Reprinted from Proceedings of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration of the Inauguration of Graduate Studies at The University of Southern California

TIBETAN LITERATURE—ITS CONTRIBUTION THROUGH WESTERN EXPLORERS

HANS NORDEWIN VON KOERBER The University of Southern California

Highland people of a mysterious kind, that live in the loftiest country of the world, are the creators of a literature which in its relationship to Western thought, is the topic of the lecture of this afternoon. These people, the Tibetans, have been living in seclusion for centuries. Geographical conditions have aided greatly in closing them in and in causing them to be inhospitable to foreigners, especially to Western travelers. Monstrous walls of mountains, stupendous glaciers and snowfields, unbridged rivers, valleys of surpassing sterility have effectively kept travelers from entering this vast highland district of Central Asia. Tibet is six times the size of California and probably holds not more than two or three million people.

Comparatively few Europeans or Americans have succeeded in living in Tibet for any length of time; and still fewer foreign residents have taken the trouble to learn the language and to become better acquainted with the people. And yet, it is possible to know them, indeed to live with them, yes—literally to feel them. Such an achievement, however, requires, on the part of the explorer, a great sacrifice. For a while he has to forget his education, he has to forget that he is a white man, he has to put aside all scientific tools and to extinguish as much as possible of his customary prejudice. He has, so to speak, to sink himself into their race, to delve into their soul, and to imbibe their cosmic breath. Then—the result will be great!

The soul of Tibet is a marvelous soul! I sensed it in the monstrous mountain ranges of the North and the South, I felt it behind the formidable walls of its monasteries and temples, in the endless solitude of the northern plains, in the perpetual snow and ice of its peaks; I saw it in the old man, who so zealously carried to the temple a load of his harvest as his monthly contribution. I felt it in the weird religious dances of the lamas, in the waving mass of the spectators who—down to the innermost fibre of their hearts—watched the performance of the religious play with honest excitement. I sensed it in the eagerness of the women who helped in the fields during summertime and added spice to their monotonous labor by singing their "Lhá sollo, lhá sollo!" "Lhá gyallo, lhá gyallo" (Hail, hail to the gods! Victory, victory to the gods!) in an almost endless, but highly melodious variety.

I felt it in the stately caravans that slowly, but sternly, moved over

the gigantic desert plains of the North or laboriously cut a path over a glacier or across a snow-bedecked ice field, unshakable in their will to conquer the vastness of Tibet's mountainous world. I noticed it in the caravansery on the road in Southern Tibet while chatting with a monk in a serene mood, while conversing with a mother nursing her child, while talking to a young man whose bride had been killed by an avalanche in the upper valley, while speaking with a schoolmaster who took his task too seriously, or with a manservant who was entrusted with the care of the camels and horses, or with children playing gaily and watching curiously the foreign guests, or with the owners of the inn who had an almost inexhaustible store of stories to tell.

I sensed it, most of all, in closest contact with the inmates of the temples, in conversation with the lamas, in the atmosphere that prevailed during a morning service, in the slowly increasing force of the formula-muttering congregation, in the awe-inspiring stillness of a monastic meditation, and in the jubilation of the entire land as it touches you wherever you may be,—a jubilation marvelously represented by the great formula of Tibet:

Om mani padme hum.

Such is the atmosphere within which the literature of Tibet has grown, such is its background, and such is also its spirit.

In the seventh century A.D., the tribes of Tibet were ruled by a king, whose name has been deeply engraved not only in the history of Tibet, but also in the hearts of the Tibetans themselves. It was King Srong-btsan-sgam po "the straight forward and wise Lord," who became the founder of Tibetan civilization. He ruled 617-698 and was related by marriage to the Chinese T'ang emperor, T'ai-Tsung, as well as to the royal house of Nepal. He founded the first monastery, which is known to us as the Great Potala of Lhasa, the residence of the Dalai Lamas. The Mongols later saw in him an incarnation of \overline{Arya} Avalōkitēçvara and called him, therefore, "Hutuktu Nidüber Üsekchi."

