ON ATISA'S ITINERARY IN TIBET

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I

According to Prof. Petech, Sum-pa-mkhan-po-Yi-lus-dpal-b'byor, the Mongolian historiographer, completed his encyclopaedic work popularly known as *dpag-bum-yon-bzan* in A.D. 1748\(^1\). The full title of the work is *Phags-yul-leg-pa-nag-chen-po-bod-dan-sog-yul-du-dam-po-tshogs-byam-tshag, dpag-bum-yon-bzan-ba-byun-ha* (i.e. the history of Buddhism in India, Tibet, China and Mongolia). The *Rings-mig*, i.e. chronological table, forms part of part III of the aforesaid work as edited by Dr. Lokesh Chandra from the collection of Dr. Raghuvira. Sum-pa was a prolific writer and hardly there is any subject which has been left from the domain of his writing. He wrote on history, grammar, mathematics, astrology, geography and almost all subjects concerning Buddhist religion\(^2\). Sum-pa was born in Wood-Ape year (A.D. 1704)\(^3\) in the neighbourhood of dgon-lah monastery of Amo in exterior Tibet. The monastery lies to the north east of Hu-sching in the Ching-hai (Tsinghai or Koko Nor) province of China which is inhabited by Chinese, Tibetans and Mongolians\(^4\). According to Karat Das, Sum-pa died at the age of 73\(^5\) which should be A.D. 1776 according to Tibetan way of calculating time. Tibetologists, however, are not in agreement about the date of his death\(^6\).

In *Iht-nig*, Sum-pa describes the principal events of Tibet year by year beginning from A.D. 1027 to A.D. 1746. He has divided the whole chronology according to Tibetan system into 12 cycles of 60 years each. An English translation of the portion of *Rings-mig* containing the chronology and chronicle of Atisa’s visit to Tibet and his work there is given below.

II

FIRST CYCLE

Fire-Hare
(A.D. 1027)

Kolyannamitra Po-to-ba-rin-chen-gsal\(^7\) was born. The twelfth Khul-atiliya (Rig-lad-blu-glin-pa-ni-ma) sat on the throne of Sambhala. Gyi-jo-lot-tatsbhas (lo-sa-ba) translated *Kalevaka* into Tibetan language. Since Buddha attained Nirvana in the Fire-Hare year, this was the 361st year of Asalha. According to some historians who believe that Buddha passed away in the year Iron-Dragon, this was the 408th year of Asalha.\(^8\)

Earth-Dragon
(A.D. 1028)

According to some Gyi-jo translated the great commentary of *Kalevaka* into Tibetan in its year.\(^9\)

Earth-Serpent
(A.D. 1029)

