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*The Sacred and Ornamental Characters of Tibet.\*—By SARAT CHANDRA DÁS.*  
(With nine plates.)

It is a well known fact that Thon-mi, the son of Anu, who was one of the chief ministers of king Sroñ-tsan Gampo, introduced the art of writing in Tibet. He studied Sanskrit under several eminent Buddhist professors of Magadha for many years, and after acquiring a thorough knowledge of the sacred literature of the Buddhists, returned to Tibet, where he was cordially welcomed by his illustrious sovereign. During his residence in Magadha (A. D. 630—650) he enjoyed high reputation as a scholar and holy man, and was called by the name Sambhoṭa or the excellent Bhoṭa, *i. e.*, a native of Bhoṭ (Tibet). He wrote seven treatises on the newly formed written language, besides his celebrated grammar in verse which all beginners in Tibet commit to memory.

During the reign of king Sroñ-tsan Gampo and his immediate successors translations of Sanskrit books were occasionally made in Magadha by Tibetan students studying at Śrī Nálendra (Nálanda), but no regular attempt was yet made to translate the sacred books into Tibetan. At this period the thirty-four letters, which Sambhoṭa had introduced from Magadha and which he had shaped partly after the form of some of the 'Wartu' characters of Magadha (see Plate I), were found adequate for the conveyance of thought in writing. Then the language of Tibet was in its infancy and free from words either of Indian or Chinese origin.

\* [With this paper may be compared Mr. Hodgson's account of the various Newári and Bhoṭiyá characters, published with numerous plates, in the XVIth volume of the Asiatic Researches, 1828. Ed.]

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During the reign of king Thisroñ Deu-tsan, Buddhism was made the state religion of Tibet, and the Pon religion was suppressed by royal edicts, and the country of snows attracted the attention of the Indian Buddhists. Sánta Rakshita, one of the professors of Srí Nálendra, visited Tibet where he was appointed the spiritual adviser to the king. Thisroñ embraced Buddhism with that earnest devotion to religion which marked the character of Aśoka. He was determined to follow that monarch's footsteps in the propagation of his adopted creed. At the advice of Sánta Rakshita he founded many religious institutions in central Tibet. Not satisfied with the religious works of minor importance which he had already done, the king desired the Indian pandit to introduce Buddhist monachism in his kingdom. In order to help Sánta Rakshita in this important work, the king invited Achárya Padma Sambhava, a native of Udyána, who was at this time travelling in Magadha. With the help of these two Indian pandits the king founded the famed monastery of Sam-yea after the model of the monastery of Uddanápuri of Magadha. He richly endowed this monastery, and provided it with spacious accommodation in buildings designed in the Indian fashion for the residence of one hundred and eight Indian pandits.

The two Indian pandits commenced the introduction of Buddhist monachism by initiating seven Tibetan young men into the order of Bhikshu. After the completion of Sam-yea the king invited many Buddhist scholars from Magadha to conduct the work of translating Buddhist sacred scriptures into Tibetan. During the reign of this king and his successors, down to the accession of the apostate Lang Darma to the throne of Tibet, the work of translation was carried on with vigour. With a view to make Sanskrit accessible to the Tibetans, and also to save the Tibetan students, desirous of learning Sanskrit, the trouble of an Indian journey and residence, the Tibetan Lochavas (Sanskrit scholars and interpreters) wrote commentaries on Sanskrit grammars and translated Sanskrit dictionaries into Tibetan. The works of the best authors of ancient India, including those of Kapila, Válmíki, Vyása, Páñini, Kálidása, &c., were also translated. The thirty-four Tibetan letters of the alphabet, that were introduced by Sambhoṭa to form the basis of the Tibetan language, were now found insufficient for this kind of work. To facilitate the transliteration of Sanskrit words into Tibetan, additional letters were required. These they supplied by the simple method of inversion and duplication of some of the existing Tibetan, letters.

