

²¹ *chos skyong chen pos sde par 'dre sna zug pa'i gzims khang gong gi mchod rten rnams gzhan du spo dgos tshul lo snag ma stod lung chu tshan la byon skabs dge skos gnyis brgyud de labs pas yin kyang dngul dgung tsho phral nas 'jog pa tsam las ma spos pa'i skyon gyis nad gzhi chug pa yin/ da cha 'tshub cher song bas gzims khang gong spo dgos gsung bar* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 390). Gavin Kilty, in his translation, considers this passage to mean that the Regent became ill because the silver mausoleum was left in the Upper Chamber (Kilty 2019: 62). The Regent died around the end of 1658.

The 5th Dalai Lama continues:

There was much discussion about whether something like an exorcism ritual would suffice or whether the house needed to be destroyed. True or not, some said that when the eight stupas were not yet dismantled, voices and sounds came out of the [main] stupa. Because such superstitions gave rise to demons, the rumors did not cease. The personal belongings [of Grags pa rgyal mtshan] were carried down the valley of Stod lung and the woodwork [of the house was] brought to the canyon of the Shar chu River.²²

As the 5th Dalai Lama notes in 1662, a new temple was built in place of the destroyed Upper Chamber in 1661.²³ This narrative shows that everything was done to remove any trace of the Upper Chamber. Not only the residence, but also the lineage, since the 5th Dalai Lama forbade the search of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's reincarnation.²⁴ According to the 5th Dalai Lama, Grags pa rgyal mtshan was not the genuine incarnation of the Upper Chamber and became a malevolent spirit after breaking his tantric vows. The 5th Dalai Lama's view is exemplified by the following quote:

The one who was wrongly recognized as the reincarnation of Bsod nams dge legs dpal bzang, through the manipulation of Lags a rgyal of Gad kha sa, became a *dam sri*²⁵ spirit of perverted aspiration.²⁶

This narrative is indeed an attempt to discredit Grags pa rgyal mtshan. It helped the 5th Dalai Lama justify that there was no need to look for Grags pa rgyal mtshan's reincarnation, and justified the destruction of the Upper Chamber.

²² *rgyal rdzongs lta bus go chod pa'i khang pa bshig ma dgos pa yong mi yong gi gleng gzhi mang du byung rung bden mi bden ji ltar yang mchod rten brgyad po ma phral ba'i skabs mchod rten nang nas skad dang tsi ra brgyab zer bas mtshon pa'i rnam rtog 'drer lang kyis kha mtshon ma chod pa'i sku chas tsho stod lung mda' dang shing cha rnam shar chu sbug tu bskyal* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 390).

²³ *gzims khang gong bshig shul du lo snga ma'i nang lha khang gsar du bzhengs par* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 471).

²⁴ Dreyfus 1998: 238 and Karmay 2009: 514.

²⁵ *dam sri* defines a class of malevolent spirits (*sri*) who have broken their sacred commitment (*dam tshig la gnod pa'i sri*).

²⁶ *gad kha sa'i lags a rgyal gyi 'phrul la rten sprul sku bsod nams dge legs dpal bzang po gi sku skye brdzus ma lam du song ba mon lam log pa'i dam sri gyur te* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009c: 298). Bsod nams dge legs dpal bzang (1594–1615) is the former incarnation of Grags pa rgyal mtshan. Gad kha sa is the family name of Grags pa rgyal mtshan. Lags a rgyal is the name of his mother. On the Gad kha sa family, see McCune 2007.

These events surrounding Grags pa rgyal mtshan's death are often linked with another account by the 5th Dalai Lama, regarding the spirit residing at the spring of Dol, which is known as the "Dol rgyal."²⁷ About this Dol rgyal, the 5th Dalai Lama writes in his account of 1675:

In Dol chu mig dkar mo, a very powerful spirit of perverted aspiration was known for having harmed the doctrine and beings. This spirit had been growing stronger since the Fire-Bird Year [1657], and despite many rituals performed, it was as if I could not catch it. I performed [these rituals] often.²⁸

He continues:

A new temple was built at Dol chu mig dkar mo at the end of the Earth-Bird Year [1669], and the furniture [of the former temple] had been moved in. Although we had hoped that the spirit would come to settle in this temple, the harm increased. Recently an epidemic affected many monks and lay people, and a couple of monks died. Therefore, the monks of the monastery unanimously decided to perform rituals.²⁹

In 1669, several Rnying ma specialists were invited to perform certain rituals over the course of one week, and the 5th Dalai Lama writes:

The *dam sri* spirit was burnt together with his entourage of malevolent spirits through a fire burning ritual. They were confident that it was effective, since many wondrous signs appeared, and everyone smelled an odor of burning flesh.³⁰

²⁷ See Dreyfus 1998: 240–245.

²⁸ *dol chu mig dkar mor smon lam log pa'i dam sri mthu rtsal shin tu che ba zhid gis bstan 'gro spyi bye brag la gnod pa'i grags pa me bya nas je cher song ba'i don thog tu'ang khel ba mang rung nga la ma rag lta bu'i byed mi dkon* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009b: 357). Dreyfus mistakenly notes that the Fire-Bird Year corresponds to the year 1636, making him think that this spirit was active before Grags pa rgyal mtshan's death (Dreyfus 1998: 270). Moreover, Dreyfus notes that this passage is found in folio n° 157 of the second volume of the 5th Dalai Lama's autobiography, whereas it is in folio n° 257.

