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MING-SI-LIE AND THE FISH-BAG

—Hugh E. Rickardson

Many characteristics of the Tibetans in the 13th to 16th centuries, as seen through the eyes of Chinese historians, are recognizable in their descendants of the present day. For example, the Tang Annals describe how in A.D. 707 a Tibetan envoy to Chang'an explained his open delight at hearing Chinese music as due to his rustic origin in a remote border country. In recent times I found such professions of simplicity or ignorance by Tibetan officials used sometimes as a disarming gambit when they wanted to turn aside troublesome or contentious incidents. Neither party took such statements seriously. Nor perhaps did the Chinese in the Tang dynasty for in 730 when the Tibetans asked for some of the Chinese classics a minister of the imperial court warned against granting the request because it might increase the warlike abilities of the Tibetans who were not only aggressive but were endowed with energy and perseverance and were intelligent, sharp, and untiring in their love of study.

So much by way of introduction to the story of the fish-bag. In A.D. 756 there were discussions about a treaty between the Tibetans and the Chinese who had been at war almost continuously since 670. The leader of the Tibetan delegation to Chang'an was Ming-si-lie who is stated in the Tang Annals to have known some Chinese and to have been on a mission to China before, in order to escort the princess of Kin-cheng to Tibet. A banquet was given in his honour after which the Emperor conversed with him and gave him various presents including what Buschell translates as a "fish-bag" and Pelliot as a "couise au poisson". Ming-si-lie accepted the other presents but politely declined the fish-bag saying that such ornaments were not used in his country and he did not dare to accept so rare a gift. In the New Tang Annals the present which Si-lie declined is described as a golden fish.

Neither Buschell nor Pelliot throws any light on this incident but the key is to be found in that fascinating assemblage of miscellaneous exotic learning—The Golden Peaks of Samarkand by Professor Edward Schliefer. He writes (p 16) that a fish in bronze, or rather, half such a fish was carried as a token by the envoy of each country that maintained diplomatic relations with China. On arrival, the envoy produced his half which was compared with the other half, kept at the imperial court; and he would then be given appropriate facilities according to the pro-
tool. The fish token was carried in a handsome purse attached to the girdle of a ceremonial robe which would also be presented by the Emperor. Accepting such a gift, even if it were not up in a specially valuable guise, would smack of the acknowledgement of "tributary" status. That was something the Tibetans would not endure. In La Cuisle de l'Académie des Sciences et des Lettres de Veyzieville states (p. 182) that the Tibetans had precedence at the Chinese court over all other "barbarians". And it is recorded in the T'ang Annals that in 708 the Tibetan king rejected a letter from the Emperor because it was not phrased in terms of equality.

The wording had to be altered to omit the offending expressions. Ming-shih's refusal of the "fish-bag" was, therefore, the act of an alien diplomatist.

A rather similar Chinese intrigue was attempted in 7945 when General Yung Mu-sung visited Lhasa to console on the death of the 11th Dalai Lama. He offered the Tibetan Government a golden seal in honour of the Dalai Lama. It is most unlikely that the Dalai Lama himself would have accepted such a gift from that source but the Chinese may have hoped to find the internal government not yet quite sure of itself. Nevertheless, the offer was at first refused because, "as the Dalai Lama was temporarily absent from the body, these could be of use for a seal". I believe that it was eventually decided to be innocuous and was accepted as a contribution to the expenses of the late Dalai Lama's tomb.

It is sad that such diplomatic skinflintish in Sino-Tibetan affairs were replaced in 1949 by the naked use of force.

BRAHMANISM AND BUDDHISM

—NAIMUKSN, DUET

In this paper my object is to make a critical study of the valuable paper of Mr. B. Ghosh on "Upanishad or Buddhism" published in the Journal of Theology, Vol VI, No. 3. The subject is very wide and so the present paper proposes to deal with three such terms. These are:

1. Brabna and Brahman
2. Arama and Brahman
3. Pudgalavada

At the outset, I should state that both the Upanishads and the Buddhist literature were products of the same country, using the same vocabulary, Pali being a modified form of Sanskrit, and Pali literature also was replaced later by Sanskrit by the Sarvastivadins and the Mahayanaists.

Be Brabna and Brahman.

The word "Brahma" means "pure, sacred" as in e.g. the word Brabmancaraka or Brabmancarya. The word "Brabna" is frequently used in the Buddhist texts, e.g., Brabmapalitta, Brabmancarivasa, Brabmaparibhanga (sattva, karta, mula and upaksha) and so forth. Brabmapariksha has also been used as a synonym of dharmasakti, as the wheel of law leads to purity. From the word Brabna is derived Brabnasa, which word is found in the Tattvavijaya Sarnath (VI.1.4), Kartha Yashita (V.12.3) and in many other texts, meaning "descendant of a Roli (sama), requiring purity and learning like the Vedic Rishi, a Brahman must have prominence in knowledge and not mere descene. Sakyakuma Jambu was the son of a slave-girl and so his parentage was not known. He frankly told this fact to Rishi Gautama Haraskumara (Cha, Upa., iv, 4) and so he was accepted as a Brahmin pupil by the sage.

In the ninth centuries B.C. when Prince Siddhartha Gautama was born, Brahmanism had deteriorated into Varmanas-Varma, attaching importance to birth only and not to purity or learning. The society was divided into four higher castes, Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vasa and Sudra, which included even Nasaumass and other backward classes as also the untouchables. Worship of gods lost its sanctity and ended in animal sacrifices in the name of gods and goddesses.
The term "Brahmana" of the Upanishads was accepted by the Buddhists. In the undermentioned stanzas of the Dhammapada, the use of the word brahman is illustrated:

_न जनाथसे न गोपोने न अवाहनीति ब्राह्मणे।_
_ब्राह्मणे विषयो न यो मुक्ति सदृशी न कृपायादामेँ॥_

(Not by matted hair not by lineage not by caste, does one become a Brahmān. He is a Brahman in whom there are truth and righteousness. He is blessed).