In 632 A.D., the same year when in Arabia the great prophet of Mecca, Mohammed ben Abdullah, passed away, Srong-btsan-sgam po began his stupendous work of civilization by sending to India his confidant and minister, Thu mi Sambhota, an incarnation of Bödhisattva Mañjuçrī, together with sixteen assistant scholars, for the purpose of making themselves acquainted with the Māhayāna type of Buddhism Thu mi Sambhota apparently had a Brahmanic and a Buddhistic teacher, who taught him the sacred language and script of India. After the model of the "script of the gods" (Dēvanāgari)—also called Lancha-script—he derived from the Sanskrit syllabic alphabet an alphabet which he successfully applied to the Tibetan language. This was an achievement that later definitely arrested the attention of western phoneticians and scriptologists, who recognized with amazement that Thu mi Sambhota had been capable of analyzing phonetically Tibetan words, which, by nature, represent units of the monosyllabic type of speech.

Thu mi Sambhota and his group translated a number of Buddhistic texts into Tibetan. From the 7th to the 9th centuries, Buddhistic translated literature assumed vast proportions. Today it actually represents the bulk of Tibetan literature. Among the first translations, we naturally find the Tripițaka, the Prajnapāramitā Sūtra, Prajnapāranitā Ardhashastikā, the Lañkāvatāra Sūtra, the Saddharma Pundarīka Sūtra, the Lalitavistara, Kālidāsas Meghadūta, and other texts so well known to our scholars of Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. A still larger number of faithful translations of Sanskrit texts-partly based on Chinese translations-were made during the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. Among these, I particularly wish to mention the Petakopadesa, the Pañcaratra, the Ahirbudhnya Samhita, the Paramārtha Samvarti Satya Nirdesha Sūtra, the Dashabhūmika Sūtra with its Dashabhūmika Sūtra Shāstra, the Dharmadhātu Hriddya Samvrita Nirdesha, the Kamāvarana Pratisarana, the Rādjāvavādaka Sūtra, the Samyuktāvadāņa Sūtra, and hundreds of other texts with which Western scholars of Vedic or Buddhistic philosophy occasionally come into contact.

It is not the object of this paper to present a complete survey of Tibetan Literature nor to point out the merits of its several divisions. This would certainly require several volumes. I am only pointing out a few items in order to illustrate the place Tibetan literature holds in the world.

Thus, with reference to the above-mentioned translations, we may say that they are very interesting from the point of view of comparison and rendering. A number of Buddhistic technical terms appear to be used differently; through these Tibetan texts certain dates of importance are furnished to the history of India, China, and even Mongolia; there are Tibetan versions of some Sanskrit texts that had been lost. The finds which the Western scholar can make in this field are without number.

In the so-called worldly literature, Tibetan sagas were made accessible to us by H. A. Francke through his translation of the Kesar-saga. This opened another avenue to the heart of the Tibetans and is rich in material for comparison with the folklore of other people.

The late Berthold Laufer of Chicago was the first who approached the Tibetan field of divination by translating and editing some of the texts. I should like also to mention his splendid monograph "Bird divination among the Tibetans."

There exist works on agriculture and horse breeding. Among these Tibetan publications, for instance, we know the text of a treatise on horse breeding which was written by King Srong-btsan-Sgam po himself. This type of literature will not appeal to the modern scientific mind. Yet I am convinced that the Tibetan publications at least on agriculture will surprise the world some day with a number of amazing facts, when the scientific mind of the Occidental will have learned also safely to travel in a world we call metaphysical.

There exist some dynastic histories of the Lamas, even publications which we, in all probability, would class with political history. The former contribute very much to our knowledge of the history of this one class of the Tibetan people, and the latter are not yet sufficiently translated to show us their merits. The history of Lhadak and Western Tibet has been very ably presented by H. A. Francke, based on Tibetan documents. In general, however, we know very little of the Tibetan history. The Tibetans apparently neglected to compile historic events. On the other hand, the little we know already reveals data that belong to the histories of Persia, India, Mongolia, and China. They help in some instances to complete the historical records of these countries. It is true, Tibet's very rich literature occasionally mentions historical names and dates; such citations are, however, not at all sufficient to furnish a survey of the entire history of Tibet. Its history was written and still is written on stones scattered all over the country. In each monastery and temple, in each shrine or so-called prayer wall, there is to be found a votive tablet stating the date of foundation, and providing us with a number of other historic facts in connection with the establishment of the building. In order to write a comprehensive history of Tibet, it would be necessary, indeed, to collect the often almost unreadable inscriptions of such votive tablets and to combine them intelligently-if possible. The author of this paper brought home copies of such inscriptions, taken from 681 votive tablets.

