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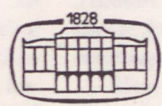
K. CZEGLÉDY, B. CSONGOR, I. ECSÉDY, GY. HAZAI, G. KARA, A. RÓNA-TAS,  
A. SÁRKÖZI, G. URAY, I. VÁSÁRY

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LOSANG THONDEN, *Den-dus Bod-kyi skad-yig. Modern Tibetan Language I<sup>2</sup>-II*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, 1984, 1986.

In Tibetan monasteries, a need for language teaching always existed. The young Tibetan monks had to learn the literary language in which they read the holy scripts and were supposed to write. For this purpose, there was a long tradition of teaching manuals. We know from as early as the 9th-10th centuries, that Tibetan Lamas taught their language to non-Tibetans. This also had its continuous traditions. For more than a thousand years, the grammatical concepts of the Tibetans developed in their own language, it slowly departed from its Sanskrit models and tried to adapt its system to the needs of the structure of the Tibetan language, which in the meanwhile had changed. To teach non-Tibetans meant that one had to take into account their linguistic background and grammatical training. It is one of the most difficult tasks to harmonize the Tibetan grammatical tradition with the European linguistic background, whatever it is, and give a coherent, practical description of Tibetan with didactic aims. This was done by LTh who taught non-Tibetans for many years at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. The conclusion can be advanced: this manual is didactically well built up and offers a very good introduction.

Of course LTh is himself aware of some of the problems involved. Putting aside

the difference between the classical written Tibetan and modern Written Tibetan, further the dialects and sociolects, there remains a considerable gap between modern Written Tibetan and the colloquial language. One of the major merits of LT's work is that where he finds it necessary he draws attention to the difference.

It is more difficult to make the Tibetan grammatical concepts comprehensible. In many respects Tibetan remained for the author a written language, which one has to read and pronounce, and not a spoken language, which one has to write. Thus it does not teach how Tibetans write sounds, but how they read the letters or their combinations. But this leads to difficulties. On p. 9. we read that "(T)he four vowels *i, u, e, o* are formed by adding 4 signs of vowels . . . to the top of the thirtieth consonant ح (a)". I will not deal here with the question: what kind of consonant the *a-chen* is, (it was surely denoted in early times as an unvoiced consonant), it is sufficient to recall that the above statement fully accords with the Tibetan grammatical tradition — but cannot be used for the description of the vowels of modern Tibetan. LTh knows this and gives on p. 13 "The precise pronunciation chart of the vowels". Here we find 10 vowels combined with *short: long quantities* and *level: falling* tones. The student does not get rules here on how Tibetans write these vowels, only examples for each. I am glad to see that at least what does concern the tones, within the framework given by LTh, is in accordance with the system described by Chang and Shefts, used by Goldstein and analyzed by me. Instead of a High and Low register, he uses High and Low tone, instead of an Even and Falling contour, he uses an Even and Falling tone, thus separating the register and the contour, which together give the tone and are suprasegmental, i.e. do not pertain to any of the segments of the syllable. Historically he is right, since the register depends on the initial consonant(s), while the contour depends

on the vowel and the final(s), but in the synchronic description this is of no relevance. However, this may have didactic importance for those, who have to deduct the tone from the written form. For them, however, the rules should be then given. (See: Some remarks on the vowel system of Spoken Tibetan: *Tibetan and Buddhist Studies commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös II*, ed. L. Ligeti, Budapest 1984, 215—235). LTh distinguishes only 10 vowels, from which one only occurs as short in level contour, all other have short and long quantities and even and falling contours. Not only is this different from the above analysis, in some cases I do not understand the system itself. In the case of the verb "to desire" *mö-pa (mos-pa)* the shortness of the *ö* can be due to prosodic features, but why is the *ö* short in "incense" *pö (spos)*? Goldstein correctly has a long vowel. LTh himself writes long *ö*: in *nö*: (*nos*) (p. 44), *nja*; *n-ts'ö*: (*ña-tsos*) on p. 110, *ngö*: *-su (ñnon-su)* on p. 125 etc. Similarly "centre" is *ü* with short vowel (*dbus*), but "by whom" is correctly *sü*: i.e. with long *ü*: (*sus*). The vowel harmony, i.e. the assimilative influence of the closed vowels independently described by many scholars (Sprigg, R. A. Miller, Chang and Shefts, and Goldstein) is not marked. I assume that this is due to the strong influence of the written form, and the fact that this feature is absent from the Tibetan grammatical tradition.

The Tibetan term *rjes-'jug* is translated as "suffix", which is etymologically defensible, but which has as a linguistic term another meaning, here "final" would be appropriate. I understand that the *a-chun* in *dga'* is a *rjes-'jug*, but in the Tibetan orthography it has only a graphotactic function, it is a device to avoid the reading *dag* (though not in *mtha'*).

How difficult it is to cope with the European concepts can be illustrated with the sentence on p. 93: "There are five genitives in Tibetan". Here, this means the five forms of suffixes in written

Tibetan, but only in the written form, because *-gi* and *-gyi* converged in spoken Tibetan into *k'i* very early. LTH of course knows this. On p. 108 he writes *na khrom-la 'gro-gi yin* "I will go to the market" and *'gro-gi* is transcribed *k'o-k'i*. In a footnote with asterisk he then remarks: "*gi* is commonly used after a *mtha'-med* verb in conversation though grammatically it is incorrect". In fact a very old colloquial form intruded into the written text. On the other hand, the original genitive marker *-i* fused with the preceding vowel, thus *-a'i* > *ä:*, *-o'i* > *ö:*, *-u'i* > *ü:*, *e'i* > *e:* and *i'i* > *i:*. If we do not understand here that the vowel quality (palatality) and length are the markers of the "genitive case" we do not understand the synchron system. Furthermore, the difference between *na* "I" *nä:* "by me" and *nä:* "of me" can be taught only if we have a clear concept of the vowel system of the spoken Tibetan.

I have to admit that these are difficult problems, and if we set them aside, it will be easier to learn Tibetan. In this case, however, one has to have a good teacher, a Lama, as Losang Thonden surely is. I wish I had him as my teacher in Modern Tibetan, when I began my studies.

Teaching manuals compiled by non-Tibetans have their own problems and in any case have the major shortcoming compared to this book, that they lack perfect competence of the native speaker. This can be only partly substituted by the assistance of Tibetans. Therefore, we can only congratulate the Library and Archives for having such an excellent teacher and such a useful textbook to teach Tibetan.

A. Röna-Tas