_काँटो गयो वि जातो वसतिरथा समयो वि पुनःसति॥_

(Because he has put aside (bhūshāna) evil, he is called a Brahmin; because he lives in serenity is called a Samana).

_शान्ति दिशीत्मा, नासीत्मा कार्त्तिक, अनासीत्मा।_
_शरणापणं अनुवतं तु मा बुधद्रिय समानं॥_

(Him I call a Brahmin who is meditative, free from passions, settled, whose work is accomplished, who is free from taints and who has attained the highest end).

_कृपायादामें वे वेष्ठ तत्त्वावधार मा पश्चाति।_
_अयो यात्रिकं परो ब्लूक्तं यास्य भवेददास्मी।_
_रक्षसालात्तसां तत्त्वं अथ बुधद्रिय जातो॥_

(Him I call a Brahmin, who knows his former existences, who perceives heaven and hell, has reached the end of existences, is a sage whose knowledge is perfect and has accomplished all that is to be accomplished).  

Brahmana both in the Upanishadic thought and Buddhism is accepted as a term for a saint, one who has attained final sanctification. The Brahmin is one who casts off belief in happy worldly existences, the basis of desire (trehn). Not by ritual and sacrifices, not by isolation and trance but by self concentration and exercise of Maitri and Karuna does one transcend seven and become a Brahmin, who knows the highest truth (paramārtha says). Buddha says "not off the stream of existence with energy (viriya).

_Re. Atman and Brahman._

_The background of Buddhism is the same as that of Brahmanism, viz., Brahman the Impersonal but not, of course, the Volanic Para-

8
The fundamental difference between Buddhist and the Upanishadic thought lies in the conception of soul of an individual {jiva/man). The watchwords of Buddha consisted of dukkha, anicca and anatta. The first word dukkha means that worldly existence is misery because it is impermanent, insubstantial (anitya, kshanaika) and lastly anatman (i.e., unreal) absence of nitya atman (permanent soul) corresponding to Vedantic jivatman. A person is a composite of namarupa (mind and matter) sub-divided into five constituents (skandhas). These five constituents are ceaselessly changing, hence kshanika. A baby loses its babyhood when it grows up and becomes a young man. The young man loses his youth, his blood, flesh and bone when he becomes old. The change is effected every moment as our nails grow and need trimming every week or fortnight and so it is said that there is no continuous personal identity (na ca so na ca amo). (Vide Milindapatha, p. 46). This conception is expressed in these stanzas:—

\[
\text{वर्मे संजारा अत्तमा हि वर्ष फक्राय प्रक्षितः।}
\text{वर्ष विद्वृत्तिः सुचेते वर्मे सः सः विद्वृत्तिः।}
\text{वर्मे संजारा सुचूं वर्ष वर्ष फक्राय प्रक्षितः।}
\text{वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष।}
\text{वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष वर्ष।}
\]
All things are impermanent (anitya), lacking in self (anatta) or reality and therefore sorrowful (dukkha.).

Re. Padgalaśravas

Padgalaśravas (Padgalaśravas) is the fundamental doctrine of Vatsiputriya or Sammitiya, and those were also known as the Avatakas, because they claimed as their patron-saint Mahānāma, the direct disciple of Bhagavan Buddha, and a native of Avanti. Besides this fact, the Sammitiya had many adherents in Avanti. It is striking that at Hsüan Tsang’s time, the largest number of monks belonged to the Sammitiya school. In the inscription of Sarnath of the 4th or 5th century B.C. it is seen that the name of Sarvasiddhārtha was replaced by their name. From this inscription it is evident that this school had its origin prior to this date. Hsüan Tsang states that 15 treatises of this school were translated into Chinese. One of these texts, the Sammitiya-nikāya-sastra, has been translated into English by Professor Vedadasan of the Vaisakharan. This text is the main source of information, apart from the treatises on sūtras written by Vasumitra, Bhavya and Yuthodarsh. The latter two exist in Tibetan translations.

The Padgalaśravas rely on the following statements of Buddha:—

(i) एकव दुस्रा कथितव यथाभवव (there is a person who exists for his own good),
(ii) एकव्यायस्य शास्त्रं अभाबं ध्यानं निरतिः लोकानिर्वाणं (there appears a person, who exists for the good and happiness of many out of compassion for the world of beings). Kaññavādha.

Basing on such words of Buddha, the S. (henceforth abbreviated) for Sammitiya state that the puggala of the above-mentioned passages is something positive. It is not something apart from the five constituents (skandhas) of a being; it is not possible to establish a relation between the puggala and the skandhas, i.e. like the container and the contained. On the other hand, though it possesses all the characteristics of the skandhas, it is not like them caused and conditioned (saḥeta upapāgaya).

In support of their contention the S. rely on the Bharhavi-sutta of the Samyutta Nikāya (VI, p. 153), which is as follows——

कथा कथितव, यथा ?
पुनः पुनारं वाच्यामात्रिव व्याख्या
कथा भेदः कथितव वाच्यामात्रिव व्याख्या,
पुनः पुनारं वाच्यामात्रिव व्याख्या कथां कथितव, यथा ?

10
(What, O Bhikkhu, is the burden? Burden refers to the five constituents: matter, feeling, perception, impression and consciousness. These are called bhava.)

भावे च भवे, भावहरू च उपस्थि नित्यं भवे ।

वायु आध्या एवं वायु एवं विद्यार्थीएवं वायुयक्तं,

विद्यार्थिरेव भावहरूः ॥

(What is, O Bhikkhu, is the carrier (bhava) of burden? The person (puggala), which has a name, a lineage is called the carrier of burden.)

