

# **Trode Khangsar**

## ***Dorje Shugden's Ornament in Lhasa's Mandala***

By Trinley Kalsang

Just as the Buddhist monuments and structures in the Indian subcontinent are undeniable testaments to Buddhism's past establishment in these regions, similarly Trode Khangsar (*spro bde khang gsar*) in the heart of Lhasa illustrates how the protector deity Dorje Shugden was officially established in Tibet. In the 17th century Trode Khangsar was designated as a "protector house" (*btsan khang*) for the deity Dorje Shugden by the Fifth Dalai Lama. By the end of the 17th century its role was expanded as it was entrusted to the Gelug monastery Riwo Choling (*ri bo chos gling*) by the Fifth Dalai Lama's regent<sup>1</sup> (*sde sris*) Sangye Gyatso. As a result relations between Dorje Shugden and the Gelug sect, the Tibetan government, Ganden Podrang (*dga' ldan pho brang*), were firmly established early in the existence of this deity.

### **Lhasa Real Estate: Location, Location, Location**

Trode Khangsar is part of the dwindling a number of historical buildings amongst a sea of encroaching development in the Lhasa valley. Not only is the city expanding on a course to soon exceed the valley itself, but historical buildings in its epicenter, critical elements of Central Asia's holy city, are being torn down and replaced with modern urban housing, commercial buildings and other structures.

The Tibet Heritage Fund has been chronicling historical buildings in Lhasa since the 1990's as they disappear like icicles in the sun. They provide this startling statistic<sup>2</sup>: "Out of the 600 buildings recorded by Peter Aufschnaiter in the city's central area in 1948, an average of 35 buildings per year have been torn down since 1993, except in 1999 and 2000." In other words by 2011 virtually all of the historical buildings will be gone except those few that enjoy a protected status.

The lot of Trode Khangsar itself exemplifies this trend. A modern building obscures the front western half of the building. Another small historical protector house on its lot dedicated to Dorje Shugden's attendant deity Khache Marpo was removed in the 1990's to make room for surrounding development. The Dagpo Drumpa mansion, a historical neighbor building, was demolished and replaced with other structures in the late 1990's. The basement of Trode Khangsar is now used as a dwelling (TOL, 196-198).

### **Lhasa's Inner Sanctum**

Like many other historic religious structures, Trode Khangsar is just outside the perimeter of the Barkor (*bar skor*). The Barkor is the innermost circumambulation or pilgrimage route as it encircles the Tsuklhakhang temple in the center of historical Lhasa. This is Lhasa's holiest temple, which hosts the Jowo Shakyamuni Buddha statue<sup>3</sup>. The Tsuklhakhang is the center of the Lhasa's mandala like design, which the city has followed since the seventh century when the king Songtsen Gampo extended the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet.

This mandala design included various shrines in groups of four just outside the perimeter of the Barkor in a sparse, peripheral arrangement. In particular there were Rigsum Lhakhang<sup>4</sup> of four cardinal directions (*phyogs bzhi'i rigs gsum mgon po lha khang*), another set of Rigsum Lhakhang for the four intermediate directions, and four protector houses (*btsan khang*). Although Trode Khangsar is not included in this group of four, it

exists in the same zone, being just outside the perimeter of the Barkor. As for the exact location of Trode Khangsar, it is just south of the Barkor, approximately 200 meters south of the Tsuklhakhang. From a Tibetan pilgrimage (GCJ, 33) guide:

Trode Khangsar is also orally pronounced "Pute Khangsar". It is also referred in shortened form as Trokhang. On the east side of Dagpo Drumpa [mansion] in the Pal Ling [neighborhood] you will encounter this tsen khang [protector house].

Encompassing all of historic Lhasa is the Lingkor (*gling skor*), the outermost circumambulation route. It encircles the Barkor on the south east side and extends far to the northwest to encompass the majestic Potala palace. The Lingkor passes by an access way on the south east corner of its loop that leads north to Trode Khangsar, which is accessible at about 100 meters. Pilgrims visiting Lhasa for the last 300 years have been circumambulating Trode Khangsar whether they were aware of its existence and significance or not.