²⁹ *dol chu mig dkar mor sa bya'i mjug khang pa gsar brtsigs dang ka ca sogs spos pa'i rgyal po chags rten yong la re byas na'ng gnod pa je 'phel byung zhing nye char skya ser du mar nad yams dang gra pa re gnyis shi chad byung bas rkyen byas gra tshang gi gra pa rnams mgrin gcig pa lta bu'i las sbyor byed zer bar* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009b: 357). Here the text mentions a *rgyal po* spirit, while above, it mentions a *dam sri* spirit. *rgyal po* means "king," and here designates a class of spirits who dwell and protect a certain place.

³⁰ *sreg pa me'i las sbyor gyis dam sri 'byung po 'khor bcas bsregs par rtags mtshan gyi rigs ngo mtshar shin tu mang zhing ro bsregs pa'i dri ma lta bu kun gyis tsher [tshor?] ba'i yid ches kyi gnas su gyur ba* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009b: 357–358).

This narrative does not link Grags pa rgyal mtshan with the spirit of Dol chu mig dkar mo. The 5th Dalai Lama just talks about a monk who had broken his vows and became this spirit. Except for the fact that the spirit of Dol chu mig started his malevolent activity in 1657, the same year the Gnas chung Oracle advised to move Grags pa rgyal mtshan's mausoleum, there is no reason to think that the 5th Dalai Lama considered the spirit of Dol chu mig to be that of Grags pa rgyal mtshan.

The link between the spirit of Dol chu mig and Grags pa rgyal mtshan is actually an invention by Shugs ldan's adepts and appears in the same text where we find the first narrative of Shugs ldan's origin.

2. The First Narrative of Shugs ldan's Origin

The *Shugs ldan be'u bum*, a compilation of texts from various authors about the deity Shugs ldan, contains a text titled "A Bunch of White Lotuses: The Short Narrative of the Origin of the Mighty Shugs ldan" (*Rgyal ba'i bstan bsrung chen po Rdo rje Shugs ldan rtsal gyi byung tshul mdo tsam brjod pa Pad dkar chun po*). This text seems to be the oldest one telling the origin of Shugs ldan.³¹ The colophon does not mention the precise name of the author, who is said to be Mchog sprul Ma ti'i mtshan can, "The Supreme Emanation Bearing the Name Ma ti." It is very likely that this Ma ti was Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1714–1762), the fourth incarnation of the Stag phu lineage, but the first one to have been recognized as such, which would explain the title *mchog sprul* "Supreme Emanation." According to the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC), Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan was also called Stag phu Ma ti.

At the beginning of the text, Stag phu Ma ti writes:

Here, concerning the short narrative of the origin of the mighty Shugs ldan, this Great Dharma Protector is, in fact, a deliberate wrathful manifestation intent on destroying all those harmful and evil [ones] who turn their anger toward the teachings of the Second Buddha [Tsong kha pa] and those who practice it. Related to this [narrative], as it is well known these days, it is also said that the subsequent rebirth of Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa, called Grags pa rgyal mtshan, was in conflict with the reincarnation of the All-knowing Yon tan rgya mtsho, and took the form of a malevolent spirit.³²

³¹ Ma ti 1983.

³² *'dir rgyal ba'i bstan srung chen po rdo rje shugs ldan rtsal gyi byung ba'i tshul mdo tsam brjod pa la/ de yang bstan bsrung chen po 'di ni 'jam mgon rgyal ba gnyis pa'i bstan*

Stag phu Ma ti then tells what he had heard from some older lamas:

During the time of Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa, Pe har, the leader of the haughty spirits, wondered which one is the immaculate teaching of the Buddha nowadays in the world, and also who is the most eminent being holding this teaching and collecting the qualities of the scriptures and realization? [He] then wandered and searched the whole world and saw that there was no purest doctrine other than the doctrine of the Venerable Master [Tsong kha pa]. [He] then did not find, among the community of those holding this teaching, a community with a greater accumulation of the qualities of scriptures and realization than the “Sublime Community” of the Great All-knowing Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa. Understanding that this Paṅ chen is a bodhisattva who has reached the highest stage of realization, [Pe har] came in front of him and said: “I have wandered the whole world and found no doctrine purer and more immaculate than the Venerable Master [Tsong kha pa]’s, and I did not find a more realized practitioner holding this doctrine than you. Therefore, I request you to unleash your pacifying, increasing, magnetizing, and destroying activities in order to eliminate all those who harm and hurt both the doctrine and practitioners of Tsong kha pa’s teaching, as well as to hold, protect, and disseminate this [teaching]. I will do whatever is in my power to help you in this [task].”³³

Then Pe har adds:

bstan 'dzin dang bcas pa la log par 'khu ba'i gnod byed gdug pa can mtha' dag tshar gcad pa'i phyir bsam bzhin du drag po'i skur bstan pa zhig stel de'i tshul yang deng sang yongs su grags par paṅ chen bsod nams grags pa'i sku skye phyi ma'i yang phyi ma sprul sku grags pa rgyal mtshan zhes bya ba thams cad mkhyen pa yon tan rgya mtsho'i sprul sku dang nor 'khrul byung ba de dregs pa'i gzugs bzung ba yin par smra zhing/ (Ma ti 1983: 178).

