

Tibetan Text Preservation and Publishing

Tony Duff

Padma Karpo Translation Committee

Nepal

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

Due to an unfortunate set of circumstances I was not able to make it in time for the conference. I would like to extend my apologies to the organizers who were kind enough to invite me to come and speak again this year. My apologies to you in the audience as well for any inconvenience it may have caused. From my side, I am sad not to be with all of you, especially my close acquaintances in the field of Tibetan studies. I had looked forward to seeing Gene Smith, Robert Chiltern, Chris Fynn, and the many others who will be there and with whom fruitful discussions were to be had.

Much of my work over the last few years has been done in connection with the heirarchs of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Ms. Barbara Green has also been working closely with them for many years. She is the author of a very well-known video on the main seat of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition in India, so it seemed fitting to ask her to stand in for me. She is your reader for today.

Given my absence and given that I presented the work of the Drukpa Kagyu Heritage Project extensively at last year's conference in Taiwan, I thought that I would write a set of notes here to bring you up-to-date. It is my strong hope that I will be up to join you again at next year's conference at which time I should have lots of materials to show you on the computer.

The Drukpa Kagyu Heritage Project

The Drukpa Kagyu Heritage Project was established in order to revive the writings of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The texts of that tradition were almost completely destroyed by the Communist invasion of Tibet and the simultaneous loss of most of the rare texts in the kingdom of Bhutan which was the only other repository of Drukpa Kagyu texts.

For seven years now the project, which is housed in Nepal, has been collecting texts

of the lineage, typing them into computers, and correcting them. Most of the typing and a significant portion of the correction work has been done at this point. It is anticipated that correction work will continue for another one to two years and then the massive job of publication will take another year or so. The final edition will consist of approximately 110 volumes of texts. The plan is to produce an initial 300 sets of the edition and to distribute these at no cost to the various Drukpa Kagyu monasteries and retreat centers around the world. This is contingent of course on raising funds for printing which could cost from \$300,000 to \$500,000.

When the project was first started, it did not seem feasible to publish the work in any but the traditional paper form. However after some prompting by Mr. Chris Fynn and with further developments in personal computing, it seemed possible that the project could be published electronically. To do that, new software had to be created to suit the task, since the word-processing format being used for the basic work could not be suitable for archiving and electronic publication. During a period of four years, we put a lot of effort into developing stand-alone Windows software which would be suitable for archiving and publishing Tibetan texts. Along the way, we also made software that was suitable for making electronic dictionaries and a standalone word-processing application. Mr. Leigh Brasington was our assistant during that period. He has now left the project. Now that he has left, please note that he does not represent our projects nor the software developed our projects.

The new software really is unique. It is the first and the only standalone software available that handles Tibetan (and English) properly. The fonts in the software are those of the Tibetan Computer Company which have become famous amongst Tibetans and Westerners alike as the best in the world. I am sorry that we cannot demonstrate the new software to you today. However, if you visit our web-site at www.tibet.dk/tcc you will be able to download a copy of the new software and a variety of files for use with it. The reader edition of the software is completely free. This new software is effectively an Adobe Acrobat for Tibetan. It is our hope that others such as ACIP would embrace this new software.

Although the entire work of the Drukpa Kagyu Heritage Project has not been corrected, there are significant portions which are complete and which could be published electronically using the new software. Therefore, although it will be some years yet before the paper edition of the Drukpa Kagyu texts will be available, it is my hope to start electronic publishing of some portions in the near future.

The Padma Karpo Translation Committee

I was asked by Tsoknyi Rinpoche in 1992 to found and direct the Drukpa Kagyu Heritage project and also to found and direct the translation committee which he called the Padma Karpo Translation Committee. The work of the two groups proceeds hand in hand, even though they have slightly different focii.

As the software development work of the Drukpa Kagyu Heritage Project proceeded, the Padma Karpo translation committee undertook its own projects in connection with the new software. Our first project was to make an electronic edition of the most classic of Tibetan English dictionaries, the Sarat Chandra Das Tibetan-English Dictionary. We typed in the entire dictionary and corrected it thoroughly using the new software. We also added hypertext to the new dictionary to increase its ease of use. The work is complete and available.

In recent years, Sarat Chandra Das' dictionary has come under attack by some translators. Although their comments that some of the translation equivalents are outdated are true, the rest of their attacks seem quite unfounded. In particular, it seems to be popular to discount his dictionary because of its having a small number of entries. As a matter of interest, the dictionary has about 23,000 headwords which is approximately the same as the number of headwords in the standard Tibetan-Tibetan dictionary in use these days, the "New Arrangement Lexicon". This seems to make it difficult to assert that his dictionary is short on entries!

However, judging the content of the dictionary by the count of headwords is a mistake. Sarat Chandra Das's dictionary has a huge amount of material contained within the individual headwords, much of which could be set out under its own heads. Because it is not under its own head, most of this material is not really accessible. It gets overlooked and hence there is the current tendency to pass the dictionary off.