### **The Role of a *Tsen Khang* or Protector House**

The Trode Khangsar temple is classified as a *tsen khang*. A *tsen* is a type of fierce, warrior-like spirit. Most of these *tsen* are regional deities (*yul lha*) not even stable and reliable enough to be recognized as local protector deities. Yet this term only provides an etymological origin for term *tsen khang*, which in context should be considered a "protector house", as the *tsen khang*-s in Lhasa are integrated with monastic institutions and serve multiple roles. Moreover the *tsen khang*-s in Lhasa are related to protectors that are not simply part of the *tsen* class.<sup>5</sup>

*Temples of Lhasa* gives an overview of the nature and role of the *tsen khang*-s in Lhasa (TOL, 173): "Several Lhasa *tsen khang*-s became monastic institutions, usually branches of a larger community, and even participated in affairs of state. The oracle would then generally be a monk, and caretaker monks would service the shrine... They were all branches of larger Gelug communities in the Ganden Po-trang period, but their earlier history is obscure." Although most of these *tsen khang*-s predate the establishment of the Gelug sect, this later transition to institutionalization and entrustment to the Gelug monasteries was culminated at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama.<sup>6</sup>

Of the original group of four *tsen khang*-s mentioned earlier, each one has its own history and houses a particular protector.

1. **Rabsel** - The Rabsel *tsen khang* is for Lutsen Thutob Wangchug who is the protector of the Jowo Shakyamuni statue in the *Tsuklhakhang*. This naga spirit protected the Jowo Shakyamuni statue originally in India. Later, when it was transferred to China and finally to Tibet this protector followed the statue. Rabsel *tsen khang* was originally managed by the Nyingma sect, but it was transferred to Sera Me monastery by the Fifth Dalai Lama (GCJ, 32).
2. **Karmashag** - Sera Me was also entrusted by the Fifth Dalai Lama (GCJ, 32) to manage Karmashag *tsen khang* although it was originally associated with the Karmapa (TOL, 183).

3. **Darpoling** - Darpoling is associated with the Lhasa valley protector Chingkarwa and during the Fifth Dalai Lama's reign it was entrusted to the Dalai Lama's personal monastery Namgyal (TOL, 175).
4. **Tengyeling** - Finally, Tengyeling, a regency seat owned by Demo Rinpoche, contained a *tsen khang* for the protector Tsiu Marpo, a protector associated with Samye and bound by Padmasambhava (GDT, 115).

Although Trode Khangsar is not part of these original four, its purposes and relation to the Gelug institution, Riwo Choling (*ri bo chos gling*) in its particular case, does not differ. However, its relatively later origin gives a better understanding of its inception. One unresolved matter is regarding the early history of Trode Khangsar's related *tsen khang* on the same plot of land. One possibility is that the previously existent *tsen khang* on this lot, for the *tsen* spirit Khache Marpo, was related to Tsiu Marpo. Khache Marpo is one of the "seven brothers" (*'bar ba spun bdun*) of Tsiu Marpo's retinue (TSH, 55), and also assumed the role as Dorje Shugden's attendant (*bka' sdod*) when Dorje Shugden came into existence in the 17th century.

### **The Fifth Dalai Lama Gains Power over Tibet**

Just as historical buildings in Lhasa are becoming sparser by modern development, so are accounts of Trode Khangsar's origin. A short chronology and a background of the key figures here will clarify the events leading up the founding of Trode Khangsar. The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682), was the first Dalai Lama to hold temporal power in Tibet. Earlier in his life the influence of the short lived empire in the neighboring region of Tsang (*gtsang*) exerted its control over central Tibet (*dbus*) and was at odds with the affairs of the Gelug sect in both regions (AOK, 32-39).

The Fourth Dalai Lama, Yonten Gyatso, was Mongolian and his incarnations came to be revered by the Mongolians. Sonam Rabten was the Fifth Dalai Lama's associate<sup>7</sup> since his recognition at childhood (FDL, 256). He sought the help of the Qoshot Mongols to intervene in the situation in Tibet (HPP, 447). Eventually the Mongol leader Gushri Khan came to Tibet and proceeded to overthrow the king of Tsang, Karma Tenkyong Wangpo (*kar ma bstan skyong dbang po*), in 1642.

Effective power was granted from Gushri Khan, who retained the title of "King of Tibet", to the Fifth Dalai Lama through appointment of various governors<sup>8</sup> (*sde sri*) (HPP, 448). The Fifth Dalai Lama traveled to China to meet with the Qing Emperor in 1652 which sealed his recognition of sovereignty<sup>9</sup> (FDL, 263). Other military campaigns went eastward to Kham and seized control of Ngari, Western Tibetan from Ladakh's control (TGF, 13). As a result, the provinces of Central Tibet, Kham, Tsang and Amdo all came under the control of newly created Tibetan government called the Ganden Phodrang under the leadership of the Dalai Lama.

### **The Fifth Dalai Lama and his peer Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen**

In Drepung monastery<sup>10</sup> near Lhasa at this time there were two principal recognized reincarnation lineages: the upper and lower residences. Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen (1619 - 1656) was the recognized reincarnation of the upper residence (*gzim khang gong ma*) just

as the Fifth Dalai Lama was the recognition of the lower residence (*gzim khang 'og ma*) (ATT, 129). This was the Dalai Lama's original reincarnation title, while "Dalai" was an epithet given by the Mongolians. Both reincarnations were students of the great Gelug master Lobsang Chokyi Gyaltsen and took Vinaya ordination<sup>11</sup> him on the same year of 1638 (COT, 192).

