

NOTES & TOPICS

TRADITION AND TRADITIONAL SOURCES

This number of the Bulletin publishes two articles based on traditional sources in Tibetan.

The one on hidden treasure of texts called Terma (rendered in English as apocrypha, revelations etc) contends that the tradition of such hidden and later discovered texts is not confined to the Nyingma Sect : and further that the Tibetan tradition of hidden treasures was developed from the Buddhist tradition in India. We add that when pioneer scholars like Sarat Das described these hidden treasures as "generally spurious" much of Tibetan literary texts was not available.

The article on the first hierarchs of Sakya Sect is exclusively based on traditional sources and presents in English the idiom and imagery of Tibetan sources. The author proposes to write later an account of the Sakya hierarchs in idiom and form suitable for modern times. We add that a discerning reader, not accustomed to Tibetan idiom and form, may find in the article events and facts not far from truth; these events and facts testify to the learning and statesmanship of the Sakya hierarchs, who were the first Lama rulers of Tibet.

BODHIPATHA PRADIPA

While books are reviewed in the pages of the Bulletin, generally no notice of articles in other journals is made. Helmut Eimer is the leading authority on the life and works of Dipankara Atisa, and we could not decline to publish his learned article on Bodhipatha Pradipa written in criticism of an article in Jagajjyoti publication entitled "Atish Dipankar Millennium Birth Commemoration Volume". Eimer's critical review deserves notice of all scholars who read both Sanskrit and Tibetan.

We have now a copy of this Jagajjyoti publication and I am constrained to submit that besides the main theme that Atisa was a Bengali this publication does little to enlighten us about the greatness of Atisa. Besides errors abound. I point out only three.

An ICS officer describes (p.52) Domton as the founder of the Gelugpa Sect. He is obviously ignorant of the great name Tsongkhapa. An expert on art and archaeology

describes (pp. 63-64) the object on Atisa's right as a Ghanta (bell). It is sad to notice that the famous Chorten (Stupa) which Atisa took to Tibet would be described as a bell in the millenary celebrations. Last but not least a Lama scholar states (p.47) that Atisa did not preach Kalachakra in Tibet. It is a fact of history that Kalachakra, was among the Tantras which Atisa preached in Tibet. The Lama scholar's hint that Kalachakra Tantra was a debased form may please the Chinese rulers of Tibet today but not Tibetans of any Sect. His Holiness The Dalai Lama in exile holds every year one or two sessions on Kalachakra. All Tibetans happily settled in India will no doubt be unhappy with such "researches" on Dipankara Atisa.

J.K.Rechung

KALACHAKRA

My notice is drawn to the controversial statement of Lama Chimpa re: Atisa and Kalachakra Tantra.

I had written on Dipankara Atisa in Bengali in Jagajjyoti Buddha Purnima Number 1982. In this article I refused to affirm that Atisa was a Bengali and this made me a persona non grata with Bengali elite. I was quietly left out when the Special Commemoration Volume was planned. I had no regrets. But I very much regret that my friend Lama Chimpa would find fault with my article alleging that I have hinted that Atisa preached the debased form of Tantra, the Kalachakra. If Lama Chimpa had read my article independently, that is, without any help from his Bengali collaborators, he would have never misrepresented me.

To support the contention that Atisa did not preach Kalachakra Tantra, the learned Lama's collaborators have quoted from the Dictionary of Alexander Csoma de Coros thus : It is very curious that Atisa should not have referred to the Kalachakra Tantra in his extensive writings which are preserved in translations in the Tanjur collection of Tibet. (Jagajjyoti Atisa Commemoration Volume p. 28). Csoma de Coros published his Dictionary in 1834 and had not then come across Atisa's all teachings in Tibet. Sixty years later Sarat Das had found the Kadampa works and subsequent literature of the Domton lineage. I quote from Sarat Das "both Atisa and the historian Buston belonged to this cult. (i.e. Kalachakra) , Dictionary

(1902) p. 632.

I learned about Atisa preaching Kalachakra Tantra while in Tibet in 1955-56. It was my privilege to be in Drag-Yerpa monastery the celebrated site of Atisa's series of sermons on Kalachakra Tantra. Later in many Gelugpa monasteries I had further confirmation. I read much later Charles Bell's book on Tibetan Religion, and I had no reason to draw inspiration from this book.

My learned friend Lama Chimpa will do well to read my Bengali article again and will find that I have not accused Atisa of preaching any debased form of Tantra. I stated in the article that Atisa enjoined strict celibacy and a life of least comforts for the monks. Atisa made it clear that purity in life and thought would be the strength of the Sangha, and that an ideal Sangha could protect the Dharma and if necessary should run the government for protection of the Dharma.

This is not the occasion to discuss the sublime or profane aspects of Tantra. Lama Chimpa has no doubt his right to call Kalachakra Tantra a debased form. I have my own right not to toe the line of Austine Waddell, Charles Bell and Lama Chimpa.

Nirmal C. Sinha