It is worthy of remark that a tongue which in its nature was monosyllabic, when written in the characters of a polysyllabic language like the Sanskrit, had necessarily to undergo some modification. The

result of these two opposite forces, operating on the Tibetan, was its conversion into a dissyllabic language. The tongue of the Tibetans being unaccustomed to pronouncing polysyllables and combinations of several consonants with one vowel, phonetic rules to help in pronunciation were formed; and though they were not written down by the Tibetan authors for the guidance of students, they were handed down orally. It does not appear to me that the Tibetans ever pronounced their words as they wrote them.

The thirty-four letters were now increased to fifty (see Plate II, No. b), and henceforth the Tibetan alphabet became capable of more extended use by the addition of aspirates, long vowels, and compounds. } 2.42

The Chinese professor Ssan than San Si, who visited Sam-yea at the invitation of king Thisroñ Deu-tsan, was so much struck with the capacity of the Tibetan characters to express Chinese words with their curious intonation and phonetic peculiarities, that he undertook both to transliterate and translate some of the Chinese works into Tibetan and certain Tibetan works into the Chinese language. In an inscription found at Sam-yea it is mentioned that he (Ssan than San Si) compared the two languages and shewed their resemblances at the great monastery of (Gssan yañ mi-hgyur Lhun gyis-grub) Sam-yea. I here give a copy of the inscription (see Plate VI, No. 1).

The written language of Tibet has undergone slow but gradual changes from the time of its formation between 640 and 650 A. D. to the present time, but a description of these changes does not fall within the scope of this short paper. I shall, therefore, only confine myself to dividing this long period into five divisions, having regard to the nature of the changes the language has undergone.

The first or the earliest period extends from the time of king Sroñ tsan Gampo to the accession of king Thisroñ Deu-tsan to the throne of Tibet.

The second period extends from the reign of king Thisroñ to the assassination of Thi Ralpachan.

The third or dark period, during which both literature and Buddhism collapsed, is the gap between the reign of Langdarma and the revival of Buddhism by Atisa and Brom-tan under the auspices of king Yeše kod in the beginning of the 11th century.

The fourth period, during which the study of Sanskrit was considered a necessary accomplishment for the scholars of Tibet, began with Atisa and Brom-tan and terminated with the downfall of the Sakya hierarchy.

The fifth period, which commenced with the rise of the Gelug-pa (yellow cap) school, continues to the present day.

The Tibetan authors have divided the age of their language into two parts according to its grammatical variations: 1, Dag-ñiñ, or the old grammar period, which belongs to the age of the compilation of the *Kahgyur* and *Tangyur* as well as to the *Sakya* hierarchy; 2, the Dag-sar, or the modern grammar period, which properly dates from the time of *Tsoñ khapa* and continues to the present day.

In the third or dark period the Pons did not adopt the newly formed language for writing their mystical mantras and charms. It is said that in that dark age the Pons used to make their amulets and charms of coloured bark of trees, rags and thread, and consecrate them by the hands of their priests without written charms.

In the second and fourth periods greater use of the Sanskrit characters was made, mostly in ornamental and mystical writings. In the grand sanctuary of *Sam-yea*, *Lan-tsha* characters were written and painted and engraved on prayer cylinders, walls, tapestries, doors, and chapels. On chaityas and votive piles there were numerous inscriptions written in the *Lan-tsha* character, which exist up to the present time round the central sanctuary of *Sam-yea*, (see Plates VIII and IX).

During the fourth period when the study both of Sanskrit and Chinese was encouraged by the rulers of Tibet, the *Svayambhu* or *Rañjuñ* characters of *Magadha* were introduced into Tibet. This form of characters, as its name *Svayambhu* or 'self-existing' signifies, is the most sacred of all the characters known to the Tibetans. When any mark resembling the *Svayambhu* letter, is found on any rock, place or thing, it becomes an object of veneration to the Tibetans.