As expected both masters were spiritually realized beings, but according to the worldly view it would appear there was a rivalry due to the various power struggles by the administration of the Fifth Dalai Lama. In 1634, before the arrival of Gushri Khan and overthrow of the Tsang kingdom it is clear, according to the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography, that there were no personal rivalries (SPF, 12): "From this time right through to the iron-serpent [year] (1641) the incarnate lama of the gZims-khang-gong, next to me in rank, continued to attend the smon lam [prayer] (f. 75a5)."

However Sonam Rabten saw this equal status as a threat to the Dalai Lama's prestige. An incident in the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography recounts how in 1639 Sonam Rabten objected to a lineage prayer listing Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen's previous incarnations, and this resulted in a disagreement with a senior monk (SPF, 12-13). As illustrated in the overthrow of the Tsang regime described above, Sonam Rabten was regarded as an assertive figure<sup>12</sup>. On the eve of assumption of power, he allegedly killed Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, the deposed Tsang king, himself (AOK, 39) after Gushri's forces were victorious.

Sonam Rabten's protege, Nangso Norbu<sup>13</sup> already had some previous entanglements with Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen's family called the Gad-kha-sa. According to the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography in 1638 he seized their land after some members of the family were killed by Mongols (SPF, 13). After the assumption of power by Fifth Dalai Lama and Sonam Rabten, there were more signs of rivalry against Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen. From the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography (SPF, 15): "until then [his] seating and so forth were accorded the respect due to a great lama, but since the water-horse [year] (1642) he had been downgraded to the third rank by the decision of the Regent [*de sris* Sonam Rabten] himself. (f137a1-3)."

On the year of Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen's demise, 1656, the Fifth Dalai Lama himself, according to his autobiography, set off to perform a ritual on behalf of Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen who had fallen ill, but his plan was called off by an order of Sonam Rabten (SPF, 15). Using this illness as a cover, Sonam Rabten and Nangso Norbu<sup>14</sup>, with the motivation to suppress Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen's rising fame, murdered him (SPF, 16). The Dalai Lama's autobiography notes Nangso Norbu took on the aspect of guilt for his murder (DCG, 104), which is the only authoritative source on culpability of this incident.

Normally after an incarnate lama dies his successor is sought out. After Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen's murder there was never another reincarnation of the upper residence sought or recognized. Instead, according to the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography, on the advice of the Nechung oracle, Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen's residence at Drepung was dismantled and his reliquaries were relocated by Sonam Rabten (SPF, 18).

### **A Spiritual View of This Incident: the Birth of Dorje Shugden**

This gruesome incident was merely a condition necessary to allow Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen to fulfill a pledge from several lifetimes earlier. According to the law of interdependent origination, a rule Buddha posits as definitive truth, Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen arose as the protector deity Dorje Shugden as a result of being killed<sup>15</sup>. Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen made a promise lifetimes earlier to the official state protector, Nechung (*gnas chung*), in the presence of Je Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug sect, to become a protector himself. The situation with Sonam Rabten, provided the catalyst or conditions (*rkyen*) for this to happen.

Although this story may sound peculiar to non-Tibetans<sup>16</sup>, nearly all protectors in Tibetan Buddhism have an origination story in which a set of grisly events leads to their transformation into a protector deity. This account is relatively mild by comparison to other protectors such as Pehar, Four Faced and Four armed Mahakala and Tsiu Marpo<sup>17</sup>. Not only that, Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen's life and murder has been historically accepted by many as true, not a myth<sup>18</sup>, with no official explanation why his reincarnation lineage was not sought out or continued after this.

### **Trode Khangsar is Offered to Dorje Shugden by the Fifth Dalai Lama**

As a result of the incarnate master Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen of being killed there were many ill omens and strange occurrences in Lhasa that year that even affected the Dalai Lama himself according to his autobiography (ESG, 119). At first the Fifth Dalai sought to subdue the effects by inviting masters to subdue Dorje Shugden through wrathful rituals. This was not ultimately successful.