In the Tattwasangaaha (p. 130) Kamalaaha quotes its Sanskrit version

भावे: काम: पुरुषः,

सत्त्वं सत्त्वस्य नामः

एवं कृत्रितं, एवं सोहं, एवं ब्रह्माण्डः

एवं नामानुसारं परिवर्तेऽ

एवं सम्बन्धितानां पुरुषं प्रकटः ॥

(Note: The Sanskrit version is slightly better. It is not translated as it is easily intelligible).

Another very important argument put forward by the S. is that a person (puggala) in the first stage of sanctification (sotapanna) is called also sattadhatussaya (i.e. will have seven more existences at the most) to attain Nibbana. This implies that Puggala continues. The S. make their position clear by stating they accept amaavaada of Buddha but they contend that puggala is not soul but something apart from the skandhas but having all the characteristics of the skandhas. It maintains the link between two existences of a being, but there is an end of it in Nibbana.

Sanyutha Nikaya III, p. 36:

भावे च भवे सत्त्वस्य नामः, भावहरूः च न पुरुषः।

आदेशसु दूसः उसः, परिवर्तेऽपि सुणः।

विकाशसाधितं गतं भारं, भारसु भारं भावाभासः।

समुद्रं तदाय अनूठं, विनवतान्तरं विनवतिः ति ॥
SOME PUBLICATIONS
FROM
NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

PRAJNA or the famous Sanskrit-Tibetan Thesaurus-cum-Grammar was compiled by Tenzing Gyaltse, a Khampa scholar educated in Nyingma and Sakya schools of Derge, in 1771 A.C. Though this book was preserved in xylograph few copies of the block-prints are found outside Tibet. The lexicon portions are now presented in modern format with Tibetan words in Tibetan script and Sanskrit words in Sanskrit script with an elaborate foreword by Professor Nanaksha Dutt.

October 1961.

The entire xylograph (637 pp: 21 inches x 4 inches) containing both lexicon and grammar parts is now presented by offset (photo-mechanic); most clear reproduction of any Tibetan xylograph ever made anywhere. A table of typographical errors etc., found in the original (xylograph), compiled by late lamented Gegan Palden Gyaltse (Mentsikhang: Lhasa and Enchay: Gangtok) makes the present publication an improvement upon the original.

November 1962.
BRAHMANA AND KSHATRIYA

— NIRMAL C. SINGH

Apropos the indebtedness of Buddhism to Brahmanism, the great French savant Louis de La Vallée Poussin (d. 1939) made this statement: ""It cannot be said that the most notable features of the Buddhist speculation — its 'rationalism' (I mean its antipathy to every kind of ritualism and superstition); its atheism (i.e. its negation of a God creator and PROVIDENCE); its high morality, its pessimism, its anti-caste tendency, its mildness and humanity, and so on — are specifically Buddhist."" (G rant & Zeitlin: Legacy of India, Oxford 1943, pp 162-3).

As a student of history I confine my observations to "anti-caste tendency" in Buddhism. Eminent Indian scholars like the late P.C. Bagchi (d. 1949) and Professor N.K. Bose have held that the Buddha (Gautama Siddhartha) had no positive anti-caste objective in political sense or that he was above such mundane considerations. While I subscribe to this view, I submit that the Buddha was positively hostile to any inequalities between man and man. Buddhism did not succeed (survive) as a denomination of religion in India while Brahmanism did not succeed (survive) as a denomination of religion outside India. Buddhism succeeded outside India because it was not based on ethnic or caste considerations. For example, in Iran, Buddhism easily captured the ground from Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrianism from Zoroastrianism and Confucianism from Buddhism. In India Buddhism failed partly because of its own weakness which prompted and facilitated Brahmanical revival. If however Buddhism had succeeded in India it would have made the history of India altogether different and among other things it would have ended or avoided the caste.

On merit accruing to birth, we have the famous story of Satyakama (Sangaya Up. IV, 4), who was admitted to highest Vedic learning even though he said his mother could not remember the caste affiliation and was thus found to be adherent to truth (satya dharma). For centuries Nāgarka's commentary glossed over the fact of the matter. Modern thinkers like Tagore have found that Satyakama was admitted to highest knowledge because he was truthful; he did not conceal that his mother got him when she was a maid servant in the house of her master. Inference is clear that an anti-caste tendency was already strong at the time of the Buddha's advent and that the highest knowledge was open to all and was by no means a privilege of the high born.

Gautama Siddhārtha was a Kshatriya by birth, was admitted to highest Brahmanical knowledge by masters like Alara Kalama and Rudraka Ramaputra, preached to Brahma disciples as the Buddha and admitted merchants, untouchables and lowborns to his Dharma. Yet, the Buddha was very particular about his own caste Kshatriya at the highest of the four castes, even though he claimed that he himself was a Brahmana. His veneration for the Brahmana is clearly expressed in Dhammapada and Milindapatha, I have discussed elsewhere the significance of the Brahmana-Kshatriya equation in the political thought of Buddhism (Prolegomena to Lankatīla Polity, Cal. 1969). I call below data from Upanishads to suggest that the Brahmana Kshatriya parity was a live issue of history before or at the advent of the Buddha. I also contend that it was symbolized in a tense between Knowledge and Power.

The Katha Upanishad in a verse (3.2.15) describes the majesty or absolute power of God (let us use this conventional term) that: "He for whom Brahmana (priesthood) and Kshatriya (nobility) both are as food and breath is as a source, how shall one know of him where He abides?" In mystic language it is implied here that the power of God transcends the two highest powers (on earth), namely, Brahmana and Kshatriya. The anxiety to record both priesthood and ruling class on the same spiritual plane is significant in a discussion about the hereafter as in the Katha Upanishad.

