

# ON ATISA'S ITINERARY IN TIBET

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## I

According to Prof. Petech, Sum-pa-mkhan-po-Ye-ses-dPal-'byor, the Mongolian historiographer, completed his encyclopaedic work popularly known as *dPag-bsam-ljon-bzan* in A.D. 1748<sup>1</sup>. The full title of the work is '*Phags-yul-rgya-nag-chhen-po-bod-dan-sog-yul-du-dam-pa'i-chhos-byun-tshul, dPag-bsam-ljon-bzan-ses-bya-ba* (i.e. the history of Buddhism in India, Tibet, China and Mongolia). The *Re'u-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<sup>2</sup>. Sum-pa was born in Wood-Ape year (A.D. 1704)<sup>3</sup> in the neighbourhood of dgon-luñ monastery of Amdo in ulterior Tibet. The monastery lies to the north east of Hsi-ning in the Ching-hai (Tsinghai or Koko Nor) province of China which is inhabited by Chinese, Tibetans and Mongours<sup>4</sup>. According to Sarat Das, Sum-pa died at the age of 73<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup>.

In *Re'u-mig*<sup>7</sup>, 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 *Re'u-mig* containing the chronology and chronicle of Atiśa's visit to Tibet and his work there is given below.

## II

### FIRST CYCLE

Fire-Hare  
(A.D. 1027)

*Kalyāṇamitra* Po-to-ba-rin-chhen-gsal<sup>8</sup> was born. The twelfth *Kulikāditya* (Rigs-ldan-bchu-gñis-pa-ñi-ma) sat on the throne of Sambhala. Gyi-jo-lo-tsatshas (lo-tsa-ba) translated *Kālacakra* into Tibetan language. Since Buddha attained *Nirvāṇa* in the Fire-Hare year, this was the 361st year of *Adhidṛṣṭi*. According to some historians who believe that Buddha passed away in the year Iron-Dragon, this was the 408th year of *Adhidṛṣṭi*.

Earth-Dragon  
(A.D. 1028)

According to some Gyi-Jo translated the great commentary of *Kālacakra* into Tibetan in this year<sup>9</sup>.

Earth-Serpent  
(A.D. 1029)

Se-ston-kun-rigs, the spiritual teacher of the sister of Ma-chig-sha-ma-lcham-srin and disciple of 'Brog-mi-lo-tsatsha was born.

Iron-Horse (A.D. 1030)	Nil
Iron-Sheep (A.D. 1031)	Phu-chhuñ-ba-gshon-rgyan was born. According to <i>Deb Sñon-po</i> <sup>10</sup> ( <i>Blue Annals</i> ), Po-to-ba was also born during the year but the year Fire-Hare is certain <sup>11</sup> .
Water-Ape (A.D. 1032)	sTod-luñ-pa-rin-chhen-sñiñ-po, the pupil of sPyan-Sña-ba was born.
Water-Bird (A.D. 1033)	sPyan-sña-ba-tshul-khrim-'bar was born. <i>Deb Sñon-Po</i> ( <i>Blue Annals</i> ), however mentions that he was born in Earth-Tiger year.
Wood-Dog (A.D. 1034)	'Khon-dkon-mchog-rgyal-po of Sa-skya was born.
Wood-Hog (A.D. 1035)	bLa-chhen-po-dgoñs-pa-rab-gsal passed away from this world.
Fire-Mouse (A.D. 1036)	rÑog-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 doxology and travel accounts of Jo-bo (Atiśa) <sup>12</sup> , he reached mNa'-ri <sup>13</sup> .
Iron-Dragon (A.D. 1040)	Thos-pa-dga' (Mid-la-ras-pa) was born. Ba-ri-lo-tsa-rin-grags was born <sup>14</sup> . The monastery of Sha-lu <sup>15</sup> was founded. According to written travel accounts, Atiśa left Nepal. Nā-ro-pan-chhen died <sup>16</sup> .
Iron-Serpent (A.D. 1041)	According to some travel books Jo-bo-(Atiśa) reached Nepal.
Water-Horse (A.D. 1042)	sNe'u-zur-pa-ye-'bar, the principal disciple of dGon-pa-pa <sup>17</sup> was born. sMyug-rum-pa-mñar-sgon-brtson-'grus-'bar was born. Atiśa reached Mña'-ris.
Water-Sheep (A.D. 1043)	'Brog-mi-lo-tshas founded the monastery of Myug-luñ <sup>18</sup> .
Wood-Ape (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 <sup>19</sup> . 'Brom paid his respects to Atiśa.
Wood-Bird (A.D. 1045)	Nil