As for the final events that led up to his reconciliation of the events regarding Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen and his recognition of Dorje Shugden as a protector, Kangyur Rinpoche gives the following account (TSH, 32-34):

The Fifth Dalai was on retreat in the Potala when the Potala began to shake. When the Potala began to shake Dorje Shugden had his right foot pressing on the top of the "mi drug" boulder mountain [smi drug rdza ri] and his left foot pressing on the top of Drepung Gepel mountain. His pressed down on the Potala with his trident... The Fifth Dalai Lama felt remorseful and confessed to Dorje Shugden. He founded Trode Khangsar in which he placed a statue of Dorje Shugden. He then wrote *Manjushri's Own Words* [a famous Lam-Rim text], and offered it to Panchen Rinpoche who was almost 100 years old. Panchen Rinpoche said, "I am a happy old monk, now by this the Gelug tradition will flourish" and he passed away soon after.

This account of how the Fifth Dalai Lama acquiesced to Dorje Shugden through a vision again may be difficult to accept as historical. As shown with the institutionalization of the various protectors, both secular and mystic affairs are difficult to separate from the accounts of the Fifth Dalai Lama's life<sup>19</sup>. The nature of his retreat at this time was on visionary rituals. In his autobiography it is well documented that he regularly consulted with the state oracle, Nechung, on the important matters regarding the state.

As for how the Fifth Dalai Lama initially designated Trode Khangsar to Dorje Shugden, this account gives a historical account. From Choepal's pilgrimage guide (GCJ, 33):

As for the *tsen khang*, the Fifth Dalai Lama offered it as an abode [gnas] to Dorje Shugden. Originally, because this place had a "picnic house" [spro khang] that belonged to the Fifth Dalai Lama, it came to be called Trode Khangsar. Initially this *tsen khang* had statues of Dorje Shugden and Setrap and was also used for invocations. Later Desi Sangye Gyatso, because he earlier lived at Riwo Choling monastery, entrusted ownership of the *tsen khang* to Riwo Choling. By this Riwo Choling was required to send 11 monks and an oracle to permanently stay in Trode Khangsar.

Thus the official establishment of Dorje Shugden begins with the Fifth Dalai Lama and is further culminated through Sangye Gyatso who ruled Tibet (as *sde srid*) before and after the Fifth Dalai Lama's demise. Although Desi Sangye Gyatso is very famous and well known, there is very little translated into English about his eventful life. A glimpse into his life and education is required to fully understand the implications of the entrustment of Trode Khangsar to Riwo Choling.

### **Riwo Choling Monastery: Sangye Gyatso's Sabbatical**

Sangye Gyatso (1653-1705) was remarkably ambitious. He was born in 1653, about ten years after the Dalai Lama assumed power in Tibet. Not only did he assume the role of governance (*sde srid*) at the young age of 26, in 1679, he was a prolific scholar that wrote definitive books on Tibetan medicine, astrology and history. His rule was ambitious as he completed the construction of the Potala, established the Chagpori medical school and other governmental reforms. He hid the Fifth Dalai Lama's death in 1682 for most of his reign to avoid interference from foreign powers such as the Qing Empire<sup>20</sup>.

Sangye Gyatso was a nephew to Trinley Gyatso (ESG, 112), the regent appointed by the Fifth Dalai Lama after Sonam Rabten. Sangye Gyatso first came to the Potala in 1660, when he was eight, and was personally looked after and mentored by the Dalai Lama himself (HPP, 453). In 1675 he was asked to become a regent, which he declined in favor of tending to a spiritual life (HPP, 455). In 1679, after the interim *desi* was no longer able to serve, he finally relented to accepting the *desi* position after the Fifth Dalai Lama demanded it based on the Lhamo oracle's advice, his relation to the former *desi* and predictions in various *termas*<sup>21</sup> (HPP, 455).

Riwo Choling is a remote, but relatively large Gelug monastery south of Lhasa in the Yarlung valley region. The origin of Riwo Choling monastery goes back to the 14th century when Je Tsonkhapa was traveling through the area with some other monks. This area contains two mountains and Je Tsongkhapa remarked since it was shaped like a sword in the future it would be a place amicable to learning<sup>22</sup>. The sword is the implement of the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Manjushri, and represents discriminating wisdom.

Yarlung valley contains many important holy sites such as Tradrug (*khra 'brug*), the first temple in Tibet created by the Dharma king Songtsen Gampo. The Yarlung valley and its temples have been very important spiritually and geopolitically throughout Tibetan history. The Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sangye Gyatso both integrated centers of the dynastic period into their ritual calendar to reconstruct themselves in the tradition of "rightful perpetrators of the Buddhist tradition in Tibet." (TF, 33). The Ganden Phodrang invested a lot into restoring Tradrug, such as furnishing a golden roof and sponsoring daily rituals such as butter lamp offerings similar to that done in Jokhang in Lhasa (TF, 34).