³³ *paṅ chen bsod nams grags pa'i sku dus su dregs pa'i sde dpon pe har gyis deng sang 'jig rten gyi khams na rgyal ba'i bstan pa dri ma med pa ji 'dra zhig/ bstan pa de 'dzin gyi skyes bu lung rtogs yon tan gyi tshogs kyi mngon par mtho ba yang ji zhig snyam du 'dzam bu gling kun tu myul te btsal pas rgyal ba'i bstan pa rnam par dag pa yang rje bla ma'i bstan pa las gzhan med par mthong zhing/ bstan 'dzin gyi skyes bu'i tshogs kyi dbus na yang paṅ chen thams cad mkhyen pa chen po bsod nams grags pa'i dpal rnam dpyod mchog gi sde zhes bya ba nyid las lung tang rtogs pa'i yon tan gyi tshogs kyi mngon par mtho ba gzhan ma rnyed cing paṅ chen nyid sa la gnas pa'i sems dpa' chen po rtogs pa mthon por byon pa zhig yin par shes nas paṅ chen gyi drung du song ste zhus pa/ ngas 'dzam bu'i gling kun tu myul yang bstan pa rnam par dag pa bsre bsalad ma zhugs pa'ng rje bla ma'i bstan pa las gzhan du mi 'dugs cing bstan 'dzin gyi skyes bu khyed las rtogs pa mtho ba gzhan ma rnyed pas sems dpa' chen po khyed kyis rje bla ma'i bstan pa bstan 'dzin dang bcas pa la gnod cing 'tshe ba mtha' dag tshar gcad pa dang/ de nyid 'dzin skyong spel ba'i phyir du zhi rgyas dbang drag gi thabs mkhas kyi mdzad pa bstan du gsol/ bdag gis de'i grogs ci nus so bgyi'o/ zhes khas blangs shing/ (Ma ti 1983: 178–179).*

Myself, I am already entrusted by the Great Master Padmasambhava to the protection of his doctrine. I promised [to do so] and I am bound by oath [to this]. Because of that, I do not have the power to develop Tsong kha pa's doctrine in particular. Please contemplate this.³⁴

After that, the author adds that Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa

deliberately manifested himself in the bodily form of the powerful protector Shugs ldan holding an obstacle-removing-vajra in order to boost the force and increase the ferocity of his enlightened activities to defend and protect Tsong kha pa's teachings and practitioners, as well as to eliminate all maleficent beings with his wrathful activity, immediately crush to dust all enemies of the doctrine, and subdue the hordes of demons.³⁵

Stag phu Ma ti does not explicitly link Shugs ldan with Grags pa rgyal mtshan, but he quotes the Regent Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705)'s *Vai dū rya Ser po*, where it is written:

The 5th Dga' ldan throne holder was Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa. His incarnation was Bsod nams ye shes dbang po, born in Stod lung. His incarnation in turn was Ngag dbang bsod nams dge legs. After him came Nang so gro lhug [Grags pa rgyal mtshan].³⁶ At first, it had been hoped he would become the incarnation of the All-knowing Yon bstan rgya mtsho. However, by becoming later the incarnation of Ngag dbang dge legs, his rebirth was unfavorable.³⁷

³⁴ *nga ni sngon slob dpon chen po mtsho skyes rdo rje'i spyen sngar de nyid kyi bstan pa bsrung zhing skyong bar sgos/ gnyer du gtad/ khas blang/ dam bca' ba yin pas de'i dbang gis dngos su rje bla ma'i bstan pa la ches cher byed nus pa min 'dug pas khyed kyis don de thugs la dgongs shig/ (Ma ti 1983: 179).*

³⁵ *bsam bzhin du rje rgyal ba gnyis pa'i bstan pa bstan 'dzin dang bcas pa bsrung zhing skyong ba dang/ gnod byed ma rungs pa mtha' dag drag po'i las kyis tshar bcad pa'i phyir 'phrin las kyi shugs shin tu myur zhing/ drag shul shin tu che ba/ bstan dgra mtha' dag skad cig nyid la thal bar rlog pa/ bdud kyi sde 'joms pa la thogs pa med pa'i rdo rje'i shugs 'chang ba bstan bsrung chen po rgyal chen rdo rje shugs ldan rtсал gyi sku'i rnam par bstan to/ (Ma ti 1983: 179–180).*

³⁶ *nang so gro lhug* seems to be a disparaging nickname given to Grags pa rgyal mtshan, since *gro lhug* mean “potbellied.” This nickname is found in the 5th Dalai Lama's autobiography, where he says: “Nang so dro lhug of Gad kha sa, who was later proclaimed as the reincarnation of *sprul sku* Bsod nams dge legs dpal bzang by Rab 'byams pa Lcag sdig, arrived that day” (*gad kha sa'i nang so dro lhug kyang slar rab 'byams pa lcags sdig sogs kyis sprul pa'i sku bsod nams dge legs dpal bzang gi sku skyer dril bsgrags pa ltar de nyin byon byung*, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 43).