The Chandaya Upanishad (5.3.7) relates how Gautama, a Brahmana sage, had to seek the knowledge of the hereafter etc from a Kshatriya prince who made it clear that "this truth has never reached the Brahmanas up till now". The same Upanishad brackets in the list of sciences Brahavidya and Kshatravidya as not far from each other (7.1.3, 7.1.4 & 7.1.5).
The Bhishmaapya offers an apology as to why the priest (Brahmana) sits below the ruler (Kshatriya) at the Rajasuya sacrifice (1.4.11 & 1.4.14). "Though the Brahmana sits below he is the source of power of) the Kshatriya and that finally Dharma is superior to even the Kshatriya."

The Brihadaranyakya affirms (1.4.4) that the dear objects of material world like consort or wealth are prized not for the sake of the objects themselves but for the sake of the Self (Atman). In the schedule of such prized objects the attribute of Kshatriya takes immediate precedence after the attribute of Brahmana. In other words Brahmashrama or priestly rank is no more dear than Kshatriyashrama or nobility.

This exaltation of Kshatriya finds spiritual fulfilment in the Bhagavadgita (composed c.800 B.C. according to Radhakrishnan, and of pre-Buddhist origin according to S.N. Das Gupta). Here Gau (Krishna) confides the mystic lore of the Upanishads to a Kshatriya through the Upanishadic dialectic dressed in heroic grandeur. The verse of the divine dissertation is the battlefield. The great boon for Arjuna, namely, "There is no greater merit for a Kshatriya than to fight a righteous war" (2.11), remains a political testament for all cases with Kshatriya in the van. The Buddha's dialogue affirming Kshatriya as the best of mankind (Dharmaketa: Agamamoutra) does not surprise a Brahmana who comprehends the dialogue between Partha (Arjuna) and Sarathi (Krishna).

The Buddha by his life and sermon no doubt obliterated Kshatriya to divinity. In Mahayana, royalty or Kshatriyashrama was considered an attribute worthy of Bodhisattva. In Tibet, Kshatriya ancestry of Gautama Siddhartha and Asoka or of Sanaraksita, Padmasambhava and Aisa was fully played up along with the concepts of Dharma and Vajrayana (drug-sgal) and Chakravarti (khor-lo-bhgyur). The Mahayana concept of Buddha (or Buddhaputra) as jina (or Jnaputra) had inevitable temporal aura. The Lamas wielding political power would be, in temporal sense also, RGYAI WA, that is, JINA (Victorious or Conqueror). The Dalai Lama is popularly called RGYAI WA, RINPOCHE, that is, JINA RATNA (Precious Conqueror). If the popular Tibetan notion of the priest-king as a Buddhist ideal is accepted one has to trace the concept back to the pre-Buddhist Upanishadic miles in which the Brahmana and the Kshatriya vied with each other for Knowledge as well as Power.
In conclusion, Gautama Sūdrartha’s affirmation that the Kshatriya
is the best of men may be quoted along with the Gāndhāra verse that
the divine knowledge was transmitted to the Brāhmaṇa caste through
the Kshatriya caste.

क्षत्रियों सेवू है कोलसिंह, वे गद्यविरामच्।
विज्ञानवचारकम् तो मेदो भेदवापुरुष दिः।

व्या तस्मान श्रवणा, शोभान, आत: यमैं न प्रह्लाद:।
पूरा विधि त्वा गरुडविहित्य तथाभ न कवेशु
कलेवधु नान्तवेच यमालम भुजु हि।

शुद्धरोज़े विनिक्षेपूः
THE TIBETO-BURMAN GROUP OF LANGUAGES, AND
ITS PIONEERS

—B. K. SPRAGG

In an age in which controversies are increasingly celebrated, it must be confessed sorrow to the student of Tibetan and allied languages that the centenary of the first use of the term Tibetan (and Burman-Tibetan), for the sizable and important group of related languages now known by this name, went entirely unremembered. The two terms Tibetan and Burmese seem to have had their origin a hundred and seventeen years ago, in a series of articles by J.R. Logan in the Journal of the Indian Archipelago for the year 1851, one of which is entitled "General characteristics of the Burmese-Tibetan Merges, and Dravidian languages" (chapter IV, p. 160).

In an earlier chapter of the same volume Logan considered the Tibetan-Burman group of languages in relation to the Dravidian, and at first came to the conclusion that "the non-Asiatic languages of India, from their Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman members on the North East to the Tanak in the extreme south, have many features in common". But qualified this statement a little further down the page, with the remark (with which not all of us will agree): "the phonology of the south is advanced, plastic and energetic, while that of the Tibeto-Burman languages has hardly wakened into life and motion".

Whatever the relative merits of the Dravidian and the Tibeto-Burman groups of languages may be as regards plasticity and energy, there is no denying that, in associating Tibetan with Burmese, or even, for that matter, in distinguishing them as a group from Tanak and other Dravidian languages, Logan’s observations show remarkable insight, especially when one remembers that protected, in 1853, his opportunities were for studying Tibet-Burman languages, whether through published material or from observation at first hand. He was writing at the time of the Second Burmese War (1852-13); his source material for Burmese was limited to "the grammars of Johnson and Latrobe" (p. 53). There was still less contact with Tibet and Tibetan-speakers. Darjeeling had, it is true, been "ceded" to the East India Company eighteen years earlier, but foreigners did not lightly travel in Sikkim, as Sir Joseph Hooker, the botanist, had discovered four years earlier, and another twelve years were to pass before Sir Ashley Eden’s escape from Bhutan was to precipitate the Bhutan War. Only through Kashmir, occupied,
with British support, by the Dogra, Rajah Gulab Singh, in 1846, was
there access, of a sort, to the Tibetan-speaking populations of Balistan
and Ladakh. Logan tells us (p. 106) that he had to rely, for pub-
lished material on Tibetan, on Coorna de Koros’s Tibetan grammar,
of 1854, and Abol Rouxsel’s Recherches sur les langues tibetaines.