*Atiśa* on his way to Central Tibet is said to have seen the mystic 'Om' miraculously inscribed in *Svayambhu* characters on a rock at the site of the great monastery of *Sakya*, and from that he predicted that it would in time to come be the scene of a great hierarchical government. This prediction was fulfilled to the very letter. *Svayambhu* characters are said to be observable on the leaves of the celebrated tree of *Kumbum* (*ku-bum* ཀུམབུམ་ or hundred thousand images), the birthplace of *Tsoñ-khapa*. *Abbé Huc* who visited *Kumbum* has given, in his travels in Tibet and *Mongolia*, a very graphic account of the result of his examination of the leaves of that famous tree.\* The pious

\* "It is called *kounboun*, because, according to the legend, it sprang from *Tsong-kaba's* hair, and bears a Tibetan character on each of its leaves.

"It will here be naturally expected that we say something about this tree itself. Does it exist? Have we seen it? Has it any peculiar attributes? What about its marvellous leaves? All these questions our readers are entitled to put to us. We will endeavour to answer as categorically as possible.

"Yes this tree does exist, and we had heard of it too often during our journey

pretend to find Svayambhu characters on rocks, caverns, human skulls, &c. (see Plate V, *h*).

In Plate V, *c* are specimens of the Sa-chhen (*i. e.*, corpulent or fleshy) form of a second kind of ornamental sacred writing, probably introduced in Tibet during the Sakya hierarchy. There is a form of the U-chan characters, called Khoñ señ or the 'lion-hearted' character, so called on account of their inside being very narrow. This, too, was invented by some of the Sakyapa hierarchs (see Plate V, *b*).

The specimen in Plate V, *e*, called the Sintu Jod-pa or the 'finished or well described' characters, with the vowel *o* inherent in them, were probably introduced both in Tibet and Mongolia by some of the early Sakya hierarchs. These resemble the Yugur (Oigyr) characters, called the 'Gyaser yige' by the Tibetans. This form is found in almost all the old seals of Tibet. I am unable to name the letters individually, but I have obtained a transliteration of the sentences with their translation in Tibetan. I here attach both, with the English translation of the Tibetan version written in S'intu Jod-pa characters.

not to feel somewhat eager to visit it. At the foot of the mountain on which the Lamastery stands, and not far from the principal Buddhist temple, is a great square enclosure, formed by brick walls. Upon entering this we were able to examine at leisure the marvellous tree, some of the branches of which had already manifested themselves above the wall. Our eyes were first directed with earnest curiosity to the leaves, and we were filled with absolute consternation of astonishment at finding that, in point of fact, there were upon each of the leaves well-formed Tibetan characters, all of a green colour, some darker, some lighter, than the leaf itself. Our first impression was suspicion of fraud on the part of the Lamas; but, after a minute examination of every detail, we could not discover the least deception, the characters all appeared to us portions of the leaf itself, equally with its veins and nerves, the position was not the same in all; in one leaf they would be at the top of the leaf; in another, in the middle; in a third, at the base, or at the side; the younger leaves represented the characters only in a partial state of formation. The bark of the tree and its branches, which resemble that of the plane tree, are also covered with these characters. When you remove a piece of old bark, the young bark under it exhibits the indistinct outlines of characters in a germinating state, and, what is very singular, these new characters are not unfrequently different from those which they replace. We examined everything with the closest attention, in order to detect some trace of trickery, but we could discern nothing of the sort, and the perspiration absolutely trickled down our faces under the influence of the sensations which this most amazing spectacle created.

"More profound intellects than ours may, perhaps, be able to supply a satisfactory explanation of the mysteries of this singular tree; but as to us, we altogether give it up. Our readers possibly may smile at our ignorance; but we care not so that the sincerity and truth of our statement be not suspected."

Abbé Huc's travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, Vol. II, page 53.

*Translation of Yugur Sentences.\**

(1.) Jampal yañ (Manju Ghosha) is the Lord of speech and elocution.