Due to the geographic proximity of Tradrug to Riwo Choling, monks from Riwo Choling primarily rendered service to Tradrug (TF, 31). Riwo Choling was known as one of the residences of Dorje Shugden (TF, 110), and Dorje Shugden was also known as the protector (*srung ma*) of Riwo Choling (TF, 312). The village below Riwo Choling is called Tsharu, which is 2 km south of Tradrug, the oldest temple in Tibet built by Songtsen Gampo. From Choepel's pilgrimage guide (GCJ, 48):

This monastery was initially founded by Je Tsongkhapa's disciple Khedrup Dondrup Palzang in the 15th century. At first it had one college with 8 monks but gradually grew to one hundred monks. As this is the monastery famed for where the Desi Sangye Gyatso entered the religious life, there is a three story fortress of his on the side. As Desi Sangye Gyatso looked after this monastery it came to be protected by the government. Monks of this monastery were permitted to study at the three great monasteries [Ganden, Sera, Drepung], Ngari Dagpo college, and traditional Tibetan medical schools such as Chagpori [lcags po ri]. You will encounter here a one story building that hosts a silver reliquary ornamented by gold which contains the skull [broken into 8 pieces that has 21 self-arisen Taras visible] of Marpa's son, Darma Dode, placed by the Fifth Dalai Lama at this monastery. You will also find a three story Maitreya statue and a monk assembly hall that has 30 pillars [which indicates the size is large].

Tragically Sangye Gyatso's life was cut short after the resumption of power by Qoshot Mongolians by Lhazang Khan, a descendent of Gushri Khan. There were controversies about him hiding the Fifth Dalai Lama's death from the Qing emperor, Kangxi, and finally the situation with the Sixth Dalai he recognized not meeting the Mongolians' criteria. However, many of his and Fifth Dalai Lama's reforms left their mark on Tibet and its monastic and various institutions for centuries to come.

### **Trode Khangsar: the Protector House Itself**

The Trode Khansar *tsen khang* itself is a two story structure. Previously there was also a third story that housed the Dorje Shugden oracle, but it was removed during the Cultural Revolution (TOL, 196). The first story is slightly below ground level and is not used for religious purposes. On the south side stairs lead up to the front entrance which is enclosed in a portico. This portico's walls are painted with the four direction protectors (*rgyal chen sde bzhi*) as is typical with most temples and monasteries.



The front entrance leads directly into the main eight pillar hall of the building and is approximately 10 meters wide. On the east and west sides of the main hall are residential rooms for monks. Behind the main hall, protruding from the north side of the building is a room (*lcog*)<sup>23</sup> used for rituals by the resident monks. This room has a skylight and black colored walls with paintings of various protectors. On the north side of the room are statues of statues of Je Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelug sect, and his principal students Gyaltsab Je and Khedrup Je.

The murals of the main hall are of important historical significance. In relation to Dorje Shugden are murals of his Jataka (*'khrung rabs*) or previous life stories. This includes a mural featuring his lives as previous masters:

1. Manjushri during the life of Buddha,
2. Birwawa as one of the Mahasiddhas in medieval India,
3. Khache Panchen Shakya Shri as a Kashmiri scholar that traveled to Tibet and disseminated some important lineages,
4. Sakya Pandita and Buton as early Tibetan translators and scholars,
5. Panchen Sonam Dragpa, Sonam Yeshe Wangpo, Ngawang Sonam Geleg Pelzang and Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen as a series of masters of the Gelug tradition founded in the 14th century.

*The Temples of Lhasa* also has photographs of murals of Manjushri as Jampel Mawa'i Senge (TOL, 198) and Avalokiteshvara as Yellow Amoghapaśa<sup>24</sup> (TOL, 194). Other murals feature important stories of how he was urged to become a protector in the presence of Je Tsongkhapa as his student Dulzin Dragpa Gyaltsen. In particular Je Tsongkhapa is surrounded by other monks and depicts the protector Nechung arriving riding a snow lion holding a bow and arrow. Nechung in the form of a boy interrupted the teachings three times when Dulzin Dragpa Gyaltsen told him to stop. Dulzin Dragpa Gyaltsen is then depicted standing up, at which time he promises Nechung to protect Je Tsongkhapa's tradition in the future. Next Je Tsongkhapa is depicted as being delighted and offers Dulzin Dragpa Gyaltsen a skull cup filled with nectar<sup>25</sup>.

There are several popular known manifestations of Dorje Shugden, such as him riding a black horse which is popular in the Sakya tradition. The form of him riding a snow lion and holding a sword is the most popular in the Gelug tradition starting in probably the 19th century. One interesting difference in the iconography of the several of the statues and paintings of Dorje Shugden in Trode Khangsar is that he is holding a club instead of a sword. The significance of this particular iconographic detail is due the manifestation the Fifth Dalai Lama witnessed, which is evident in his praise and confession written by him:

"Robes of a monk, crown adorned with rhinoceros leather hat,  
Right hand holds ornate club, left holds a human heart,  
Riding various mounts such as nagas and garudas,  
Who subdues the mamo's of the charnel grounds, praise to you!"

