

for the corresponding reigns. Nobody would ever doubt the accuracy of the Chinese statements. Thus we are driven to believe that the dates in the sixty years' cycle, referring to early times and given in Central Tibetan chronicles, are fabrications of a later time, when the sixty years' cycle had become known in Tibet. The Ladakhi chronicles, which are free from such erroneous dates, may be far more reliable works than the Central Tibetan works.

The Tibetans of those times had a system of twelve months, which were called after the four seasons: *dpyid*, spring; *dbyar*, summer; *ston*, autumn; and *dgun*, winter. Each season had three months, called the first, the middle one, and the last. . . .

How many days each of these months was given we do not yet know.

There are a few passages in the documents which seem to point to a different, perhaps more ancient, calendar, as follows: *gYui-lo*, turquoise-year; *gShol-'abor-bai-sla*, month of putting aside the plough; *'aTron-kong-gi-sla*, month of diligence; *sKyald-gyi-sla*, month of sending.

Among the complete documents we find a great number which apparently originated with tax-collectors. They are of two styles. One of them consists of tablets of a length of about 30-40 cm., square in section. They show notches at their edges, evidently intended to mark the number of bushels of grain contributed by various taxpayers. In writing, we find such words as 'barley', 'wheat', 'millet', 'grass', 'horse-fodder', written close to the notches, whilst the names of peasants and notes regarding their payments are found at the other end of the tablet. The other kind of tax-collector's documents consists of short wooden tablets, coloured red on the surface. The right lower corner is generally cut out purposely, apparently to mark them specially. They also show notches and short notes in writing, like the other kind of documents. Thus we read: 'Six *bre* of barley were not received', and then 'Received later on', or 'Four *bre* of barley were received afterwards'. Sometimes we find the two words, *bab*, taxes, and *thar*, free, and nothing else, on the same piece of wood. Then we may suppose that the person who held the document was free from taxes.

There is another kind of document, marked by a broad stroke of red colour, running round the middle. I have not yet been able to discover what these may have in common. To say that they are messages from Government would not mean much, considering that most of the documents are of an official character. On one of these documents the red stroke was apparently painted with blood.

As regards the general character of the contents of the better-preserved documents on paper and wood, we find there lawsuits, inventories, distribution-lists of provisions or presents, demands for military assistance or for more provisions, arrangements for the service of the guards or sentinels, complaints that wages or rewards were not given, reports of illness, prayers for medicine, accounts of debts, appointments to some post, lists of transports of arms, etc. In the latter lists we read of shields, bows and arrows, arrow-blades, arrow-flags, helmets, swords, coats of arms. There are a few documents which contain something like records of battles. These notes are, however, not of much use to the historian, as they are very meagre, and cannot be dated. A note like 'The *Rong-lings* country was seized' does not help us at all at the present stage of Tibetan historical research. An interesting lawsuit is that about the sale of a slave called *rGyal-phu-tsab* [see M. I. xlv. 7]. The price amounted to eight weights of *dMar* (= *dmar-grö*, red wheat?). In case the slave should run away, the former owner was bound to provide another servant (slave) of the same capacity. Underneath this document, as well as underneath many others, the names or the seals of the forty-four chief witnesses (*dpang-rgya*) are given. These forty-four formed a court of witnesses, and it is of interest that the number forty-four is also found as that of certain officials in the account of *gNya-khri-btsan-po*, in the Ladakhi chronicles.

A considerable number of documents refer to the *so-pa* (watch, spy, sentinel), i.e. to those soldiers who had to do military service on the frontier or (probably) in unreliable districts. This service had to be done in turns, and it was not only a round of service among individuals, but among tribes. Whenever the term 'turn of service' refers to an individual, we may be sure that the same is an officer. In one document we hear of two officers, who had exchanged their turns of service and done service for one another during their respective turns.

Besides the *so-pa*, the documents mention the *'adrul-ba* (= *'agrul-ba*), runners, very often. I am convinced that these 'runners' were postal runners. Ancient Tibet and Turkestan seem to have been in enjoyment of an institution similar to that of present-day India, where the post-runners still have to do a great part of the postal work. Passages like the following occur repeatedly among the documents: 'As the runners are just leaving, I take the opportunity to write you the following words.' Besides the *'adrul-ba*, the *bang-chen* or *bang-ka-pa*,