³⁷ *paṅ chen bsod nams grags pa'i sprul sku bsod nams ye shes dbang po/ de'i sprul sku ngag dbang bsod nams dge legs/ de'i sprul sku thog mar thams cad mkhyen pa yon tan rgya mtsho'i sprul sku yong du re yang rjes su ngag dbang bsod nams dge legs kyi sprul sku byas pas mthar skye gnas kyang mi bzang bar gyur to/ (Ma ti 1983: 180).* The quote is found in Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 1989: 82.

Stag phu Ma ti rejects the statement that Grags pa rgyal mtshan's rebirth was unfavorable. His main argument is that Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa was an enlightened being, coming from a lineage of enlightened beings. He then gives a biography of Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa, as well as a list of the wondrous signs that appeared during his funeral.³⁸

Stag phu Ma ti then writes:

Because the 5th Dalai Lama did not approve of sectarianism, but was holding, protecting, and spreading all the new and old tenet systems, this Great Protector [Shugs Idan], in consequence of his previous aspiration and in order to increase the respect for Tsong kha pa's tradition, displayed various frightening manifestations toward the 5th Dalai Lama. When these visions appeared, [the Dalai Lama] applied different methods [to make them disappear], but it was not very effective. Then, he ordered Sa skya Rin po che to make them cease. Monks from Sa skya threw a *gtor ma*, but it was thrown back, and the harm increased. Therefore, they composed a new ritual for *gtor ma* offering and performed it. There is a lot of similar stories, but I will not develop more than that. The 5th Dalai Lama offered [Shugs Idan] a dwelling place in the region of Dol, and [Shugs Idan's] palace is still there.³⁹

This text shows that the association between Shugs Idan and the Upper Chamber lineage is not an invention by Pha bong kha Bde chen snying po, but was made much earlier, around the mid-18th century. This text is clearly an attempt to give a more positive picture of Grags pa rgyal mtshan than the one given by the 5th Dalai Lama. According to this text, Grags pa rgyal mtshan did not become a malevolent spirit after his death: the spirit who disturbed the 5th Dalai Lama, that is Shugs Idan, was as a deliberate emanation of Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa.

There were other attempts to give a better picture of Grags pa rgyal mtshan during the first half of the 18th century. One of these alternative narratives is found in the *Re'u mig* ("Chronological

³⁸ Ma ti 1983: 180–193.

³⁹ *kun gzigs lnga pa chen pos/ grub mtha' gсар rnying thams cad la phyogs ris ma gnang bar 'dzin skyong spel bar mdzad pas/ chos skyong chen po 'dis sngon gyi thugs smon gyi dbang gis 'jan mgon bla ma'i ring lugs la gces spras cher mdzad phyir/ rgyal dbang mchog la shin tu 'jigs su rung ba'i rnam 'gyur sna tshogs ston pa'i gzigs snang byung ba na/ rje nyid nas thabs sna tshogs gnang yang phan pa cher ma byung tshel/ sa skya rin po cher 'di'i zlog thabs byed dgos kyi bka' phebs pas/ sa skya pa rnam kyis gtor rgyag thongs pa'i gtor ma tshur log mthong ba dang/ gnod pa cher byung bas bstan bsrung chen po 'di la gtor chog gсар du rtsom te mchod pa byed pa sogs lo rgyus mang du gsung ba yod kyang/ 'di tsam las ma spros/ 'di'i bzhuks gnas skyabs mgon lnga pa chen pos dol gyi sa'i cha phul bas de phyogs su 'di'i pho brang yod cing/ (Ma ti 1983: 193–194).*

tables”) of Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor (1704–1788). For the year 1660, he wrote:

Saying that the Tibetan demon is Grags pa rgyal mtshan of the Upper Chamber is just an expression of attachment and aversion. Actually, I wonder if it is not [the Regent] Bsod nams chos 'phel,⁴⁰ who, after passing away this year, increased his commitment to the Dge lugs tradition, clung to the protection of the Dharma, and then came to be known as a guardian of the Dge lugs tradition.⁴¹

A few lines earlier, Sum pa mkhan po mentions the birth of the “peaceful Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722), who is known to be the reincarnation of Grags pa rgyal mtshan.”⁴²

We find a similar idea in a supplement to the biography of Grags pa rgyal mtshan by Dza ya paṅḍi ta Blo bzang 'phrin las (1642–1708/15), titled “The Scriptural Transmission of Wondrous Dream Omens” (*Mnal ltaṅ ngo mtshar ba rnams kyi lung thob pa*). Dza ya paṅḍi ta writes that when Grags pa rgyal mtshan was very young, he had a vision of Sa skya Paṅḍi ta, Tsong kha pa, and the Paṅ chen bla ma Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, who told him:

In the future, in an Eastern city,
Disciples of Mañjuśrī's Pure Land will increase.
At that time, in the peripheral dark lands,
You should fully light the lamp of Dharma!
In summary, with lovely and compassionate aspiration,
Perfectly accomplish other's purpose to greatly benefit beings.⁴³

Some notes were added in 1924 by a Mongolian monk, 'Jam dbyangs dgyes pa'i bshes gnyen, who explains that this means Grags pa rgyal mtshan will be reborn in China, and then in Mongolia.⁴⁴ Blo bzang rta

⁴⁰ Also known as Bsod nams rab brtan (1595–1658).