Fire-Dog (A.D. 1046)	'Briñ-Ston of rGyal was born. Zla-grags-pa, son of IChe-dal-sgañ-Pa was born. Chhag-khri-mchhog met Atiśa.
Fire-Hog (A.D. 1047)	rGya - 'dul - 'dzin - dbañ - phyug - tshul - khri - 'bar was born. Jo-bo (Atiśa) had the honour of seeing Maitreya and Mañjuśośa and having religious discussions with them at sÑe-thañ.
Earth-Mouse (A.D. 1048)	Nil
Earth-Ox (A.D. 1049)	Mu-dra-pa founded E-dgon <sup>20</sup> .
Iron-Tiger (A.D. 1050)	gÑal-chhos-'bar was born. 'Brom gave rich presents to Atiśa.
Iron-Sheep (A.D. 1051)	mKhas-grub thinks that Atiśa wrote his work on Buddhist chronology during the year and hence according to him Atiśa was born in Water-Horse year <sup>21</sup> .
Water-Dragon (A.D. 1052)	mDsed Dharma-bodhi ('Dseñ Dharma-bodhi), the pupil of Khams-pa-luñ-pa, Lab-sgron, Yu-mo and sBa-sgom of rÑin-ma sect of later spread (of Buddhism in Tibet) was born <sup>22</sup> .
Water-Serpent (A.D. 1053)	Was sDiñ-po-snubs-Chhos-'bar born?
Wood-Horse (A.D. 1054)	gLañ-ri-thañ-pa-rdo-rje-señge, the disciple of Po-to-ba was born <sup>23</sup> . bLa-ma-gsen, the pupil of Roñ-Zom-lo-tsa-ba-chhos-bzañ, was born. Atiśa attained <i>Parinirvāṇa</i> .

### III

#### Notes

1. *dPag-bsam-ljon-bzaiñ*, ed. Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi : 1959), Preface, p. XV., cf. *the Geography of Tibet* ed. and trans. Turrel V. Wylie (Roma : 1962), p. 196, note 763 wherein Wylie states that the date should be corrected to 1749.
2. A complete list of his works can be found in *dPag-bsam-ljon-bzaiñ*, Part III, edited by Lokesh Chandra.
3. S. C. Das incorrectly calculates Wood-Ape year as equivalent to A.D. 1702 (*JASB*, 1889, I.P. 37). For correct Christian equivalents of Tibetan years, see "Table of Tibetan Sexagenary Cycle" *Journal Asiatique*, 1913, Part I, pp. 666-67.
4. *dPag-bsam-ljon-bzaiñ*, preface, p. XIII.
5. *JASB*, 1889, I, p.39.
6. For example, S. Bira has given A. D. 1788 as the year of his death

- (*Acta Orientalia*, XVII, Part I, p. 77); Cf. Samten G. Karmay, *The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon* (London : 1972), 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 Re'u-mig as contained in *dPag-bsan-ljon-bzan* edited by Dr. Lokesh Chandra.
  8. Po-to-ba-rin-chhen-gsal.
  9. Here Sum-pa is obviously referring to Bu-ston (See E. Obermiller, *History of Buddhism*, p. 217).
  10. *Deb-ther-snoñ-po*. Its full title is : *Bod-kyi-yul-du-chhos-dai-chhos-smra-ba-ji-ltar-byuñ-ba'i-rim-pa-deb-ther-snoñ-po* or the *Blue Annals, the Stages of the Appearance of the Doctrine and Preachers in the land of Tibet*. It was composed by 'Gos-lo-tsa-ba-gZon-nu-dpal (A.D. 1392—A.D. 1481). It is generally referred to by its abbreviated title *Deb-snoñ* or *Blue Annals* (*BA*, I, Intro., i).
  11. See *BA*, 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. Atiśa is popularly known in Tibet by the name of Jo-bo or Jo-bo-rje (literally the *Arya* or the noble lord).
  13. The year of Atiśa's reaching mÑa'-ri does not seem to be correct for Sum-pa himself later states that he reached mÑa'-ri in Water-Horse year i.e. A.D. 1042. 'Gos-lo-tsa-ba also holds that Atiśa reached mÑa'-ri in Water-Horse year i.e. A.D. 1042 (*BA*, I, p. 247; Cf. Alaka Chattopadhyaya, *Atiśa and Tibet*, Calcutta : 1967, pp. 307-11 mÑa'-ri is identical with mÑa'-ris which is the westernmost province of Tibet, also known as Ngari khorsum, consisting mainly of the districts of Purang Shangshung and Man-yul (*TED*, p. 362, Cf. *TEJ*, p. 132).
  14. Thos-pa-dga' (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-tsa-ba who also assigns his death to Water-Hare year (A.D. 1123) and says that he died at the age of 84. Go-lo-tsa-ba has arrived at these dates after making firm calculations (*BA*, II pp. 427-436). In another source, the dates of his birth and death are given as Water-Dragon year (A.D. 1052) and Wood-Hare year (A.D. 1135) respectively. This source, however, also agrees that he died at the age of 84 (W. Y. Evans-Wenz, *Tibet's Great Yogi Milerapa*, London : 1969, pp. 52, 273).
  15. The monastery of Sha-lu was, according to Bu-ston, founded by Lhc-btsan-ses-rab'-byuñ-gnas. There were four primary and six secondary sections here (*Buston*, II, p. 206). The place was a few miles south-west of Tashi-lhun-po, the seat of the famous historian and chronologist Bu-ston Rin-po-che (*TED*, p. 184).

