
On the main road from the valley of Nepal to Tibet, by the Eastern or Kúti Pass of the Hemáchal, and about two miles beyond the ridge of hills enrobing the valley, there stands a diminutive stone chaitya, supported, as usual, by a wide, graduated, basement.

Upon the outer surface of the retaining walls of this basement are inscribed a variety of texts from the Buddhá Scriptures, and amongst others, the celebrated Shad-Akshar Mantra, Om Mani Padme Hom. This is an invocation of Padma Páni, the 4th Dhyání Bodhisatwa, and presents Divus of the Theistic school of Buddhists—with an accessory mention of their triad, under that symbolic, literal form which is common to them and to the Brahmanists*. It is not, however, my present purpose to dwell upon the real and full import of these words; but to exhibit the inscription itself, as an interesting specimen of the practical conjunction of those two varieties of the Devanágari letters which may be said to belong respectively and appropriately to the Saugatas of Nepal and of Tibet. Not that both forms have not been long familiar to the Tibetans, but that they still consider, and call, that one foreign and Indian which the Nepálea Buddhá Scriptures exhibit as the ordinary écriture; and which, though allowed by the Nepálea to be Indian, and though most certainly deducible from the Devanágari standard, is not now, nor has been for ages, extant in any part of India.

cold-blooded executions which he caused to be done upon many innocent persons, erected a temple to Maneswar (Siva), and first established Hinduism as the religion of the realm. According to one author, Chu Cheng Pha' ascended the throne in the year of Sakádityá 1524 (A.D. 1604), while another author places the occurrence fourteen years later. He died A. S. 1563, (A. D. 1641.)

I think Dr. Buchanan must have been wrongly informed, when he asserts the conversion of the royal family to the new faith was effected in the reign of Gadadhar Singh, who he calls the fourteenth prince of the family; while I make him out to be the twenty-ninth in succession to Chu Ka Pha'; he was however the first Ahom sovereign who took the Hindu title, which may have led the Dr. to credit the information communicated to him.

The proper name of the king Gadadhára Singh was Chu Pat Pha', and he reigned from A. S. 1603 to 1617, (A. D. 1681 to 1695.) In A. D. 1692-3, he dispossessed all the Bhukuts of their possessions, and compelled them to reside together in Kamrup, in Upper Assam; and in the year following, he cast all the images of the votaries of Vishnu into the Brumaputra.

* Viz. the triliteral syllable Om, composed of the letters A, U, and M, typifying, with the Brahmanists, Brahman, Vishnu, and Mahesá—but with the Buddhists, Buddha, Dharma, and Sanga.
Inscription on a Chaitya at Dinragaon, 15 miles E. of Kathmandu.

Tibetan characters

浫ヲ様ヲ仏ヲ住ヲ仏ヲ住ヲ仏ヲ

Ranja characters

毘陁羅婆羅波摩毘陁羅婆羅波摩毘陁羅婆羅波摩毘陁羅婆羅波摩毘陁羅婆羅波摩
It is peculiarly Nepalese; and all the old Sanscrit works of the Baudhhas of Nepál are written in this character, or, in the cognate style denominated Bhujin Múlá—which latter, however, I do but incidentally name. I wish here to draw attention to the fact that that form of writing or system of letters called Lantza in Tibet, and there considered foreign and Indian, though no where extant in the plains of India, is the common vehicle of the Sanscrit language amongst the Baudhhas of Nepál proper, by whom it is denominated Ranjá, and written thus, in Devanágari रंज; Ranjá therefore, and not according to a barbarian metamorphosis Lantza, it should be called by us; and, by way of further and clearer distinction, the Nepalese variety of Devanágari. Obviously deducible as this form is, from the Indian standard, and still enshrined as it is in numerous Sanscrit works, it is an interesting circumstance to observe it, in practical collocation with the ordinary Tibetan form—likewise, undoubtedly Indian, but far less easily traceable to its source in the Devanágari alphabet, and devoted to the expression of a language radically different from Sanscrit. Nor when it is considered that Ranjá is the common extant vehicle of those original Sanscrit works of which the Tibetan books are translations, will the interest of an inscription, traced on one slab in both characters, be denied to be considerable. Singular indications, indeed, are these of that gradual process of transplantation, whereby a large portion of Indian literature was naturalized beyond the Himalaya, as well as of the gradual eradication of that literature from the soil of its birth, where, for four centuries probably, the very memory of it has passed away*! Those who are engaged at present in deciphering ancient inscriptions would do well, I conceive, to essay the tracing, through Ranjá and Bhujin Múlá†, of the transmutation of Devanágari into the Tibetan alphabet. In conclusion, I may observe, that this habit of promulgating the mantras of their faith, by inscriptions patent on the face of religious edifices, is peculiar to the Tibetan Buddhists, those of Nepál considering it a high crime thus to subject them to vulgar, and perchance unintinitiated utterance.