It is another twenty-five years before I again find the term
Tibeto-Burman in a publication. This next occurrence is in the Journal
of the Royal Asiatic Society for the year 1878; and here it is impor-
tant to remember, in establishing the climate of opinion of the time, that
another seven years were to elapse before the Third Burmese War resulted
in the overthrow of the kingdom of Ava, and completed the British
conquest of the territory now known as the Union of Burma, another
twenty-six years before Young’s Burmah troops entered Uhasa, and,
last but not least, three years and twenty-four years, respectively,
before the publication of Jachste’s and Dai’s Tibetan dictionnaire.
E. L. Brandeth writes (p. 8): “the chief group we then come to is
what has been called the Tibeto-Burman from the two principal languages
included in it - an immense group - the boundaries of which in the
present state of our knowledge are very doubtful.” Later in the
same issue of the Journal Captain C. J. F. S. Forbes, of the Burmese Civil
Commission, writes, somewhat disparagingly: “the term ‘Tibeto-
Burman’ has lately crept into use as a convenient designation of
a very large family of languages which appear more or less to approximate
to each other.”

As a student of linguistics I too am obliged to recognize that
there are linguistic grounds for dissatisfaction with the term Tibet-
Burman. This is because the reason for adopting it were not so linguistic
as politico-cultural. Burmese and Tibetan were the two national languages
of the group, with great literary prestige. From a linguistic point
of view it would have been better to name the group from the languages
at its extremes, from its two most diverse members, if, of course, it
had been possible to establish which those languages were. This was not,
however, even attempted; for Logan himself writes: “Tibetan, in many
respects, takes a place between the Burman and the more advanced
postpositional languages.”

Despite Forbes’s strictures the term Tibet-Burman was sufficiently
well established by 1899 to give its name to Part III of the Linguistic
Survey of India, and it is a matter of pride to me that I should, even
though indirectly, be associated with that volume, through the scholar-
ship of David Macdonald, my wife’s grandfather, who contributed to
the chapter on Lepcha as well as himself contributing to the chapter
on Sikkimese Tibetan, and helping Colonel Waddell with a contribution
to the chapter on central Tibetan.
1. Even in the jet age, however, students of Tibeto-Burman languages are in some respects no better off than Logen: Burma is all but closed to scholars from America and the non-Communist countries of Europe; the present writer was refused permission by the Government of Pakistan to study the Balti dialect of Tibetan (of great interest, as being in many respects the nearest in pronunciation to Tibetan spolling) in their province of Baltistan; and who would waste time and energy in applying to the Chinese Government for permission to study Tibetan in Tibet?


A. Coutts-de Koros, Grammar of the Tibetan language, Calcutta, 1834; Abel Remusat, Recherches sur les langues tibétaines, Paris, 1819.


AGYAN-DRUG MCHOG-GNYIS (Six Ornament and Two Exceleton) reproduces ancient scrolls (1650 A.C.) depicting Buddha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dinnaga, Dhammakirti, Gunaprabha and Sakyaprabha; reproductions are as per originals today after 500 years of display and worship with no attempt at restoration or retouching. The exposition in English presents the iconographical niceties and the theme of the paintings, namely, the Mahayana philosophy; the treatment is designed to meet also the needs of the general reader with an interest in Trans-Himalayan art or Mahayana. A glossary in Sanskrit-Tibetan, a key to place names and a note on source material are appended. Illustrated with five colour plates and thirteen monochromes. Price: Rupees Twenty Five (India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim) or Fifty Shillings (other countries).

April 1962.

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY, GANGTOK, SIKKIM
ON THE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF THE BANGNI

—DAVID W. M. DUNCAN

The Bangni, whose dialect belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages, inhabits the eastern half of Kameng Frontier Division and the western areas of Subansiri Frontier Division in the North East Frontier Agency. Their land is bounded by Tibet to the north and by the plains of Assam to the south. The Bangni are the sons of Aba Tani in his form of Roti Tani and their Mother was Sachingoe, The Earth. They worship Din-Dollo, the Sun-Moon God of their ancestors, and they propitiate the spirits of their ancestors and the spirit of Good and Evil, the spirits of the mountains and their rocks and the spirits of their valleys and their many streams. It was my privilege to serve them as their Assistant Political Officer from 1945 to 1949 in Sepilu Sub-Division which is predominantly inhabited by the 2 Sub-Tribes the Yano Bangni and the Tagir Bangni; and the marriage customs which are briefly described in the succeeding paragraphs pertain more specifically to the marriage customs of the Yano Bangni, although there is good reason to believe that the Tagir and Koolang Bangni also observe the same customs. The tribal word where they occur in this article are in the Yano Bangni dialect.

A Bangni takes a woman as his spouse for the purpose of procreation and for economic reasons. The Bangnis are a practical people. They are nevertheless capable of expressing the purest and deepest affection for their marriage partners; but a dubious virility singing and weeping by the side of a lake with water lilies in the background would be as incomprehensible to them as Einstein to a new born baby. They do, however, believe that a couple who have been joined in marriage will be re-united in the after life; and with a few exceptions a Bangni husband does show more affection towards his wife than towards his parents and other relatives.

The Bangni are exogamous and polygamous (polygyny), and marriages are arranged either by the parents or next of kin, or by the man himself if he is in a position to acquire a wife for himself. Marriages are also effected between a couple who are in love with each other provided that the man is capable of paying the bride price. When a marriage is arranged by the parents or next of kin not much attention is paid to the age of the girl or the boy; and marriages have been arranged between a matured girl and a boy who has not yet reached the age of
puberty, and there have been marriages between an old man and a more
child. Marriages have also been arranged between a young boy and a
young girl who have not yet attained the age of puberty. In such cases,
where the physical consummation of marriage is impracticable, the
girl will continue to remain in her own home until she is considered fit
to become a wife in the physical sense. This is the general rule, but
there are exceptions, especially if the girl’s parents are poor and desire
to secure the bride price as early as possible. On the other hand, if
the bride price has been paid in full, it is not unusual for a matured girl
who is married to a young boy to go and live in her husband’s house,
and it is not considered an offence for the husband’s male relatives to
cohabit with her at this stage and even after the husband is in a position
to perform his marital duties.