For instance, you might look up a word in the paper edition and not find what you are seeking. However, it is probable that your word exists as part of another entry somewhere else in the dictionary. Normally, in the paper edition, you would just give up and not find it. However, the electronic edition has the advantage of extremely powerful search features. With the new software you can find anything, anywhere in the dictionary in moments. When you do use the electronic version, you suddenly find a wealth of information in the dictionary which you had overlooked previously. For this and many other reasons, my translator friends who have started using the new electronic edition of the dictionary have

rescinded their complaints and once again included the dictionary as one of their principal research tools.

The original edition of the dictionary is full of typographical errors, most of which derive from the difficulties of printing in India at the turn-of-the-century. We went to a substantial amount of trouble to remove all of these errors with the result that the electronic edition is very clean and easy to read compared to the original paper edition. Additionally, because of the consistency of spelling now present in the electronic version, searches of the dictionary will find every instance of a word. If we had followed the suggestions of some scholars and reproduced the original, spelling errors and all, the value of the electronic edition would have been severely reduced. However, in order to cater to all needs, we also went to a substantial amount of trouble to annotate the changes that we made. In this way, we made the electronic edition as useful as possible while maintaining its value for scholars who need to know what was in the original, paper edition.

And evaluation version containing several hundred actual entries from the electronic edition of the dictionary is available on our website for free download together with the reader software. Please do download them and have a look; we think you'll be pleasantly surprised at what you find. The web-site address is the same as the one given earlier: www.tibet.dk/tcc

With the completion of the Sarat Chandra Das Dictionary project, we turned to publishing other things in the new software format.

We have prepared a number of Tibetan texts and these will go up on a website shortly. For example, the Bodhisattva-charya-ava-tara and the Madhya-marka-ava-tara are ready. Also, a small but excellent "Enumeration of Dharmas" from Konchok Jigmey Wangpo will be presented in the Tibetan with English translation. This should be useful for scholars and students of Tibetan alike.

Especially, my own Tibetan-English dictionary will be available very shortly in the new format. I would like to make the point concerning this dictionary that it focuses on quality rather than quantity. There is a general complaint about the two other Tibetan-English electronic dictionaries that are available, those from Eric Schmidt and Jim Valby, that they just take a shotgun approach. They provide all sorts of different English words for a given Tibetan word without explanation. This is because their dictionaries are essentially a random compilation of translation equivalents from many different sources.

This glossary approach might have been useful in the early days of Tibetan-English translation but there is a general feeling amongst translators that the value of this approach has passed. Therefore, unlike these other two dictionaries, my own dictionary does not attempt to cover every word in the Tibetan vocabulary but attempts to give an explanation of what the Tibetan words mean, together with what seem to be the appropriate English equivalents. Each entry has carefully researched information, often with examples from the texts that I have been translating in conjunction with Tibetan scholars. I expect to release it sometime in the next few months. Note that an evaluation version of the dictionary will appear on the web-site when the initial version is released.

Finally, we are close to completing another project we have undertaken, which is the electronic publication of Jamgon Kongtrul's famous encyclopedia of knowledge. This text is very important in the Kagyu tradition but is out of print and hard to get. We have used an original copy from Pay-pung to input the text and have corrected it very carefully. Again, we have not followed the Tibetan style of merely changing the text and calling it "correct" but have annotated all of our changes. We will be presenting the entire work in the new software format on a CD. The work will also be presented together with a digital image of every page in the original. This will allow scholars to check the original in case of questioning our typing and correction process. We feel that this is important since even the best correction work usually leaves a couple of typing errors in a long document.

The Tibetan Software

Just a note to those of you who are using the Tibetan software for DOS: there is a new version available. It is version 4.6. The program itself has not changed but the fonts have been radically improved and completed. Some of you, such as ACIP, have gratis copies of the earlier version. If you would like to contact me by e-mail, I will make the necessary arrangements to provide you with a free update. For anyone else, updates are available through the authorized distributor. Again, see our web-site for details.

As a matter of interest, one of the things that prevented me from arriving at this conference in a timely way was a hurriedly scheduled but necessary trip to the kingdom of Bhutan. On that trip, I provided the government with the new version of the software just mentioned. The software is used by them throughout the kingdom. It is a slightly modified version made to suit the needs of Dzongkha which is the official language of Bhutan. They have plans for the future development of a Unicode system for Dzongkha and I have offered certain proprietary portions of the Dzongkha software for use in their project. It is my hope that, if their project proceeds well, it will help the needs of Tibetan computing

and especially text preservation.

Since I am sure that Gene Smith will be in the audience, I would like to mention that I did a lot of research whilst in Bhutan regarding Padma Karpo's collected works. My research turned up a number of surprises, including the fact that a new edition, which should be substantially better than anything else available, should be available shortly. I hope to be in touch with Gene to fill him in on the results of my researches.

I would like to close here. Again, I offer you my apologies for not being able to be present today. And again, it is my strong hope to be able to attend and speak at the conference next year. At that time I should have samples of Tibetan texts that we have released to show you.