(2.) The goddess Yañchan-ma (Sarasvatī) milched the wishing cow of science.

(3.) The noble Tshañ-pa (Brahma) holds the treasures of the four-fold classes.

(4.) The chief of the Dharapís can send forth fortune and bliss to the dead.

(5.) Thus the holy ones are not liberal in promises ;

(6.) But if their promises with difficulty once can be gained,

(7.) Those remain certain as figures cut on rocks.

(8.) These they do not gainsay even to death.

The specimens in Plate VII, No. 1, also a form of Gya-ser-yige, are wholly unintelligible to me. This kind of character was used by the successors of Chinghis Khán and Qúblái in golden tablets. I believe some specimens resembling this form of Yugur characters, are given in Yule's Marco Polo.†

During the decline of the Sakya hierarchy Rin-chhen Puñpa, one of the most powerful chiefs of Central Tibet, became the patron of learning. He invented the curious form of symbolical writing for secret state correspondence, which is called after his name, *i. e.*, Rin puñ yige. I have obtained a copy of some of the Rin puñ yige and have illustrated them in Plate IVa.

The specimen in Plate Va was invented by Sakya Pañdita Kungañ Gyal-tshan, who was appointed spiritual guide of Goyug and Gotan, the grandsons of Chinghis Khán. Kungañ gave the square form to the Tibetan characters, a modification of which he introduced in Mongolia prior to the invention of the modern Mongolian characters.

The two forms of characters, contained in Plate Vf and g, were probably designed by the Kahgyud and Gelugpa hierarchies. One of these is a modification of the Lan-tsha characters, and the other that of the ordinary Tibetan characters written with rounded corners.

- \* (1.) S'bra ma gad di namag pyuñ yañab naphar na myag śa.  
 (2.) Ta byak ajath sś tsho ka dsuk sak sha tot sha choshi tabs.  
 (3.) Namah h fiat shakar ſia rñe nayili nah hassoña la seit.  
 (4.) Dajiya nadi namad gahb syañr tsyir in kas rehoñ.  
 (5.) Ssi bmal be, lak sa thsakh śi tsa ſishe ki ay chhi dsa.  
 (6.) Tshad ye lam ſia ap tsap śi añ dsab tshyn th śa.  
 (7.) Thlod thiko irb sa ssi achhi ślu.  
 (8.) Nitads tsha chh ś be athiss l sath tshad ſitshyutt.

Transliterated Yugur Mongolian sentences.

† [See his vol. I, pp. 14, 29, 30, 169, 344 ; and the plates at pp. 342 and 472. Ed.]

The monograms in Plate Vd, are in Lan-tsha characters. It is not easy to ascertain the date when this design was made in Tibet. They are found engraved on rocks, or slabs of stone, in votive piles, and on boards used in caves and corners of temples. I conjecture they were designed and matured by the five Sakya hierarchs who are recognised as the successive manifestations of Manju Ghosha, the god of science and learning.

In Plate VI, Nos. 2 and 3, there are two forms of Khando yige, *i. e.*, 'the letters of fairies.' These characters were used in the old Niñma works, said to have been discovered under rocks by some of the Tertons or 'discoverers of sacred treasure.'

In Plate VII there are six specimens of ornamental characters, of which :—No. 1 is used in seals and tablets.

No. 2 is the modified form of the Tibetan characters, called Chhag-lohi yig gsar, *i. e.*, 'the letters invented by Chhag Lochava,' a celebrated translator of Buddhist works. His name is mentioned in Sumpa's chronological list of Tibet.

No. 3 is the form that was given to the Tibetan characters by the historian of Tibet, called Hgos Lochava or Lama Shonnu dpal. He wrote the history of Tibet called Debther Ñon-po. This form is called Hgos lohi yig gsar, *i. e.*, 'the new letters of Hgos Lochava.'