Se-ston-kun-rigs, the spiritual teacher of the sister of Ma-chig-sha-ma-kham-shi and disciple of ‘Rodmi-lo-tatsba was born.
Iron-Horse  (A.D. 1030)  Nil
Iron-Sheep  (A.D. 1031)  Phu-chhu-ba-ghon-egyan was born. According to Deb Ston-po (Blue Annals), Po-to-ba was also born during the year but the year Fire-Hare is certain.
Water-Age  (A.D. 1032)  sTod-lab-par-in-chhen-shit-po, the pupil of dPhyan-Sha-ba was born.
Water-Bird  (A.D. 1033)  dPhyan-sha-ba-rabul-khrims-bar was born. Deb Ston-po (Blue Annals), however mentions that he was born in Earth-Tiger year.
Wood-Dog  (A.D. 1034)  "Khon-dkon-mchog-rgyal-po of Sa-skyu was born.
Wood-Hog  (A.D. 1035)  Bla-chhen-po-dgongs-pa-rab-gsal passed away from this world.
Fire-Mouse  (A.D. 1036)  rNog-chhos-rdo-rje, the pupil of Mar-pa was born.
Fire-Ox  (A.D. 1037)  Nil
Earth-Tiger  (A.D. 1038)  Nil
Earth-Hare  (A.D. 1039)  According to astrology and travel accounts of Jo-bo (Atiša), he reached mNa-'ri.
Iron-Dragon  (A.D. 1040)  dThos-pa-dga' (Mì-cia-ris-pa) was born. Ra-ri-lo-tsa-ri-grags was born. The monastery of Shá-to 'ph was founded. According to written travel accounts, Atiša left Nepal. Nil-ro-par-chhen died.
Iron-Serpent  (A.D. 1041)  According to some travel books Jo-bo (Atiša) reached Nepal.
Water-Horse  (A.D. 1042)  sNe-zur-pa-ye-'bar, the principal disciple of dGon-pa-pa was born. sMyung-rum-pa-mtser-agon-brtson-'kru- 'bar was born. Atiša reached Mda-'ris.
Water-Sheep  (A.D. 1043)  'Brog-mi-lo-tshas founded the monastery of Myung-nam.
Wood-Age  (A.D. 1044)  rMa-lo-tsha-Chhos-bar, a native of La-Stod and famous as the male-partner of Ma-chig-sha-ma was born. 'Brom paid his respects to Atiša.
Wood-Bird  (A.D. 1045)  Nil
Fire-Dog  
(A.D. 1046)  
‘Brill-Steo of rGyal was born. Zla-brags-pa, son of iChe-dal-khes-Pa was born. Chag-khri-mchod-thog met Atisa.

Fire-Hog  
(A.D. 1047)  
rGyal-tub-dal-dzin-gnyan-phug-thub-khrims-’bar was born. Jo-bo (Atisa) had the honour of seeing Makreya and Mahājñāna and having religious discussions with them at STshe-hanth.

Earth-Mouse  
(A.D. 1048)  
Nil

Earth-Ox  
(A.D. 1049)  
Mu-drpo founded L-dgon26.

Iron-Tiger  
(A.D. 1050)  
gNal-chhos-’bar was born. From gave chx presents to Atisa.

Iron-Sheep  
(A.D. 1051)  
mKhas-grub thinks that Atisa wrote his work on Buddhist chronology during the year and hence according to him Atisa was born in Water-Horse year27.

Water-Dragon  
(A.D. 1052)  
mDudn Dharma-bodhi (‘Dus Pham-bodhi), the pupil of Khams-pa-lha-pa, Lab-sgron, Yu-mo and Shes-sgom of sNying-ma sect of later spread (of Buddhism at Tibet) was born28.

Water-Serpent  
(A.D. 1053)  
Was sDing-po-nubs-Chhos-’bar born?

Wood-Horse  
(A.D. 1054)  
gLan-dri-lab-pa-rdo-rje-segche, the disciple of Po-to-ba was born29. Blu-mi-pet, the pupil of Blo-ham-blo-tsa-bu-chos-’bar, was born. Atisa attained Parinirvāna.

III

Notes


2. A complete list of his works can be found in dPags-pa’i-bod-chen, Part III, edited by Lokesh Chandra.


4. dPags-pa’i-bod-chen, Preface, p. XIX.

5. JASB, 1889, 1, p.39.

6. For example, S. Bira has given A. D. 1788 as the year of his death
(Avisa Orientalia, XVII, Part I, p. 77); Cf. Samten G. Karmay, The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Buddha (London: 1973), p. 197 where he seems to doubt that Sum-pa died in A.D. 1776 as according to the colophon of a work composed by Sum-pa, it is mentioned that he composed the work in A.D. 1786.

7. We have used the Tibetan text of Rewa-mig as contained in dpag-btan-bcon-brtan edited by Dr. Lokesh Chandra.


9. Here Sum-pa is obviously referring to Bu-ston (See E. Obermiller, History of Buddhism, p. 217).


11. See Bu, I, pp. 263 according to which Po-to-ba was born in Iron-Sheep year (A.D. 1031) and died at the age of 75 in the year Wood-Bird (A.D. 1105).