A difficult territory is the domain of Tibetan mythology. The material is immensely rich and complicated. Through the efforts of the Russian Prince Esper Uchtomski, through the publications of Grünwedel and Waddell, and lately through those of Roerich, a small amount of this division of Tibetan literature has already been made accessible. Tibetan mythology still holds many treasures. A fascinating chapter is this! Its threads lead over to territories east and south of Tibet and thus connect Tibetan mythology with that of China and India.

In Tibet, mythology is closely related to art. In fact, practically all the Tibetan art of painting is a powerful manifestation of the creed of the Tibetans. A collection of Tibetan paintings, as complete as possible, would not only betray the talent of the various painters, but also illustrate the richness of the Tibetan pantheon. Most of these paintings have explanatory notes. These form valuable material for information. There also exist Tibetan publications on the principles of art and on the various divisions of art; they all await translation into English or some other Western language. The writer of this paper was amazed at the richness of information contained on 453 different paintings which he had brought home, to the interpretation of which he could attend only after his return from Central Asia.

The Tibetans also wrote much on their pantheon. Through the efforts of Western scholars like Schiefner, Schmidt, Klaproth, Csoma de Körös, Burnouf, Waddell, Bacot, and others, we already have an extensive knowledge of their gods, semigods, and sages.

In the Tibetan literature on ecclesiastical organizations and customs, it is striking to note such a large number of similarities between the Lamaistic and Catholic cults. In the ritual of both churches, we find the cross, the mitre, the crosier, the priestly vestment, the monk's frock, the gorgeous robes worn by the upper class of the clergy. We notice the use of candles, the application of consecrated water, incense vessels swung on chains, the ringing of larger bells, the giving of signals during the ritual by means of a smaller hand bell, the singing in a chorus with responses, the chanting of psalms, litany, the giving of the blessing, rosary, votive presents, fasting, processions, mass for the dead, holy images, temple flags, adoration of relics, tutelary saints, pilgrimages, vows of poverty and chastity, celibacy, confession, tonsure, in certain provinces also the baptizing of children, ordination of the priests, confirmation, investiture of bishops, the doctrine of purgatory, the praying for the dead, and the use of a cult language which is not intelligible to the people at large.

These similarities have, of course, produced several hypotheses concerning the probability of an early contact between the Catholic and Lamaistic churches. We have, however, still to wait for the final word.

There is also rich literature on the cult of Tibet. Western publications concerning this province of religious activity exist in the form of articles scattered over a number of journals or in the form of smaller monographs written in English, German, French, Dutch, and Russian.

A highly interesting section of Tibetan literature is represented by the Religious Mystery Plays. The Tibetan theater is a theater in the open air, in great altitudes. Its side scenes are the grotesque walls of the inner court of the monastery, and in the background arise the snow-covered peaks.

From all over the Highland they come, the inmates of neighboring temples, the people of the villages, the nomads of the plains. For a week or two they reside in tents put up around the place of performance. Waddell, the Britisher, and Bacot, the Frenchman, have presented us with an introduction to and a translation of several of those mystery plays. Especially well done are Bacot's translations, in which we really feel the pulse of the people. I think of his "Trois Mystères Tibétains."

Surprisingly, much has also been written by the Tibetans on their language: through men like Schiefner, Schmidt, Jäschke, Foucoux, Amundsen, Bell, Hannah, Sandberg, Chandra Das, and Laufer, we know of treatises

on grammar, lexicography, theory of style, rhetoric, and metrical art. Thus far, the Western philologist has not been able to understand the Tibetan theories concerning language and speech. There is an abyss which, to his mind, cannot be bridged over at all. Here is a point on which I should like to dwell for a moment. Generally speaking, every manifestation in Oriental culture, pre-eminently in that of Tibet and the Far East, has a surface meaning and an inner meaning. The surface meaning is inseparably connected with the inner meaning. We see only the surface meaning and endeavor to enforce a Western interpretation on what has grown on the mystic ground of the East Asiatic oriental mind. As long as Western philology deals with languages by strictly and fearfully "keeping to the letter," its disciples "kill the spirit" and will, therefore, never know it. Tibetan philology deals very much with the so-called inner speech form. i.e., with the invisible part of language, with the powers that are at work in forming a root, in letting it grow, and in causing it to enter an association with other mental entities. The Tibetan scholar is not so much interested in what is said, as in how it is said. His manner of approaching language is fundamentally different from ours. I do not doubt for a moment that the Occidental mind one day will also be forced to investigate more definitely what language really is. Only then, I dare say, Tibetan philology will reveal itself to him.