⁴¹ *bod de'i rgyal po ni gzim khang gong ma sprul sku grags rgyan zer ba ni chag[s] sdang gi gtam kho nar zad do/ des na bsod nams chos 'phel ni lo 'dir 'das nas khong dge lugs la thugs zhen ches pas chos bsrung ba'i tshul bzungs nas dge lugs pa skyong zhes grags pa bden nam snyam mol* (Sum pa mkhan po 1959: 70–71).

⁴² *sprul sku grags rgyan skye bar grags pa'i khang zhi bde skyid rgyal po* (Sum pa mkhan po 1959: 70).

⁴³ *'di nas ma 'ongs shar gyi grong kyer du/ 'jam dpal zhing gi gdul bya'i tshogs rnams spel/ de nas mtha' khob mun pa'i gling dag tu/ chos kyi sgron me yongs su sbar bar gyis/ mdor na byams dang snying rje'i lhaḡ bsam gyis/ 'gro phan rgya che'i gzhan don yang dag sgrubs/* (Dza ya paṅḍi ta 1983: 172).

⁴⁴ In the first sentence, it is added: “It is the sign that immediately after this life [he] will take birth in China” (*sku tsho brjes ma thag rgya nag tu skye ba bzhes pa'i rtags dang*). In the third sentence, it is added: “It is the sign that in the future, [he] will take a rebirth again in the northern country of Mongolia” (*de nas ma 'ongs pa na*

mgrin (1867–1937), in his introduction to the *Shugs ldan be'u 'bum*, considers this passage to mean that Graggs pa rgyal mtshan was reborn as the Manchu emperor.⁴⁵ Dza ya pañdi ta does not explicitly say this, but he could have inspired Sum pa mkhan po's mention that Graggs pa rgyal mtshan was reborn as the Qing emperor in his *Re'u mig*. Sum pa mkhan po's intention was certainly to refute the 5th Dalai Lama's narrative and to rehabilitate Graggs pa rgyal mtshan, giving him a posthumous fate in the person of the Emperor Kangxi. As we will see later, this mention is of great significance for the political context in which Sum pa mkhan po was writing his work.

Stag phu Ma ti's text on Shugs ldan's origin also seeks to rehabilitate Graggs pa rgyal mtshan. Stag phu Ma ti does not present Shugs ldan as the spirit of Graggs pa rgyal mtshan, but as an emanation of his previous incarnation, Pañ chen Bsod nams grags pa, one of the most famous scholars of the Dge lugs tradition. This undermines the idea that Shugs ldan is an evil spirit and does not contradict Sum pa mkhan po's argument that Graggs pa rgyal mtshan was reborn as the Emperor Kangxi. Moreover, the link between Shugs ldan and Dol rgyal assimilated Shugs ldan with a protector that was already propitiated inside the Dge lugs tradition during the first half of the 18th century.⁴⁶ This provided Shugs ldan a set of already existing rituals.

We still have to understand why, about one century after the death of Graggs pa rgyal mtshan, there was a need to produce narratives rehabilitating him and giving him a propitious posthumous fate. For this, we need to go back to the historical contexts when these conflicting narratives were written, that is the time of the rule of the 5th Dalai Lama and the time of the establishment of the Manchu protectorate.

byang phyogs sog po'i yul du yang skye ba gcig bzhes pa'i rtags yin gsungs, see Dza ya pañdi ta 1983: 172).

⁴⁵ After quoting what the Pañ chen bla ma Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan told Graggs pa rgyal mtshan, Blo bzang rta mgrin adds: "The meaning which is conveyed by many prophecies such as this one is that this master [Graggs pa rgyal mtshan] will immediately be reborn after this life as the king of China" (*ces sogs lung bstan mang du stsal ba'i don ni rje rang nyid kyis sku tshe rjes ma thag tu rgya nag gi rgyal por skye*, see Blo bzang rta mgrin 1983: 631–632).

⁴⁶ According to Dreyfus, Dol rgyal was first propitiated by the Sa skya tradition, and then the Dge lugs tradition. He writes that the Dga' ldan khri pa Ngag dbang mchog ldan (1677–1751) put an end to the practice of Dol rgyal by expelling him from Dga' ldan Monastery (Dreyfus 1998: 242–243).

3. *The Dalai Lama Institution and the Dge lugs Clergy*

The 5th Dalai Lama took power over Tibet thanks to his alliance with the Khoshut prince Gushri Khan (1582–1655) who defeated the Gtsang ruler Kar ma bstan skyong (1606–1642).⁴⁷ This enabled the Dge lugs clergy to gain control over Tibet and the 5th Dalai Lama to establish a centralized state. Although this state partly relied on the Dge lugs clergy, it also relied on other Tibetan Buddhist traditions, as well as on the lay aristocracy. Therefore, the Dge lugs clergy did not have complete control over the Tibetan state. Moreover, the 5th Dalai Lama placed himself at the head of this state, and hence most of the power was vested in his hands.