12. Atilla is popularly known in Tibet by the name of Jo-bo or Jo-bo-rije (literally the Arya or the noble one).

13. The year of Atilla’s reaching mNa-ri does not seem to be correct for Sum-pa himself later states that he reached mNa-ri in Water-Horse year i.e. A.D. 1042. ‘Gos-lo-sgra-la also holds that Atilla reached mNa-ri in Water-Horse year i.e. A.D. 1042 (Bu, I, p. 247; Cf. Atika Chittopadhyaya, Atilla and Tibet, Calcutta: 1967, pp. 307-11) mNa-ri is identical with mNa-ri which is the westernmost province of Tibet, also known as Ngari chosrum, containing mainly of the districts of Parang Shangphung and Man-yul (TED, p. 361. Cf. TEL, p. 132).

14. Thos-pa-rgya (meaning delightful to hear) was the name given to Mid-la-ras-pa at the time of his birth by his father. Sum-pa seems to have borrowed the date from ‘Gos-lo-sgra-la who also assigns his death to Water-Horse year (A.D. 1123) and says that he died at the age of 84. Go-lo-tu-ba has arrived at these dates after making firm calculations (Bu, I, pp. 427-430). In another source, the dates of his birth and death are given as Water-Dragon year (A.D. 1052) and Wood-Horse year (A.D. 1135) respectively. This source, however, also agrees that he died at the age of 84 (W. Y. Evans-Went, Tibet’s Great Yogi Milarepa, London: 1969, pp. 52, 273).

15. The monastery of sha-la was, according to Bu-ston, founded by Lehe-btan-se-rab-byum-gras. There were four primary and six secondary sects that here (Buston, II, p. 201). The place was a few miles south-west of Tashi-Bun-po, the seat of the famous historian and chronicler Bu-ston Rin-po-che (TED, p. 184).

17. S. C. Das translates this passage: "Ye-de-shar of Sneju swar, the eldest son of Gung-pa was born". He thus describes the name wrongly and translated the Tibetan word fle-chen to mean "eldest son" incorrectly here. The word means "Principal disciple" (CT BA, I, p. 311).

18. CT BA, I, p. 207.

19. S. C. Das (JASB, 1889, p. 41), however, translates the crucial text as follows: "Ma-chig sha-ma's husband was born. rMa Lo-choura Chhis-bas of La-slo was born." But in our opinion the text refers to only one person named rMa-lo-tshas-Chhis-bas who was not the husband of Ma-chig-Sha-ma but her male partner.

Ma-chig-Sha-ma was married at the age of 14 but being disgusted with her marriage, she flung insanity and separated from her husband (BA, I, p. 221). rMa-lo-tshas accepted Ma-chig-sha-ma as his Modrin, i.e. female partner (BA, II, p. 219) after she left her husband.

20. Similar with the monastery of Bo-don which lies on the route from Pun-tsho-gon to bKra-sde-lugs-po (MBHLC, p. 136n; CT Tpej, TPS, p. 202) wherein Tsemo places Poison i.e. same as Bo-don-e on road between Lha-tse and bKra-sde-lugs-po i.e. Tashi-bhugpo in the neighborhood of Zane-dge-lhaid.

21. Here S. C. Das does not give the complete translation of the passage. He simply mentions "Atita wrote his work on the Buddhist Chronology" (JASB, 1889, p. 41). Water-Horse year, the year of Atita's birth given here, is equivalent to A.D. 982 (vide M.P. Pelliot, "Table of Tibetan Sexagesimal cycle". Journal Asiatique, 1913, part I, pp. 666-67).

22. S. C. Das translates the whole passage incorrectly (JASB, 1889, p. 41); (CT BA, I, pp. 175-189 wherein names of the teachers of Dharma-booli were given.


Abbreviations
JASB — Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.
TPS — Tibetan Painted Scrolls by G. Tucci.