

## PREFACE

The Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary of Buddhist terminology — better known among experts as *Mahāvvyutpatti* — was one of the earliest of Csoma's works, but one that was never published in his lifetime. The first reference we find to it was in two letters Csoma addressed to the authorities in early 1825 from the British outpost in Sabatu after his year of study in Zangla.

"As there are several collections of Sanskrit and Tibetan words among my other Tibetan writings, I brought with me a copy of the largest, taken out of one of the above-mentioned volumes, consisting of 154 leaves, every page of six lines." (Letter dated January 28, 1825, addressed to Captain Kennedy)

"I have another large collection in Sanskrit and Tibetan (the Sanskrit also being written in the Tibetan capital character, as they early adapted their alphabet to express properly every Sanskrit word), copied from the Stangyur Do division, 90 volume, from the 223d leaf to the 377th, consisting of 60 sheets of common Cashmerian paper, having writing but on one side, and having on every page 32 lines. This vocabulary, arranged after certain matters or subjects under general heads, contains many thousand words of every description; several distinctions and divisions highly interesting in order to understand better the whole system and principles of the Buddhistic doctrine." (Letter dated May 25, 1825, addressed to Captain Kennedy)

These excerpts show that Csoma was fascinated by the thought of such a dictionary very early on. When in 1831 he moved from the Tibetan monasteries to Calcutta, he took with him the manuscript of this work of his, too, along with an English translation. H. H. Wilson, Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, announced in a letter addressed to the government: "... Besides the Tibetan Grammar and the Dictionary, a translation of a Tibetan vocabulary, containing a summary of the Buddha system, was ready for publication and at the disposal of Government." (Letter dated December 26, 1832, addressed to the government)

The former two, the *Grammar* and the *Dictionary*, were published in 1834; the work on terminology, however, was not even discussed, although the new secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, J. Prinsep, called attention to its value:

"The Dictionary and Grammar now submitted form but a small part of the works Mr. Csoma has executed while in Calcutta. A catalogue and analysis of the voluminous manuscripts received from Mr. B. H. Hodgson of Nepal, and a valuable and most extensive polyglot vocabulary (of which M. Rémusat attempted a small portion in Paris from Chinese works), and several minor translations are deposited with the Asiatic Society. The vocabulary would merit well to be printed, but the expense would be considerable, and the author is averse to the further detention, which its publication would entail on him at the present moment." (Letter dated January 5, 1834, addressed to Macnaughten)

Soon after this, Csoma left Calcutta for a number of years, making a study tour of North Bengal between 1835 and 1837; but even after he returned to Calcutta, there was not a word about the publication of the dictionary of terminology. For

years after his death it lay unnoticed, until Theodore Duka, an enthusiastic admirer of Csoma, dug out the forgotten manuscript from the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. It was he who published the table of contents of this completely unknown material. In this he was greatly assisted by Csoma's successor as librarian of the society, Dr. Rajendrolála Mitra, who added a supplement to the table of contents:

"The volume is a foolscap folio of 686 pages, with 20 pages of index and some blank pages, in a good state of preservation. Some sheets of the paper bear the watermark of "Snelgrove, 1828", others of 1830. The writing, therefore, was not undertaken until 1831, when Csoma de Kőrös was in Calcutta, and he must have taken some time to complete it. The whole is in the handwriting of Csoma. From the general appearance of neatness and absence of erasures, corrections and interlineations, it is evident that the volume is a fair copy. The matter is arranged in four columns, the first containing the serial number, next the Sanskrit word in English letters, then the Tibetan equivalent in Tibetan character, and lastly the English meaning. The words are grouped in classes, as shown in the index. The arrangements being according to classes and not alphabetical, it is difficult to use the volume for reference." (Theodore Duka, *Life and Works of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös*, London 1885, p. 207)

Thus at least the existence of the work arranged for the press by Alexander Csoma de Kőrös as early as 1834 became known to the scholarly public. It was left to someone else to publish the manuscript itself, to Sir E. Denison Ross, who later founded the renowned School of Oriental and African Studies. It was he who, with the help of Professor Vidyābhūšana, published the first part in 1911 as the first booklet of Volume IV of the series *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, and, thanks to their laudable efforts, the second booklet came out in 1916, the War notwithstanding. A long time elapsed again until the third part was published in 1944, edited by Professor Chatterjee, with an appreciative foreword by General Secretary Kalidas Nag.

This is the first time that this basic work of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös appears in one volume.

To make the *Vocabulary* easier to use, the dictionary part is presented uninterrupted by the foreword and table of contents originally published before the first and the third parts; these we placed at the beginning of the volume. The second part, which originally had no table of contents, has now been furnished with one.

The Editor  
(Terjék József)