Men like Alexander von Humboldt, Steinthal, Wundt, Mistelli, and Franz Nikolaus Finck influenced my philological thinking immensely and furnished a base for my language research of a metaphysical character. I thoroughly differ with the majority of present-day official philologists by saying that language is not merely a grammatical arrangement of sounds, sound groups, or words, is not merely acoustic matter which we have to handle just as we handle stones, bricks, and tiles; but I say that each nation (or race) represents the incarnation of a spiritual intelligence, of the so-called genius of the nation, and its innermost being is most directly revealed by its inner speech form. In accordance with this, is also the outer speech form or language. Thus, we are not merely dealing with something in the nature of conventionalized sound symbols, but rather with intelligence and life, indeed, with an intelligence or a genius.

The nature of the Tibetan language as a type seems to prove this clearly. Inspired by men like Steinthal and Finck, I made it a point to approach language from this point of view. Many items came to the knowledge of the Western world of which nobody has dreamed as yet. The Tibetan language is the oldest of the Indo-Chinese family. Its morphology discloses roots and their development which have very much in common with certain language phenomena with which we are all acquainted. Some day it will be definitely proved that there is an inner relationship between the languages of the White and Yellow races. And it will also be shown that each original word is the embodiment of an idea which *lives* and can therefore enlarge or condense its body.

Another important and very peculiar division of Tibetan literature is represented by the Tantras, i.e., by guide books, commentaries, exposition, and ritual of the Tantra-Buddhistic System. Toward the end of the second century A.D., there lived in Southern India a Brahman, Nāgārjuna, who became a Buddhistic monk. Through him the embryonic thought of the Mahāyāna received a mighty impulse and developed into a very successful school, known as the Mādhyamika school. Nāgārjuna is, therefore, considered as the builder and promoter of the Mahāyāna system. He laid down his doctrines in his Mādhyamika Shāstra. To him are also attributed 24 works of the Chinese version of the Tripiţaka. His biography was translated into the Chinese by Kumārajīva in the 4th century A.D.

About 500 years after Nāgārjuna, i.e., in the middle of the 8th century, there came from India to Tibet a follower of Tantra-Buddhism, who proved the most ardent preacher and promoter of this doctrine among the Tibetans. We do not know his real name; he is only known as the man "who was born in a lotus," Padma-Sambhava. The records say that he was from Udayāna, the Kafiristan of today, a district on the north side of the lower Kabul river in Afghanistan.

Like the Mahāyāna, the Tantrik system has as its goal wisdom, perfection. and Nirvana; in addition to this, however, "it makes use of all the powers and resources of man's being and of all the help of an enlarged pantheon of mythological personages in order to attain the end. Men's power of memory is availed of to the full by the exercise of learning strings of innumerable syllables, unintelligible in exterior form, but replete intrinsically with mystic meaning and supernatural energy. Psychical force by meditation is applied not only to animate the arterial blood, but also to make flux with the generative faculties of the body." In other words, Tantra attempts to put man's psychic power into contact with the intelligent entities in a mountain, in a lake, in a river, in a tree, in a flower, and so on. These exercises are most successfully supported by pronouncing or chanting strings of syllables. To understand this emotional element in a series of monosyllabic units like la, ma, tswa, gi, ri, le, me, om, is very difficult, without an understanding of the invisible nature of language.

Tibetan Tantric literature is very rich and, of course, includes the famous r-gyal pos m-dzad pahi mdžu r-gya tor bod yig b-ži i s-kad šan s-bya ba-i b-kah h-gyur gyi s-dag-s thsor bar b-kod pa and a Tibetan rendering of the Mādhyamika Shāstra.