16. Nā-ro-pan-chhen (i.e. Naropa) was born in A.D. 956 (*JBRs* 1967, p. 125).
17. S. C. Das translates this passage : "Ye-śes-bhar of Sneju ssur, the eldest son of Dgon-pa was born". He thus describes the name wrongly and translated the Tibetan word *Bu-chen* to mean "eldest son" incorrectly here. The word means "Principal disciple" (Cf. *BA*, II, p. 311).
18. Cf. *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-chawa Chhos-'bar of La-slod was born." But in our opinion the text refers to only one person named rMa-lo-tsha-Chhos-'bar 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 feigned insanity and separated from her husband (*BA*, I, p. 221). rMa-lo-tsa-ba accepted Ma-chig-sha-ma as his Mudrā, i.e. female partner (*BA*, II, p. 219) after she left her husband.
20. Identical with the monastery of Bo-doñ which lies on the route from P'un-tsoḡs-gliñ to bKra-śes-lhun-po (*MBGHC*, p. 156n; Cf. Tucci, *TPS*, p. 205 wherein Tucci places Poton i.e. same as Bodon-e on road between Lha-rtse and bkra-śes-lhun-po i.e. Tashilhunpo in the neighbourhood of Zabs-dge-ldiñ).
21. Here S. C. Das does not give the complete translation of the passage. He simply mentions "Atiśa wrote his work on the Buddhist Chronology" (*JASB*, 1889, p. 41). Water-Horse year, the year of Atiśa's birth given here, is equivalent to A.D. 982 (vide M.P. Pelliot, "Table of Tibetan Sexagenary cycle". *Journal Asiatique*, 1913, part I, pp. 666-67).
22. S. C. Das translates the whole passage incorrectly (*JASB*, 1889, p. 41); Cf. *BA*, I, pp. 175-189 wherein names of the teachers of Dharma-bodhi were given.
23. gLañ-ri-thañ-pa-rdo-rje-señ-ge died in A.D. 1123 (*BA*, I, p. 270).

#### Abbreviations

<i>JASB</i>	— <i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</i> , Calcutta.
<i>BA, I</i>	— <i>The Blue Annals</i> , Part One (Calcutta : 1949) by G. N. Roerich.
<i>BA, II</i>	— <i>The Blue Annals</i> , Part Two (Calcutta : 1953) by G. N. Roerich.
<i>TED</i>	— <i>A Tibetan English Dictionary</i> (Delhi : Patna : Varanasi, 1970) by S. C. Das.
<i>TEJ</i>	— <i>A Tibetan English Dictionary</i> (London : 1968) by H. A. Jaschke.
<i>JBRs</i>	— <i>The Journal of Bihar Research Society</i> , Patna.
<i>TPS</i>	— <i>Tibetan Painted Scrolls</i> by G. Tucci.
<i>MBGHC</i>	— <i>mKhyen-brtse's Guide To The Holy Places of Central Tibet</i> (Rome : 1958) by A. Ferrari and Luciano Petech.