### **Trode Khangsar throughout History**

The Tibet Heritage Fund database lists origin of the Trode Khangsar building to the 17th century<sup>26</sup>. Like most of the other temples in Lhasa, it was desecrated during the Cultural Revolution and left untended until the 1980's. It is currently an active monastery, managed by Riwo Choling housing seven of their monks and was restored starting in 1986 (TOL, 195-196).

Unlike the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso (1708-1757) was not involved much in secular affairs but was an erudite master. In his collected works there is a text on fasting (*smyung gnas*) through the practice of Avalokiteshvara in the tradition of the great Kashmiri nun Palmo. Listed among those who requested this teaching are Jaya Pandita, Tagphu Tulku Lobsang Tenpa'i Gyaltsen and Lhasa Trode Khangsar assembly amongst many others.

At the time of the Eighth Dalai Lama, Jampel Gyatso (1758 – 1804), there was an Amban (an official from the Chinese Qing dynasty) present in Lhasa. This Amban had some important matters which he brought before the Dorje Shugden oracle at Trode Khangsar. The answers to these questions were brought to the Qing Emperor Daoguang (1782 - 1850). Daoguang rewarded Dorje Shugden with a pandit hat and official praise. The Eighth Dalai Lama, Retreng Rinpoche, the Amban, the Dorje Shugden oracle and various official monks partook of a grand ceremony in the courtyard of Trode Khangsar, and the pandit award was placed over the door (DCG, f.139-140).

A survey of Tibetan wood printing blocks in monasteries was conducted while Tagdrag (*stag brag*) Rinpoche was regent (1941-1950)<sup>27</sup>. Included in the catalog are contents of the various hostels (*khamts tshan*) of the three major monasteries (Sera, Ganden, Drepung), various regent seats, various hermitages and Trode Khangsar. It lists Trode Khangsar having wood blocks for having an extensive Dorje Shugden fulfill ritual (*chos skyong shugs ldan gyi bskang chog rgyas pa*) authored by Ganden Jangtse Serkong Dorje Change, the most important Gelug Lama at the turn of the 19th century.

### **Conclusion**

Many of the events during the Fifth Dalai's time are shrouded in conflicting accounts of events and various power struggles. One thing is certain: from the Fifth Dalai onward the Gelug tradition enjoyed more power and its influence spread to the nearly all of the Mongol tribes and even to the Qing Emperors themselves. On the other hand, from this the Gelug tradition suffered from more power struggles, scandals involving enlightened beings and opened the door in Tibet to the influence from foreign powers.

Further complicating deciphering the history is the fact that Tibetans did not write extensive accounts on the history of events and various buildings and mostly relied on disseminating history orally. Many can personally attest to the last generation of Tibetan-born lamas and geshe being master story tellers, leaving their audience in a suspended state of drama while they recount events from 500 years ago down to the most minute detail. The objective with this is in imparting the moral of the story with an unforgettable impact, not for historical documentation.

In today's modern climate oral history is treated with suspicion, as it has been in the West, as it is often exaggerated or altered to suit political inclinations. Most of the educated Tibetans that were knowledgeable of Tibet's history have already passed away. Furthermore, as Tibet never even had typewriters or a modern printing press, many of the writings not having wood blocks for reproduction were lost after the Chinese invasion and consequent systematic destruction of these materials in the 1950's and 1960's. Nevertheless the mere existence of a temple with centuries old paintings can hardly be dismissed as important source for researching the historical development of the deity Dorje Shugden in Tibet.

Ironically, writing this now is probably easier than it would have been ten years previously. More information is available and searchable to the masses thanks to fruitful projects such as Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center and the Tibet Heritage Fund. This short account could be expanded on as more sources are found.

## Images



**Image 1: Original historic murals in the main hall depicting the earlier incarnations (Jataka) of Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen, amongst other figures.**



**Image 2: This is inside of the portico, on the east side of the entrance to the main hall. Depicted are restored murals depicting two of the four direction protectors (rgyal chen sde bzhi).**



**Image 3: View of the front of Trode Khangsar.**

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GDT: Ladrang Kalsang translated from Tibetan by Pema Thinley. (1996). *The Guardian Deities of Tibet*. New Delhi: Little Lhasa Publications.

HPP: Richardson, Hugh Edward. (1998). *High Peaks, Pure Earth : Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture*. London: Serindia Publications.