BRIDE PRICE

When the interested parties to a proposed marriage get together for the purpose of discussing the bride price, the meeting is known as the NIDA GAHNA. In this meeting a decision will be taken in respect of the bride price and the time when the girl will leave her parents’ house to join her husband in his house or village. The bride price is called DAMRE. Two witnesses are to be present at the NIDA GAHNA. The one from the boy’s side is known as the BINGTE and the one from the girl’s side is known as the CHENE. The BINGTE and the CHENE each receive a fee called the BIJO and CHENE DUNGTON respectively. Such a fee rarely exceeds one mithun (boar fœtus) in value. The DAMRE is paid only by the man, his father or next of kin, and it is very rarely less than one mithun in value, and I did come across a case where the DAMRE was valued at 70 mithuns. In those days the price of a full grown mithun was Rs 100. Salt, erichadies, meat (mithun, beef, mutton or pork) are also included in the DAMRE, and if the man is fairly rich the costly necklaces known as TASANG and Tibetan prayer bells known as LAKTE are also given and count towards the value of the DAMRE. In this connection it may be mentioned that the TASANG, of which there are many varieties, are distinctly Tibetan in origin and the people believe that God had given them the TASANG, and as far as I could gather the number of TASANG in the Bangtail area had never been augmented by direct purchase from other areas. The Tibetan prayer bells are all without handles and have been given names and are endowed with the quality of being either male or female. Their origin, as far as the BANGNI are concerned, is the same as that of the TASANG.

The DAMRE can be paid all at one time or in instalments and it is expected that the girl will join her husband when the full DAMRE has been paid.
After the NIDA GAHNA has come to an end, a mithun will be slaughtered in front of the girl’s house by the man’s family. This signifies that the betrothal has taken place. A mithun so slaughtered is called the PIGAH and counts towards the DAMRE. If a man is unable to afford a mithun he will offer witchdoctor (Assamese: silk) instead and such an offer is known as the PAH-GAH. If the presentation is a sword (CHIDE) it is known as the SEGAI.

The DAMRE is received by the girl’s father or by her brothers or brothers or by the guardian of the girl if she has no close relative. Whoever receives the DAMRE takes upon himself the responsibility of giving the girl in marriage to the man who paid the DAMRE, or to the man on whose behalf the DAMRE was paid. It is customary for the wife to live in her husband’s house but on certain occasions if a man is unable to pay the full DAMRE he will go and live in his wife’s house and work for her parents until the full DAMRE is paid, or until such time as his wife’s parents are dead when he will take his wife to his own home.

THE DOWRY

A dowry is paid by the girl’s parents to the man’s family only when the DAMRE is more than seven mithuns in value. There is no restrictive name for the dowry; however if the dowry presented is in the form of mithuns (SEBE) it is called BECHE, if TASANG are given the dowry is known as SANGCHE, and if a male slave (NERIA) or a female slave (PAHNE) is presented the dowry is called RACHE or PAHCHAE respectively. In addition the girl’s parents can also give necklaces (TASANG) if the DAMRE is more than four but less than eight mithuns in value. If the DAMRE is five mithuns in value then the girl’s parents will give one TASANG which will then be known as the GALLAM TASANG. If the DAMRE is six and seven mithuns in value then the additional TASANG given by the girl’s parents will be known as the GALLAM TASANG and another TASANG respectively.

The different names given for the dowry are used only if the marriage was arranged at a NIDA GAHNA, after which the girl went to live in her husband’s home. If, however, a girl elopes with a man and stays in his house as his wife, and if the girl’s parents do not object to the marriage and a NIDA GAHNA is then held after the elopement, then the dowry (if there it to be a dowry) is known by other names. A dowry of mithuns would then be called SORIF, a dowry of TASANG would be called FARGE DOHPLUM and a dowry of a male or female slave would be called SENGLE PATAH. Such dowries are generally given if the DAMRE is far in excess of ten mithuns in value.

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POLYGAMY A BANGNI can marry any number of wives, but the number of wives he does marry is usually determined by his ability to pay the extra DAMRE, or by the number of wives left to him as his inheritance. I rarely came across a BANGNI having more than four wives at any one time.

The first wife is the important wife and she exercises considerable power over her husband and his household. The husband must get his first wife’s permission and consent before he can marry a second or third wife otherwise there are endless quarrels and the second or third wife is apt to be mistreated by the first wife. The first wife also tells the husband which wife he is to sleep with on any one night. A man’s wives will continue to sleep around the same hearth until one of them gets a child. The first wife will then tell the husband to make a separate hearth for the wife who had the child. A BANGNI does not have sexual intercourse with a woman who is menstruating, and a menstruating woman cannot sleep around the hearth but has to sleep in the back veranda of the house.

If a man has paid the DAMRE for a girl who is unable to leave her parents because of her young age and if in the meantime he marries another girl (naturally) and brings her to his house, then the second girl becomes the first wife. Such cases are rare, and a matured man generally starts off by marrying a matured girl first.

If a girl whose DAMRE has been paid dies, then her DAMRE has to be returned or her sister or some other girl is to be given in marriage. This is particularly true if the young girl dies before going to her husband’s house. The DAMRE is not returned if a dowry has been paid and the wife dies in the husband’s house. If no dowry was given then the DAMRE is to be returned.