Padma Sambhava and other learned Tibetans of his time translated most of the sacred books of Tantra Buddhism into Tibetan. These texts are found in a large work or collection of texts of all kinds known as the bkah gyur (Kandjur), i.e., "Translation of the Words." In accordance with the edition, the Kandjur at the present time consists of 100-108 volumes of about one thousand pages each, comprising one thousand and eighty-three distinct works.

The bulk of this colossal bible may be imagined from the fact that each of its hundred or more volumes weighs about ten pounds, and forms a package measuring about twenty-six inches long, by eight inches broad, and about eight inches deep. Thus the code requires a dozen yaks for its transportation; and the carved wooden blocks from which the bible is printed require, for their storage, rows of houses like a good-sized village (Waddell).

Along with the Kandjur, there also exists a commentary called *tan-gyur* (Tandjur). This is a great cyclopedic compilation of all sorts of literary works (including rhetoric, grammar, prosody, medieval mechanics, and alchemy). Its religious and philosophical works were written mostly by ancient Indian scholars and some learned Tibetans in the first few centuries after the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. Among them we have the Prajñā-paramitā, the Mādhyamika Shāstra, and others. The whole Tandjur consists of two hundred and twenty-five volumes. Both the Kandjur and Tandjur are vast storehouses of knowledge.

I still wish to mention the names of two men, the two greatest mystics of Tibet. They are Tson Kha pa and Milaraspa. The former gave expression to his philosophy in a number of treatises scholastically written, dealing with virtues and morals as well as with the true side of mysticism; the latter expressed his mystic philosophy in a poetical way and finally became the greatest poet of Tibet, in a sense comparable to Shakespeare of England or to Goethe of Germany.

Tson Kha pa lived from 1356-1418 as a monk of the d-ge lug-s pa sect (or "virtue sect"). His priestly name was Sumatikirti (Tib. b-lo b-zan grag-s pa). However, he is popularly known after the name of his native district as "the man from the onion valley," i.e., Tson Kha pa. He brought about the great reform of the Red church and established the Yellow church: in this respect, he can be compared to Martin Luther. Tson Kha pa's contribution to the Western world, particularly in the field of morals, ethics, and esotericism is considerable.

Milaraspa was a hermit, a wandering monk, and a poet. He lived from 1038-1112 and quite obviously had established an inseparable contact with astral powers and intelligence-units in nature. He surely belongs to the most outstanding mystics of the world. For Tibet he was some kind of a Francis de Assisi.

It is an unspeakable pleasure to read his poems in the original language. Translations give the meaning only in a meager way and surely miss the flavor and spice of the original. Many a beautiful flower that you pick on the way, while wandering through the great forest of Tibetan literature, finally will prove to have been a product of Milaraspa's all-loving soul and deeply penetrating mind. I wish to bring this paper to a close by quoting only two passages from his "one hundred thousand songs," which I rendered into English by keeping to the text as closely as possible and by making every effort to save most of the original spirit. He said of himself when he was old:

> I, Milaraspa, the all known, an old man that poor and naked goes to rest, was born through wisdom and remembrance; My lips sing but a modest song, for all nature upon which I look to me is like an open book. The iron staff that supports my hand Leads me across the ocean of my wanderings.

At one time over the valley of Rag ma, Milaraspa had retired to his cave which he called byan thsub r-dzon "fortress of the purified and perfected one." Some people respectfully called on him in order to find out how he felt. He answered them in the following way:

This is Byan thšub r-dzon's mountain solitude, covered with glaciers' snow by the hands of mighty God, below, ye see the multitude of faithful givers; mountains far, surround the distance like a silken curtain, white in splendour. Virgin forest stretches out in glory, plains and meadows large and wide. Upon the blossoms rich in colour and in odour sounds the humming of the bees. On the shores of pond and lake stands in poise the water-bird and spies: in the foliage of the thousand trees hosts of colorful singers gracefully sing their songs: branches and twigs by scent-dispensing wind sway and swing in charming grace; in the summit of the trees, projecting well in height, little apes indulge in jolly spring; grazing cattle there I see down upon the meadow's velvet green, I hear the shepherd's flute and song of praise. They who are the servants of the world's desire, Bringing goods from nigh and far, also rest and camp down there! If upon my glorious mountains I repose and see this all,

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