LFD: Sangye Gyatso (sangs rgyas rgya mtsho) translated by Zahiruddin Ahmad. (1999). *Life of the Fifth Dalai Lama*. Delhi: Aditya Prakashan.

SPF: Yamaguchi, Zuiho. (1995). The Sovereign Power of the Fifth Dalai Lama: sPrul sku gZims-khang-gong-ma and the Removal of Governor Nor-bu. *Memoirs of the Research Department of The Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library)*, 53, 1-27.

TF: Sorensen, Per K. and Guntram Hazod. (2005). *Thundering Falcon. An Inquiry into the History and Cult of Khra-'brug Tibet's First Buddhist Temple*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

TGF: Karmay, Samten G. (2005, December). The Great Fifth. *IIAS Newsletter*. 39, pp. 12-13.

THF: Tibet Heritage Fund. <http://www.tibetheritagefund.org>

TOH: Alexander, Andre. (2005). *The Temples of Lhasa: Tibetan Architecture from the 7th to the 21st Centuries*. Chicago: Serindia Publications, Inc.

TSH: Byam pa thub bstan dge legs rgya mtsho. (2007). Rab rgyal lcags mo sbrul lor gtsang bkra shis lhun por gnang ba'i bstan srung snying gi nor bu rdo rje shugs ldan rtsal gyi rtogs brjod dang 'brel ba'i bka' slob thun mong ma yin pa bzhugs so. In *Shugs ldan chos 'byung dri ma med pa'i lung dang rigs pa'i lam nas drangs pa'i 'jam dpal dgyes pa'i gtam zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. pp 15-66. Chab mdo: Chab mdo sa khul pa don tshad yod kung si.

WIT: Gyatso, Janet and Hanna Havnevik. (2005). *Women in Tibet*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>1</sup> The word *sde sris* in general means governor, one who holds governmental power. In some cases, I will translate the word as governor, in other contexts as regent, such as when there is no other contending peer power, and other contexts just the word *sde sris* itself.

<sup>2</sup> THF: demolition map subheading: [http://www.tibetheritagefund.org/old\\_web/2\\_lhasa/2\\_04\\_en.html](http://www.tibetheritagefund.org/old_web/2_lhasa/2_04_en.html).

<sup>3</sup> This statue was crafted in India, allegedly within several hundred years after Buddha passed away. It was later brought to China. During the 7th century it was brought to Tibet by the King Songtsen Gampo's Chinese wife.

<sup>4</sup> Rigsum refers to the "Three Lords", who are the main bodhisattvas: Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and Vajrapani. In particular each embodies all of the Buddhas' compassion, wisdom and power respectively. There is a saying without all three of these there is no Buddha. These particular shrines are dedicated to these three bodhisattvas.

<sup>5</sup> There is a nominal division of eight types of spirits (*lha srin sde brgyad*) in Tibetan Buddhism of which one type is tsen. The protector Tsiu Marpo is sometimes considered a yaksha (*gnod sbyin*) and sometimes considered a tsen. It is unclear if protector of Rabtsel is a naga (*klu*) or tsen. Dorje Shugden is usually considered to be in the gyelpo (*rgyal po*) class, although there is an occasional reference to him as a tsen. This may indicate sometimes tsen can be used more loosely as a more general term to refer to any other one of these types of spirits as a protector. Therefore translation as "protector house" is appropriate.

<sup>6</sup> From *Women in Tibet* (WIT, 151) "It is well-known that at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama oracle came to occupy significant positions in the establishment, since they were of primary importance in installing new reincarnations as the head of state. The prominence of high-level oracles like Nechung, Gadong and Lhamo Choyong in political and religious affairs goes back to this era... In a 1792 decree the emperor Qianlong confirmed the use of oracles in selecting the Dalai and Panchen Lamas."

<sup>7</sup> The term "associate" is used due to the number of roles he assumed in his relation to the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government, Ganden Phodrang. Ahmad's translation of Desi Sangye Gyatso's biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama notes Sonam Choepel, who is also called Sonam Rabten, was present when the Dalai Lama first came to Drepung when he was 6 years old. He was also the treasurer for the Fourth Dalai Lama at the end of this life, Yonten Gyatso, which led him to be involved in recognizing his successor.

<sup>8</sup> According to Richardson, the title king of Tibet was kept by the Gushri Khan and his descendents who provided armed protection to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama was to be the spiritual leader and appointed various governors (*sde sris*) to manage the state affairs. It appears these various roles were never clearly defined and as a result most likely lead to the Qoshot Mongolian resumption of power in Tibet by Qoshot Lhazang Khan, a descendent of Gushri Khan, overthrowing and killing Desi Sangye Gyatso over 50 years later.