THE WIDOW A widow does not return to her parent’s house but continues to live with her husband’s family. The widow becomes the wife of either her late husband’s son (by another wife) or the wife of her husband’s younger brother. Herein lies the reason why many an old man will marry a very young girl. It is to provide a ‘paid for’ wife either for his son or younger brother in the event of the old man’s death.

If a man dies before his wife has come to his house, and if the DAMRE has been paid, then the wife will be given in marriage either to his son or younger brother, or another girl sent in her place. In such cases a new DAMRE is not given, although one or two extra matchs may be given especially if another girl is sent.
INCEST. The BANGNI are exogamous and I did not come across a case of incest during my stay in SepNi, but when there are prohibitory laws in existence one can assume that incestuous relationships do sometimes occur. A man who is found committing incest is immediately sold as a slave (sometimes killed) and a woman is either reduced to slavery or married off to some one else. It has also been said that a woman who has indulged in an incestuous relationship incurs divine displeasure and her urinary bladder falls out of her body.

A. A BANGNI male can marry the following females:

1. Father’s brother’s wife (MEL)
2. Wife’s brother’s daughter (MEL, RUKME)
3. Mother’s brother’s daughter (MEL, RUKME)
4. Mother’s sister (MEL, RUKME)
5. Wife’s sister’s daughter (NANGME)
6. Mother’s sister’s daughter (NANGME)
7. Wife’s sister (RUKME)
8. Elder brother’s wife (MEL)
9. Father’s other wife (MEL)

B. A BANGNI male cannot marry the following females:

1. Daughter (PAPP)
2. Mother (ANE)
3. Sister (AME, AI, ATE, BORME)
4. Sister same father different mother (AME, AI, ATE, BORME)
5. Sister same mother different father (AME, AI, ATE, BORME)
6. Brother’s daughter (BORME)
7. Father’s brother’s daughter (AME, BORME)
8. Father’s sister (AI, ATE)
9. Father’s sister’s daughter (MEW)
10. Mother’s brother’s wife (AYO)
11. Sister’s daughter (DUNGNE, KAU)
12. Son’s daughter (KAU, MFA)
13. Father’s mother (AYO, ANE LAKI)
14. Mother’s mother (AYO, ANE LAKI)
15. Daughter’s daughter (KAU, MEW)
16. Wife’s mother (AYO)
17. Son’s wife (NYAFUNG)
18. Wife’s brother’s wife (AYO)
19. Son’s wife’s mother (AYO)
C. A BANGNI female can marry the following males:

1. Husband's brother's son (REGO)
2. Father's sister's husband (MAHTE)
3. Father's sister's son (TETE, P Attention)
4. Sister's son (BREME KAU)
5. Sister's husband (MAHTE)
6. Mother's sister's husband (YAO)
7. Mother's sister's son (BURME KAU)
8. Husband's younger brother (DOB0)
9. Husband's other son (REGO)

D. A BANGNI female cannot marry the following males:

1. Father (ABOl)
2. Son (PIFA, NAHAFA)
3. Brother (ABRUNG, BOR0)
4. Brother same father different mother (ABRUNG, BOR0)
5. Brother same mother different father (ABRUNG, BOR0)
6. Father's brother (TETE, PAB)
7. Brother's son (BOR0)
8. Father's brother's son (ABRUNG, BOR0)
9. Mother's brother (ATO)
10. Mother's brother's son (KAI)
11. Husband's sister's son (KAU)
12. Son's son (KAU)
13. Daughter's son (KAI)
14. Mother's father (ATO, ABO LAK)
15. Daughter's husband (MAHTE)
16. Husband's father (ATO)
17. Husband's sister's husband (BARBORA)
18. Father's father (ATO)
19. Daughter's husband's father (ATO)

AGÈ AT FIRST COHABITATION

It would be difficult to say at what age a Bangni boy or girl begins to indulge in sexual intercourse. A Bangni girl is considered nubile when her hair, which was shaved in infancy, has grown to a point below her shoulders. I would put this age roughly at 13 years, and it is possible that a girl will have had her first sexual experience before she has started menstruating. Rape is unknown and the Bangni appear to be happily free from many of the sexual aberrations that plague a more sophisticated society.
ADULTERY

The Bagrni do not draw any fine distinction between adulterous illicit intercourse, and both offences are punishable by custom. The word YOGO covers any sexual union punishable by custom and the fine in such cases is known as YOGO.

In cases of adultery the man has to pay YOGO to the aggrieved husband, and the fine is never less than an emtihân but not more than two mutmans in value. An adulterous wife can also be scolded and abused by the husband, and a more jealous husband will go to the extent of cutting off his wife’s plaited hair. A wife who commits adultery more than once during her stay in her husband’s house is generally sent back to her parents who have to return her DAMRE.

An unmarried girl is generally not punished in cases of illicit intercourse, but the man who is caught indulging in illicit intercourse with an unmarried girl will have to pay YOGO either to the girl’s father or to her brothers if the father is dead. It is not considered an offence for man to cohabit with his elder brother’s wife or with his clan brother’s wife, and a man can also sleep with his father’s wives, other than his mother, during the father’s lifetime and no punishment is inflicted. Such affairs are, however, not disclosed out of respect for the father. It is also not an offence for a betrothed couple to sleep with each other, but if the girl becomes pregnant then she goes to her husband’s house and if the full DAMRE has not been paid then efforts are made to pay the balance as early as possible. A man who cohabits with a married girl, who has not yet gone to live with her husband, will have to pay YOGO if he does not belong to the same clan as the husband.

MARRIAGE BY CAPTURE

A Bagrni will sometimes capture a girl and take her away to his village from where he will make arrangements to pay her DAMRE later on. This form of marriage is known as NIEME SENA but is seldom resorted to. The girl might have been or might not have been married at the time of her capture, and in most cases the girl herself may have permitted the capture. The capture of a married girl leads to a bitter dispute between the husband and the captor in which their respective families, villages and clans are often involved. A seldom came across a case in which a girl was actually bound and taken away by force.