Due to this new function as the head of the centralized Tibetan state, the Dalai Lama institution became similar to a sacral kingship, but with one significant difference, namely, that the mode of succession was not hereditary, but through incarnation. Both the Dalai Lama institution and sacral kingship are based on what Dario Sabbatucci calls a “mythico-ritual association,” where royal myth empowers the king to act on every level of reality.⁴⁸

In order to become this kind of sacred ruler, the 5th Dalai Lama legitimized his institution with the myth of Avalokiteśvara. Ishihama Yumiko explains that the dissemination of the idea that the Dalai Lamas were emanations of Avalokiteśvara came in three steps.⁴⁹ The first one was through the 5th Dalai Lama’s composition of the biographies of the 3rd and 4th Dalai Lamas, where he presents them as emanations of Avalokiteśvara. The second step was the construction of the Potala Palace. The third and last step of this legitimation process was the dissemination of the idea that the Dalai Lama was an emanation of Avalokiteśvara through tantric initiations as well as mural paintings.

Since at least the 13th century, Avalokiteśvara has been considered by the Tibetans as their genitor, and the two most important

⁴⁷ On these events, see Richardson 1976, Shakabpa 1984: 100–124, Smith 1996: 105–117, and Karmay 2009.

⁴⁸ Sabbatucci 1978: 264–266. According to Sabbatucci, the myth is a symbolic institution whose cultural function is to determine what is immutable and not subject to human intervention. The rite is also a symbolic institution whose function is to act on the aspect of reality that a society perceives as mutable, subject to human intervention. There is a functional separation between the myth and the rite since the rite operates when the myth is associated with a defective order. The rite gives the opportunity to act as a historical subject on the world, even though this mythico-ritual association has the apparent effect to deny any human historic action (Sabbatucci 1978: 236–247).

⁴⁹ Ishihama 1993 & 2015.

emperors, or *chos rgyal*⁵⁰ of the Tibetan Empire, Srong btsan sgam po and Khri srong lde btsan, were also considered an emanation of Avalokiteśvara.⁵¹ The myth of the Dalai Lamas as emanations of Avalokiteśvara united the *chos rgyal* and the Dalai Lama in the same lineage and conferred on the Dalai Lamas the legitimacy of being political rulers of Tibet. This myth also helped to confer antiquity to the Dalai Lama's lineage by including different Buddhist masters who were considered *a posteriori* emanations of Avalokiteśvara.⁵² The Dalai Lama's lineage was recent at the time of the 5th Dalai Lama and certainly did not enjoy the same prestige as it does today. Extending the Dalai Lama's lineage back in Tibetan history to the time of the early *chos rgyal* increased its fame and conferred it a sacred dimension.

The Potala Palace, to which the 5th Dalai Lama moved his residence, the Dga' ldan pho brang, from 'Bras spungs Monastery, was built on the Dmar po ri, where the former palace of the first *chos rgyal* Srong btsan sgam po (617–649) was thought to have been built. Finally, tantric initiations helped the Tibetan people associate the Dalai Lama with Avalokiteśvara and to accept him as their ruler.⁵³

To strengthen the link with the ancient empire of the *chos rgyal*, the 5th Dalai Lama introduced various state rituals that were performed at Rnam rgyal Monastery, the Dalai Lamas' personal monastery.⁵⁴ One of these rituals was the 100,000 offerings to Padmasambhava (*Guru rin po che 'bum tshogs*).⁵⁵

The incorporation of the Gnas chung Oracle into the government was also a means to strengthen the power of the 5th Dalai Lama at the head of the centralized Tibetan state.⁵⁶ The Gnas chung Oracle (*sku rten*) is possessed by the deity Pe har rgyal po, who enters his body in order to advise the Dalai Lama and his government. Pe har is

⁵⁰ The Tibetan term for emperor is "*btsan po*." The term "*chos rgyal*" means "Dharma king," or "religious king," and refers specifically to the three *btsan po* who actively supported the diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet. They are: Srong btsan sgam po (617–649), Khri srong lde btsan (742–797), and Ral pa can (802–836).

⁵¹ This appears in the *Mañi bka' 'bum*, which has been used by the 5th Dalai Lama. See Kapstein 1992.

⁵² It actually also includes the mythical ruler Gnya' khri btsan po, considered as the first king of Tibet, as well as Atiśa's disciple 'Bron ston (1008–1064) (Ishihama 1993: 46).

⁵³ See Ishihama 1993 & 2015.

⁵⁴ Rnam rgyal Monastery was founded by the 3rd Dalai Lama (1543–1588), in order to perform rituals for the protection of Altan Khan (1507–1582), and was moved to the Potala Palace by the 5th Dalai Lama (Dorjee 1989: 33).

⁵⁵ The 14th Dalai Lama decided to restore this ritual in 1973, just before the publication of the "Yellow book" and the beginning of the Shugs Idan controversy. See Dreyfus 1998: 260.

