Translation of a Tibetan Passport.


[Read 24th April, 1833.]

In Hyde’s Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum (2nd edition, page 552-3), there is an engraving of a passport granted by the governor (or grand Lama) of Lassa, to an Armenian, of which, at the time of its publication, no European was able to decipher the characters. The learned author’s account of it is in the following words:

“Secundo damus Scripturam Tatarorum de Boutea* (al. Boutunt) citra Imaum supra Indias. Hujus lectio est à dextera: et hocce ejusdem elegantissimum specimen est, id quod vulgo sonat, ut passport, seu salviocenturis litteras. A principe urbis et provincie de Boutea datae, nuperis annis, Chogia Onainsi (i. e. Domino Joanni) mercatoris Armeni ibidem negotianti: et dictus princeps nomen suum (ut vides) sigilli loco et forma majusculis et implicatis characteribus infra apposuit. Talis sigilli impressio arabibus dicitur: Persea et Turcia. In Hyde’s Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum (2nd edition, page 6525), there is an engraving of a passport granted by the governor (or grand Lama) of Lassa, to an Armenian, of which, at the time of its publication, no European was able to decipher the characters. The learned author’s account of it is in the following words:

“The character of this curious manuscript proves to be the small running-hand of the Tibetans, written and engraved with hardly a single error. The following is a version of it in Roman characters, which may be interesting to those who possess Hyde’s very learned volume.


* Boutea, though applied by Europeans and Mohammedans to Tibet generally, is properly the name of one of the southern provinces, called in Tibetan Llopato: Lhasa is the capital of Tibet Proper or U-tsang. [See Journ. As. Soc. i. 123.]
† This is of course a mistake: the Tibetan reads like the Sanskrit from the left hand.
‡ The name mGo-dkar (properly white-headed, but rendered by me, above, by Mohammedans) formerly was applied in Tibet both to the Mohammedans of India and to the Europeans. But of late the Tibetans have commenced calling the Europeans by the name of Philing-pa, and an European of British India by that of rGye-Philing (-pa) or Indo-European.
Translation of a Tibetan Passport. [April,

Bod-pahi sla ädres med-ching lo-thog mi-khal-gyi Akhi agrub dês Agré byang phyin bdé-var Agrims chhug.

Translation.

"From the noble (city) Lhassa, the circumambulating race of religion.—To those that are on the road as far as Arya Dësa or India, to clerical, laical, noble, ignoble lords (or masters) of men; to residents in forts, stewards, managers of affairs, to Mongols, Tibetans, Turks, and to dwellers in tents in the desert; to ex-chis (or el-chis, envoys, or public messengers, vakils or ambassadors, &c.) going to and fro; to keepers and precluders of bye-ways (or short-cuts); to the old (or head) men, collectively, charged to perform some business of small or great importance; to all these is ordered (or is made known). These four foreign (or travelling) persons residing at Lhassa, Ichang-lo-chan, Mohammedans of It'hang-na, after having exchanged merchandise, going back to their own country, having with them sixteen loads on beasts; having nothing for their defence except some Lahori-weapons,—do not hinder, rob, plunder, et cetera, them; but let them go to and fro in peace.

Thus has been written from the noble Lhassa, the great religious race, from the senate-house of both ecclesiastical and civil affairs, in Sa-Abrug* (in the year of T. ch. 1688). On the 3rd day of the month. (These dates are wanting).

Note.—There is no Tibetan joined with them. They have about a man's load of victuals wrapped up in a bundle; with that there has been made an increase (of packages), but let them go in peace."

Sa-Abrug (earth's dragon) is the title of the second year of the Tibetan cycle of sixty years: it corresponds with Viśhvara of the Indian and Viś Dhāma of the Chinese cycle. The Tibetan reckoning commences from February, 1026: as therefore Hyde's first edition was printed in 1701, and he uses the expression "supperis annis ex India redux," the MSS. has been referred to the twelfth cycle, then current, which fixes its date to the year 1688.

Colonel Warren in the Kala Sanskrita (Chron. tab. xxii.) has given a full description of the Indian system;—a catalogue of the Tibetan cycle, which is twofold, one following the Sanskrit, the other following the Chinese system, will be published in the Tibetan Dictionary now preparing for the press.