DESECTATION

Amongst the Bagrni it is the woman who generally deserts the husband. There was only one case on record in which the man, probably seized by wanderlust, deserted his wife and children and kept moving from village to village. He returned to his village only when his wife had left his house and gone to stay
with another man, and he returned to claim back his wife. A wife deserts her husband if she is repulsed by her husband’s physical appearance or if she is maltreated by the first wife or the husband himself. Sometimes a woman falls in love with another man and her lover will entice her to leave her husband, and there are times when the parents themselves will entice the girl to leave her husband so that they can marry her off to some other man. If a free-born woman discovers that her husband’s mother was a slave she will leave her husband and go back to her parents. Custom requires that a wife who deserts her husband should be sent back to him, but when it can be established that the cause of her desertion was maltreatment either by the husband or first wife then the village councils invariably take the side of the girl and she is allowed to stay with her parents who have to return her DAMRE.

Some Bangi husbands take positive steps to prevent or deter their wives from running away. The husband either makes his wife take a solemn oath that she will not desert him, or else he keeps a lock of her hair and her parted fingernails so that the wife shall know that he will resort to severity and cause her harm if she leaves him. When a deserting wife’s subsequently returned to her husband he will quite often put her feet in wooden stocks for a few days to ensure that she does not run away again.

DIVORCE The offer of the FAGAH and the giving of the DAMRE indicate that a woman has become the legal wife of a man. She ceases to be his wife the moment her DAMRE is returned to the man or to the persons who paid the DAMRE. A wife may for various reasons not live with her husband but she is considered to be his wife as long as her DAMRE has not been returned.

The Bangi follow the patrilineal line of descent and the children always take the father’s clan name. In the case of a divorce the children will remain with the father, but if at the time of divorce there is a child who is still being breast fed then the child will remain with the mother until it is in a position to return to the father’s house. If a woman is pregnant at the time of divorce then the child will continue to live with the mother and become adopted into the mother’s clan or take the clan name of the man who eventually marries her mother.

SLAVES AND MARRIAGE The marriage customs for slaves are the same as those for the NITE (free born), but in the majority of cases it is the ATO (master) who arranges a wife for his male slave (NIERRA). Such a wife would also have to be a slave, a female slave being termed i PHAINE. In such cases it is the ATO of the NIERRA

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who gives the DAMRE and it is the ATO of the PAHNE who receives it. Sometimes a NIERRA will arrange his own marriage if he has sufficient wealth of his own. Although it is considered shameful, disgraceful and unthinkable for a free born to cohabit with a slave, it is not considered to be a crime or an offense to religion, and there have been cases of a NITE man marrying a PAHNE and of a NIERRA marrying a NITE woman. In two such cases which came to my notice I found out that in one case the man had remained a bachelor for many years and was quite poor. His elder brother, however, had some property including one PAHNE. On the death of his elder brother the man received all the property and as he was unmarried he took the PAHNE as his wife. In the second case it was a question of pure physical attraction. The man was quite rich and he had two wives, but he was so enamoured of a PAHNE that he brought her home with the intention of marrying her. He actually entered the girl away from her NIERRA husband. There was an uproar from all sides and the girl was eventually returned to her NIERRA husband.

When a NITE man marries a PAHNE the offspring become NITE, although the mother may still be regarded as being a PAHNE depending upon the circumstances under which the man married her. In most cases, however, a PAHNE becomes a NITE when she marries a free born man. A NITE man who marries the PAHNE of another man is entitled to receive one mitum as compensation from her ATO. This compensation is called PAHTIK and the reason behind it is that a NITE should be compensated for taking a PAHNE out of a state of servitude. If a NIERRA marries a NITE woman, then, in addition to the DAMRE, he has to pay one mitum as compensation to the girl's parents. This compensation is called RAARIK. Marriages between a NITE girl and a NIERRA are extremely rare and they only occur when a NITE is so poor that he is unable to give his daughter in marriage to a NITE man, and is prepared therefore to give his daughter in marriage to a rich NIERRA. The offspring of such marriages are considered to be slaves.

It is also rare for a NIERRA to have illicit intercourse with a NITE woman, and if a NIERRA does cohabit with the wife of his ATO he is likely to be severely beaten or else said to another man. The wife may also be sent back to her parents and her DAMRE demanded back.

A man who falsely accuses another man of having illicit intercourse with a woman is required to pay a fine called AU-MUM-TYP valued at one mitum, and it is immaterial if the woman in question was a NITE or a PAHNE.
CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK

I seldom met a bastard in Sepia, and one reason for this is that a girl is invariably 'married' at an early age, so if she does become pregnant one can always say that the child is the offspring of his father (sexual intercourse between betrothed couples is permitted). It does not mean that in every case the child is the offspring of its rightful father, but it does mean that the child does ultimately have a legitimate father. Even when a man knows that his wife is bearing another man's child he will claim the child as his own. The guilty man will of course have to pay YOGO unless he is a clan brother.

Abortion is sometimes resorted to if the girl does not wish to have a child and I was told that a pregnant girl will ask her friend to step upon her abdomen and thereby cause her to abort.

There were a few individuals who were definitely half-breeds, and the Bangni admit that such individuals were fathered by tea garden labourers from the plains. The oldest was then about 30 years and the youngest around 12 years of age. They were all treated as slaves but were allowed to reside with their mothers who were invariably slaves themselves.

The Bangni are a fine virile tribe whose manner and way of life will undoubtedly undergo certain changes with the passage of time and through frequent contacts with other people. When such changes do occur I sincerely hope that it will be the tribe itself that wrought the change in its desire to bridge the gap between a primitive and a technologically advanced world; and that the Bangni did not give up their way of life through extraneous coercion or through a sense of shame.
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