CHAPTER 5

On the Exercise of Jurisdiction in Southeast Tibet after the Rise of the Ganden Phodrang Government

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Introduction

During the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of the 18th century the Tibetan area of rGyal thang (Chin.: Zhongdian 中甸), located at the southeastern-most rim of the Tibetan plateau in modern Yunnan Province, underwent a change of its overlord several times. Being first under the sovereignty of the kingdom of 'Jang, the situation began to change in 1659, after Wu Sangui (吳三桂, 1612–1678) conquered Yunnan for the Qing Empire. He soon deprived the king of 'Jang of his power. When Wu Sangui, as one of the three so-called “feudatory generals”, rebelled against the Qing Emperor, he strove—for strategic reasons—to be on good terms with the new Ganden Phodrang (dGa’ ldan pho brang) government under the Dalai Lama and the Qoshot Mongols. Therefore, in 1668, he ceded rGyal thang together with four other large districts belonging originally to the kingdom of 'Jang, to the Ganden Phodrang government of Tibet. At that time rGyal thang was a stronghold of the Karma bKa’ brgyud pa, the main rivals of the dGe lugs pa for religious and political hegemony in Tibet. Thus, the Karma bKa’ brgyud pa and their local followers were not at all willing to accept the new overlords, and soon started a revolt—supported by local officials previously stationed in rGyal thang by the king of 'Jang. In 1674, the Fifth Dalai Lama consulted Dalai Qong Tayiji and others. Then, on on his order, Mongol-Tibetan troops, under the command of bKra shis Batur Tayiji from the Kokonor Qoshots, finally put down the rebellion. When bKra shis Batur Tayiji then offered rGyal thang as a so-called “monastic estate” (chos gzhis) to the Fifth Dalai Lama, the political and religious authority of the Ganden Phodrang government was extended to that remote area.

Elsewhere I have dealt with these events in more detail.1 In the present article I wish to address the question of who, after the rise of the Ganden Phodrang, actually exercised jurisdiction in rGyal thang and who had the

1 See Schwieger 2011.
practical authority to deal with and decide legal matters. I will base my statements on archival material\(^2\) except in the last section, where I will add some personal impressions given by an external witness to the local situation.

**The Sharing of Power in rGyal thang**

Establishing the authority of the Ganden Phodrang government in rGyal thang—as well as in most parts of East Tibet—meant, in practice, a sharing of power between the Ganden Phodrang and the Qoshot Mongols from the Kokonor.

After the power and influence of the Karma bKa’ brgyud pa in rGyal thang had ended, the Ganden Phodrang was able to control all religious and religious-political affairs in the area. This was achieved by channelling local economic resources to the newly-founded dGe lugs pa monastery dGa’ ldan sum rtsen gling, for example by monopolising religious services for the lay people, and committing local officials to contribute to its prosperity. Ordering the regular dispatch of monks in great numbers to study in the three great Central Tibetan monasteries, Se ra, dGa’ ldan and ’Bras spungs, and the lower and upper tantra colleges in Lhasa, and prohibiting the foundation of new bKa’ brgyud pa monasteries and the granting of new financial resources to the bKa’ brgyud pa, also contributed to dGe lugs pa control in the area. There are documents proving the Ganden Phodrang’s control of monastic affairs in rGyal thang until the end of the 18th century, that is more than a hundred years after the suppression of the uprising in 1674, and continuing long after the power of the Kokonor Qoshots in East Tibet had come to an end.\(^3\) Some documents make it clear that the Ganden Phodrang dominance in monastic affairs was first and foremost the result of the dGe lugs pa’s close cooperation with foreign rulers.

How was the role of the secular counterpart in the balance of powers defined in the first decades after the establishment of the Ganden Phodrang authority in East Tibet?

The first secular powers in rGyal thang, as well as in the whole of East Tibet, were the Qoshot princes of the Kokonor Lake, among them bKra shis Batur Tayiji, the youngest son of Gushri Qan. In the *intitulationes* of two documents

\(^2\) See appendix.

\(^3\) On two such documents from the archives in Zhongdian (035, 037) issued towards the end of the 18th century see Schwieger 2011: 249f. An English translation of the first is contained in Schwieger, forthcoming (chapter “The Qianlong Emperor and Tibetan Buddhism”).