No. 4 is the form of Tibetan characters introduced by Skyogs Lochava. These letters are called Skyogs lohi yig gsar, *i. e.*, 'the new letters of Skyogs Lochava.'

No. 5 is called Ño-mtshar-yig gsar or 'the curious new letters.'

No. 6 is the form of ornamental Tibetan used in the monastery of Rdorje-gdan.

The symbols, preceding each set of letters (Plates I—VIII) are called mgo-yig (lit. head-letter), and are always used to introduce writing. They represent the sacred invocation 'Om.'

In the appendix of Csoma's Tibetan grammar there are specimens of three forms of Tibetan characters and one form of ornamental Sanskrit; *viz.*, 1, U-chan (or headed); 2, U-me (headless); 3, Dutsha (round or granular), and 4, the Lan-tsha Sanskrit. These four forms being known to the Cis-Himálayan Buddhists, both Csoma and Jäschke obtained specimens of them.

I. The U-chan is confined to printing, and sacred writings, on paper, stone and wooden blocks; to inscriptions on cloth and paper for flags, amulets, charm boxes, and prayer wheels, &c.; and to inscriptions for casting lots.—Plate II, *a. l*

II. The U-me form is in general use, all over the country, it being the chief medium of conducting business in the writing of every day life

of the Tibetans. It has four subforms; viz., Plate II, *c, d*, and Plate III, *(a, b) c*.

(1.) Pema tshug-chhuñ :—small roundish letters, used in elegant writings, epistles, and love-letters.—Plate III, *a, b*.

(2.) Khyug yig :—running hand letters, used entirely in business and correspondence.—Plate III, *c*.

(3.) Ka-dpé or Khugs yig rKañ riñ :—long-legged letters for copy-writing, exercises in penmanship, &c.—Plate II, No. *c*.

(4.) Dpe yig rKañ thuñ :—short-legged letters for manuscripts, books, &c.—Plate II, *d*.

III. The third form called Du-tsha (Hbru-tshag), which is seldom used for the above four purposes, is used in public notices, placards, signboards, names of books on covers, and in making covers of goods, bales, furniture, &c., (see Plate III, *d*). Almost all the Pon books are written in this form. It appears to me that the Pons, out of their antagonism to Buddhism, were averse to adopt the Lan-tsha form of Sanskrit in their sacred writings and inscriptions. They, therefore, gave the ornamental shape to the U-me characters, and thereby formed the Du-tsha, (see Plate III, *e*). As in course of time the Pon religion declined, it (Du tsha) fell into disuse. Still the largest use is made of it only in Pon monasteries. The U-me form is now-a-days taking its place in the writing of notices and signboards. The three forms of characters are, however, modifications of that form of the Devanāgarī which was current in Magadha during the 7th and 8th centuries A. D.\* The U-chan, U-me, and Du tsha run parallel to each other in their shape.—Plates II and III.

IV. The Lan-tsha (Ranja) form of Sanskrit is exclusively used in writing title-pages, headings of books, ornamental inscriptions, tapestries, painting, sacred objects and symbols, &c., &c. It was introduced in Tibet from Magadha.—Plates VIII and IX.

*Some Pre-historic Burial-places in Southern India.*—By A. REA, M. R. A. S.

(With two plates.)

*Megalithic and earthenware tombs at Pallāvaram.*

These remains, consisting of groups of dolmens, and round and oblong earthenware sarcophagi, are found around and over a range of hills to the east of the village of Trisulūr about a mile to the east of the

\* "The Tibetan alphabet itself, as has been noticed in other places, is stated to have been formed from the *Devanāgarī*, prevalent in Central India in the seventh century. On comparing the forms of its letters with those of various ancient Sanskrit inscriptions, particularly that at Gya, translated by Mr. (now Sir Charles) Wilkins, and that on the column at Allahabad, translated by Captain Trover and Dr. Mill, a striking similitude will be observed." Csoma's Tibetan grammar, page 204.