⁵⁶ Dreyfus 1998: 260–261.

believed to have been one of the first deities tamed by Padmasambhava, who made him the protector of Bsam yas Monastery at the time of the *chos rgyal* Khri srong lde btsan (742–797).⁵⁷ This event not only marked an important step in the diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet but also, or maybe above all, marked the establishment of an imperial rule legitimized through Buddhism. Indeed, the conversion of Pe har to the chief of the protector deities represented dominion over the regional and clan factions that the Tibetan Empire wanted to subdue.

The same logic was at work in the 5th Dalai Lama's desire to impose his rule on the whole country. The 5th Dalai Lama's political model necessitated that he unite all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions around him. However, the unity of these traditions was not an end in itself, but a means for the establishment of a particular political regime. Therefore, via his close association with the Gnas chung Oracle, the Dalai Lama employed Padmasambhava and Pe har as symbols not just of religious tolerance, but also, or perhaps mainly, as political symbols legitimizing the new regime he established.

This political regime was characterized by the principle of *chos srid zung 'brel*, often translated as “union of politics and religion.” David Seyfort Ruegg avers that with *chos srid zung 'brel*, the Dalai Lama combined the secular and religious aspects of the *mchod yon* relationship.⁵⁸ However, I argue that *chos srid zung 'brel* introduced an important shift, I would say a rupture, in the political system of the patron-priest relationship, since the 5th Dalai Lama considered the *mchod yon* couple to be formed by the Regent and Gushri Khan.⁵⁹ Therefore, in this context, we can assume that the 5th Dalai Lama considered his institution to be above the *mchod yon* relationship.⁶⁰

The tensions between the 5th Dalai Lama and the Dge lugs clergy that both Tsyrempilov and Dreyfus mention could have been the result of the 5th Dalai Lama's monopolization of power and his use of the figure of Avalokiteśvara to increase his own charisma, as well as

⁵⁷ Shen-Yu 2010. On Pe har, also see Bell 2013.

⁵⁸ Ruegg 1991: 450.

⁵⁹ See Ishihama 1993: 39–43 and Karmay 2009: 511.

⁶⁰ Ishihama Yumiko concludes: “[F]rom 1642 onwards the political power of the Dalai Lama as it existed on a theoretical level gradually increased, reaching its culmination during the time of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, and that in the years between 1642 and 1653 the Dalai Lama took various actions presenting himself to the populace as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara. Since Avalokiteśvara was believed already before the establishment of the Dge lugs pa school to be the bodhisattva charged with converting Tibet, it is beyond doubt that the faith engendered in the minds of both the nobility and the general populace as a result of the Dalai Lama's actions served to gradually enhance the power of the Dalai Lama and raise him to a position on a different level from that of the regent and Gushri Khan and his descendants” (Ishihama 1993: 54).

the use of Rnying ma elements to channel the prestige of the imperial time. In this context, Stag phu Ma ti's remark that Shugs Idan was disturbing the 5th Dalai Lama because he did not approve of sectarianism can be understood not as a mere stand against religious tolerance, but as an opposition to the very structure of the 5th Dalai Lama's political regime and the sacred status this regime conferred to the Dalai Lama.

It is impossible to prove that this political opposition was the cause of the rivalry between the 5th Dalai Lama and Grags pa rgyal mtshan. However, this would explain why the 5th Dalai Lama was so keen to destroy the Upper Chamber, remove its lineage from Tibetan history, and promote such a negative image of Grags pa rgyal mtshan.

The opposition to the 5th Dalai Lama's rule is more identifiable after his death. Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho concealed the 5th Dalai Lama's death until the 6th Dalai Lama was old enough to be enthroned. However, trouble arose in Tibet as the Manchus and the Dzungars were upset that the Regent concealed the 5th Dalai Lama's death. The Dzungars took the inappropriate behavior of the 6th Dalai Lama as a pretext to fight for control of Tibet and killed the Regent in 1705, while the 6th Dalai Lama died in custody *en route* to China in 1706. But the Dzungars were defeated in 1720, and the Manchus were able to bring the 7th Dalai Lama, who was then under their control, back to Lhasa and establish a *mchod yon* relationship. This did not last, as the 7th Dalai Lama was sent back to China in 1728, when Tibet was under the rule of Pho lha nas Bsod noms stobs rgyas (1689–1747), who did not want any Manchu interference in his rule. The 7th Dalai Lama was allowed to come back in 1732, but his authority was restricted to religious matters. Finally, Pho lha nas was murdered in 1747, as was his son Gyur med rnam rgyal in 1750.⁶¹ This cleared the way for a Dge lugs rule based on a *mchod yon* alliance with the Qing emperor that lasted until the beginning of the 20th century.

This new regime was certainly closer to what the Dge lugs clergy wanted to establish after Gushri Khan's victory over the Gtsang ruler. Indeed, some important lamas of the Dge lugs tradition took part in this struggle against Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho.⁶² But the hope

⁶¹ On these events, see Shakabpa 1984: 125–152 and Tsyrempilov 2003: 56–57.