<sup>9</sup> Again this is a sensitive interpretation of the significance of this event. On one hand its significance is downplayed by those to assert Tibet's independence over China. On the other hand it is an event that clearly indicates the Fifth Dalai Lama's rise to sovereignty.

<sup>10</sup> One of the three principal Gelug monasteries (*gdan sa gsum*).

<sup>11</sup> In the original Mulasarvastivada tradition of monk ordination which was brought to Tibet (*smad 'dul*).

<sup>12</sup> There are noted disagreements between domineering Sonam Rabten and the Dalai Lama himself. Also, according to a Cultural History of Tibet by Snelling and Richardson Sonam Rabten was "a capable, though arrogant and self-seeking man, and he is said to have urged the Dalai Lama to assert himself over the *Pan-chen* Lama, his own teacher, an old and greatly revered figure."

<sup>13</sup> According to some Nangso Norbu is Sonam Rabten's son, and to some his nephew. According to Yamaguchi in SPF he is adopted son (*sras po*). The safest term is protege, because whether or not he is a blood relative he was apparently groomed by Sonam Rabten. Nangso means majordomo, and Nangso Norbu was also a local governor (*sde ba*) in the Dalai Lama's administration. After Sonam Rabten's death there was a standoff between Nangso Norbu and the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1659. The Fifth Dalai Lama did not want Nangso Norbu to replace Sonam Rabten as *sde sris*, but Nangso Norbu would not stand down. Many lamas in Lhasa, including the Panchen Rinpoche, became involved as the use of force loomed. Ultimately Trinley Gyatso was appointed *sde sris* by the Fifth Dalai Lama (SPF, 20-23).

<sup>14</sup> According to TBRC, which cites *bod rig pa'i tshig mdzod chen mo shes bya rab gsal*, responsibility of his murder rests with nang so nor bu.

<sup>15</sup> Just the same as a reincarnate lama (*sprul sku*) depends on a father and mother to take birth as a human Buddha (*skye ba sprul sku*), all the conditions consistent with the phenomenal world must be met. Similarly, a state of anger, such as when one is murdered, is concomitant with taking birth as a spirit.

<sup>16</sup> Whether one accepts protector deities as true or not, they have been officially involved in the Mongolian and Tibetan government's affairs for at least the last 350 years. Moreover, whoever has witnessed an oracle under the influence of a recognized deity such as Dorje Shugden will mostly likely realize it is not an act. For more account read....

<sup>17</sup> For these accounts see Ladang Kalsang's *The Guardian Deities of Tibet*.

<sup>18</sup> There are some accounts that claim he committed suicide but these most likely distorted oral accounts or politically motivated to cover up the Fifth Dalai Lama's administration.

<sup>19</sup> The Fifth Dalai Lama has an entire volume of experiences from retreats called a secret biography in which various visions of his are described. This has been translated into English as *Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama*. Not only that, there is an entire tradition of teachings, called pure vision (*dag snang*), for meditation practices passed down since this time that are based on the visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama as well.

<sup>20</sup> This caused a strong response from the Qing Emperor Kangxi, who ordered an edict built at the Potala. See *Ching dynasty inscriptions at Lhasa* by Hugh Edward Richardson for a translation of this edict.

<sup>21</sup> The claim by the terma is the Fifth Dalai Lama was the reincarnation of the eighth century king of Tibet Trisong Detsen, and Desi Sangye Gyatso was the reincarnation of his son Mu-ne Tsan-po (ESG, 114).

<sup>22</sup> Source: interview with anonymous visitor to Riwo Choline in the 1940's 3/2008.

<sup>23</sup> The word *lcog* refers to the shape of a building, which is square but walls slightly taper inward going toward the ceiling. This shape of the room is typically used for protectors and has come to be used interchangeably as the protector room.

<sup>24</sup> There is a tradition of Yellow Amoghapaśa coming from Kashmir Pandit Shakya Shri (kha che paN chen), a previous life of Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen, which is probably why this mural is present.

<sup>25</sup> Source: interview 2/2008, with anonymous person who stayed at the neighboring Trijang Labrang in the 1940's before the Chinese invasion.

<sup>26</sup> THF archive database [http://www.tibetheritagefund.org/old\\_web/item\\_CA90](http://www.tibetheritagefund.org/old_web/item_CA90).

<sup>27</sup> See *Three Karchacks* (Gedan sungrab minyam gyunphel series, v. 13), published 1970 New Delhi: *Gangs can gyi ljongs su bka' dang bstan bcos sogs kyi glegs bam spar gzhi ji ltar yod pa rnam nas dkar chag spar thor phyogs tsam du bkod pa phan bde'i pad tshad 'byed pa'i nyin byed*.