The Tibetan sentiment and practice are, in this respect, both the more orthodox and the more rational. But in another important respect, the Nepalese followers of Buddha are far more rational at least, if far less orthodox, than their neighbours: for they have utterly rejected that absurd and mischievous adherence to religious mendicancy and monachism which still distinguishes the Tibetans‡.

* The very names of the numerous Sanscrit Baudhha works recently discovered in Nepál were totally unknown to the Pandits of the plains, who received the announcement of the discovery with absolute disbelief.
† All the four systems of letters are given in the 16th vol. of the As. Researches.
‡ The curious may like to know that Tibetan Buddhism is distinguished from
I need hardly add, after what has been just stated, that the circumstance of the inscriptions being mantras proves the temple or chaitya, adverted to, to be the work of Tibetans, though existing on the very confines of Nepal proper—a fact indeed which, on the spot, wants no such confirmation. It is notorious; and is referrible to times when Tibetan influence was predominant on this side of the Himalaya. The great temple of Khāsa chit, standing in the midst of the valley of Nepal, is still exclusively appropriated by the Trans-Himalayans.

Note.—So much has been published on the subject of the mystical mantra above alluded to, that it is unnecessary to do more than direct the attention of the reader to the learned dissertation by Dr. Geber in the Alphabetum Tibetanum, page 500, &c. and to a more recent elucidation of the same subject in Klaproth’s Fragmens Bouddhiques in the Journ. Asiatique, Mars, 1831, p. 27.—The mantra is quite unknown to the Buddhists of Ceylon and the Eastern Peninsula, and it forms a peculiar feature of the Tibetan Buddhism, shewing its adoption of much of the Brahmanical mystic philosophy. A wooden block, cut in Tibet for printing the very passage in the two characters, and from its appearance of some antiquity, is deposited in the museum of the Asiatic Society.—En.

Note.—M. Klaproth, in his memoir in the Nouveau Journal Asiatique, where he has brought so much of the erudition of Eastern and Central Asia to bear upon this Buddhist formulary, attaches himself to two versions principally, as preferable to all that he finds elsewhere among Tibetans, Mongolians, and Chinese. The former is, “Oh precieux Lotus ! Amen,” on the supposition of छिलियाँ छि being the true reading; but if it be read, as he justly prefers, छि छिलियाँ छि, “Oh ! le joyau est dans le Lotus. Amen.”

There is no objection to the former translation, that of “Om mani-padm-me haim :” for the two nouns cannot be read as separate vocatives, “Oh jewel! Oh Lotus!” (as M. Coma de Kérda informs us it is understood in Tibet,) without reading mani सङ्गी instead of नमिः.

The latter translation of “ Om mani-padm-me haim” is not equally admissible: for it would require indispensably by grammatical rule, either the insertion of a Visarga after mani, or the substitution of a long i for the short one, so distinctly marked in the inscription; i. e. the nominative सङ्गी: or सङ्गी instead of the crude form सङगी. The junction of the two nouns in one compound is therefore as necessary in the reading of the locative case, as in that of the vocative; and this makes it necessary to translate it thus: “AUM (i. e. the mystic triform divinity) is in the jewel-like Lotus. Amen.” The legends cited by M. Klaproth respecting Buddha apply as well to this version of the formulary as to his. I hope that Mr. Hodgson may hereafter favour us with the import of these words, as explained in the yet unexplored treasures of Sanscrit Buddhist literature in Nepal.”

W. H. M.

Nepalans, solely by the two features above pointed out—unless we must add a qualified subjection on the part of the Saugats of Nepal to caste, from which the Tibetans are free; but which in Nepal is a merely popular usage, strict of the sanction of religion, and altogether a very different thing from caste, properly so called.