⁶² Dreyfus writes: "As long as the Fifth was alive, the Dge lugs hierarchy had to endure his rule, but his death changed the situation. His prime minister Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho at first tried to conceal his death. When this proved impossible, he attempted to continue the Fifth's tradition by appointing his candidate, Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho, as the Sixth Dalai-Lama. But with the latter's failure to behave as a Dalai-Lama, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho lost the possibility to continue the task started by the Fifth. A few years later (1705) he was killed after being defeated by a complex coalition of Dge lugs hierarchs led by 'Jam dbyangs

for a powerful Tibetan centralized state, which persisted in Tibet since the collapse of the empire in the 9th century, did not disappear.⁶³ It certainly kept haunting the mind of some Tibetans during the Manchu protectorate, and each Dalai Lama has certainly been seen by some Tibetans as the potential leader of an independent and centralized Tibetan state.

In this context, Grags pa rgyal mtshan became the symbol of the opposition to the 5th Dalai Lama's regime, as well as the symbol of the *mchod yon* alliance with the Qing dynasty, as it was illustrated by Sum pa mkhan po's idea that he took rebirth in the person of the Emperor Kangxi.⁶⁴ We cannot affirm that Grags pa rgyal mtshan was the figurehead of the opposition to the 5th Dalai Lama's regime when he was alive, but it is quite obvious that he was seen as such around the mid-18th century.

The merging of Grags pa rgyal mtshan with the Dol rgyal into the figure of Shugs ldan allowed the already-existing propitiation practice of Dol rgyal to be included into the mythico-ritual system elaborated around Shugs ldan. This was a means to worship Shugs ldan as a divinized form of Grags pa rgyal mtshan and as the symbol of the opposition to the 5th Dalai Lama's regime. This was also a means to worship Shugs ldan as the symbol of the political system based on the *mchod yon* alliance with the Qing, which was seen as the best one for the interests of the Dge lugs tradition.

bzhad pa, the Dzungar Mongols and Lha bzang Khan backed by the Manchu emperor" (Dreyfus 1998: 235). On 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1648–1721), see also Tsyrempilov 2003: 57–58.

⁶³ About the persistence of the memory of the Tibetan Empire, see Dreyfus 2003.

⁶⁴ Sum pa mkhan po was invited twice to Beijing by the Manchu Emperor Qianlong, where he met the 3rd Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–1786). Dreyfus states that Sum pa mkhan po was a Dge lugs sectarian (Dreyfus 1998: 259). Sum pa mkhan po was recognized as the reincarnation of Sum pa bla ma by 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1648–1721) and was the student of the 2nd Lcang skya bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan (1642–1714). Later, he became the teacher of the 3rd Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737–1802). As Matthew Kapstein has shown, the 3rd Thu'u bkwan did not agree with his master Sum pa mkhan po's sectarianism against the Rnying ma tradition. However, the 3rd Lcang skya was close to the Manchu emperor (Kapstein 1989: 234–237). This would prove that preference for the political regime based on the *mchod yon* relationship did not necessarily imply a sectarian approach. Maria Soloshcheva identifies Sum pa mkhan po, along with the 2nd Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje (1642–1714) and the 2nd Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos skyi nyi ma (1680–1736) as Dge lugs "purists" (Soloshcheva 2014: 8). We can add Stag phu Ma ti to this group, as Stag phu Ma ti was the student of 'Jam dbyang bde pa'i rdo rje (1682–1741), who himself had for teacher 'Jam dbyang bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1648–1721). Moreover, Stag phu Ma ti was the teacher of Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po (1728–1791), who was recognized as the reincarnation of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje.

4. Conclusion

I have shown that the link between Shugs Idan and Grags pa rgyal mtshan appears in a text written in the mid-18th century, around the same time when Sum pa mkhan po expressed the idea that Grags pa rgyal mtshan was reborn as the Qing Emperor Kangxi. Both these narratives appeared precisely when a *mchod yon* relationship was established with the Qing dynasty.

Through these narratives, Grags pa rgyal mtshan was rehabilitated as a genuine incarnate lama and the *mchod yon* alliance with the Qing dynasty legitimized by the idea that Grags pa rgyal mtshan was reborn as the Qing Emperor Kangxi.

In this context, the narrative of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's becoming Shugs Idan helped to show that the political regime established by the 5th Dalai Lama conflicted with the Dge lugs tradition's interests, since the 5th Dalai Lama was not exclusively relying on the Dge lugs tradition in both his religious practice and his political structure.

Therefore, the conflict among the Dge lugs tradition can be explained as an opposition between the partisans of two different political regimes: one built on the model of the sacral kingship of the imperial *chos rgyal*, in order to reunify Tibetans of all religious traditions under a centralized state, the other built on the model of the *mchod yon* relationship, in order to unify a Dge lugs tradition that had transcended Tibetan borders, so that Tibet was included within the most powerful Asian empire of that time.

The alternative narratives of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's posthumous fate have been written not only for the purpose of rehabilitating the figure of Grags pa rgyal mtshan, but also to promote this figure, together with Shugs Idan, as a symbol of the political regime based on the *mchod yon* alliance with the Qing emperor that has been established when these alternative narratives were written.

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