

A FRAGMENT FROM TUN HUANG

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My article "How Old Was Srong Brtsan Sgam Po?" in Vol II, No. I of this *Bulletin* refers to a damaged passage at the beginning of the mss of the Tun Huang Annals. The present article publishes, for the first time, a transliteration of the text of that passage together with a suggested reconstruction and a translation. The importance of this fragment and the light it throws on Tibetan chronology have been examined in my earlier article.

The chronology of the early Tibetan Kingdom depends to a great extent on the annals from Tun Huang published in 1946 by Professors J. Bacot, F. W. Thomas, and C. Toussaint in *Documents de Touen Houang relatifs a l' Histoire du Tibet* (THD). There are two mss containing these annals; the longer is in two parts of which the first—and smaller—is in the Bibliotheque Nationale at Paris with the number Pelliot Tibetain 1288 (formerly Pelliot 252); the larger second part is in the India Office Library at London with the number 730 (formerly Stein Tun Huang 103, 19, viii, i). Another mss in the British Museum—Or 8218, 187—overlaps the former record at the year 743 and runs to the year 763 with a lacuna of seven years between 747 and 754. This is a quite separate compilation; it is not just a copy of the manuscript which is divided between Paris and London.

The Paris mss provides an explicit starting point for the year-by-year record of events which it contains. This is the dog year following the death of Srong Brtsan Sgam Po. That event is mentioned in the Chinese T'ang Annals under the first year of Yung Hui which corresponds to 650 A.D. The Tibetan bird year, preceding the dog year, would run from about February/March 649 to February/March 650. Internal evidence in the T'ang Annals suggests that Srong Brtsan Sgam Po died towards the end of that period—between January and March 650. From the dog year beginning in 650 down to the pig year 747 the mss contains a short comment on the events of each year. Before the first of those entries—that for 650—there is a passage in which the events of the preceding nine years are summarised, thus

taking the record back to 641 when the Chinese princess Mun Cheng arrived in Tibet as bride to Srong Brtsan Sgam Po. This date accords with the account in the T'ang Annals.

On p 10 of THD the editors state "La relation commence six annees plus tot"—i.e. six years before 650; this should, in fact, be nine years as stated above. At p. 9 they also comment on the mss, as follows: "Sa partie superieure est laceree sur le cote gauche. On peut constater cependant qu'il ne manque pas necessairement une partie superieure. Les premiers alineas, dont les tetes manquent, ne se terminent pas comme les alineas des annees". Examination of a photographic copy of the mss, kindly made available by the Bibliotheque Nationale, shows that this comment refers to a number of fragmentary lines preceding the passage with which the published version of the mss opens. I offer here a transcription of that unpublished portion, followed by a suggested reconstruction, and a translation. Both the text and its interpretation are greatly clarified by two passages in the Chronicle section of THD which relate to the events mentioned in the unpublished annals fragment and which contain very similar wording. The Chronicle makes little or no attempt at precise dating but gives in some instances a fuller and more popular presentation of certain events which are summarised more systematically in the unpublished fragment which is the subject of this essay.

Transcription

1. 'khus nas/snying drung
2. um pa'a/mtha' dag kyang
3.
4. snang glo ba rings nas/kho na'i
bran pa tsab gyim po/
5. bkyon phab nas bkumo/mkhar sngur ba
bshig go/
6. / btsan po khri srong rtsan gyis/shuld byang
lam du byung ste/ 'a zha dang rgya la'a
7. dang 'a zha gnyis dpya' gcalto/

8. na'a/btsan po gcen srong rtsan dang/gcung
btsan srong gyis nold nas/gcung
9. l ta mkha's sregs 'khuste/mnyal gyi gzen tu/
gcung btsan srong/zhugsu
10. so/

Notes

The number of letters probably contained in the missing part of each line, calculated by measurement, is indicated by the number of dots, which run from 30 in the first two lines to 7 in the last. The lines have been numbered for ease of reference.

1. Only part of the *a bo* is visible but cf 'khuste in 1. 9.
2. Indications of a *zhabs kyu* and the lower part of *ma* can be seen. After *pa* is what I take to be *a bo* followed by a *shad*. Above the letter is a mark which might be the trace of a reversed *ki gu* but is probably only a smear or the intrusion of part of a letter from the line above. The reading is, therefore, not absolutely certain; but cf the Chronicle THD p 111 "*sum pa mtha' dag dmagis gdab myi dgos par...*"
3. The space between line 2 and the next surviving line shows that a short line has been completely lost owing to damage to the mss.
4. Only part of the superscribed *s* is visible but the context and comparison with THD p 111 makes *sngang* certain.
5. In other passages of THD where this name occurs there is doubt whether it is *sngur ba* or *sdur ba*. Here *sngur* looks more probable.
10. *s* is not complete: *mo* would be a possible reading but the traces are more like *so*.

Reconstruction of the Text

Words and letters which have been supplied are underlined.

1. 'khus nas/snying drung
2. myang mang po rje zhang snang gis sum pa'a/
mtha' dag kyang
3. rnal mar bkug go/
4. de nas lo x x na' /myang mang po rje zhang snang glo ba rings
nas/kho na'i bran pa tsab gyim po
5. 'khuste/myang zhang snang la bkyon phab nas bkumo/mkhar
sngur ba bshig go/
6. de nas lo x x na' /btsan po khri srong rtsan gyis/shuld
byang lam du byung ste/'a zha dang rgya la'
7. dmag drangste/rgya dang 'a zha gnyis dpya' gcalto/
8. de nas lo gsum na'/btsan po gcen srong rtsan dang/
gcung btsan srong gyis nold nas/gcung
9. btsan srong gi zhal ta mkha's sregs 'khuste/mnyal gyi gzen
tu/gcung btsan srong/zhugsu
10. dgung du gshegsa/

Notes

1. The line is too fragmentary for anything but guess work. The reference may have been to events related in THD p 111 beginning : "*btsan po srong brtsan sgam po'i ring la / / yab 'bangs ni 'khus*". In that passage the death by poisoning of the father of Srong Brtsan Sgam Po and the revolt of his subjects are mentioned. Snying Drung is a place name—see THD p 31. The Padma Bka' Thang Yig puts it in Snye Mo.
2. and 3. cf THD p 111 lines 1—7 "*ung gi 'og du myang mang po rje zhang gis/sum pa mtha' dag dmagis gdab myi dgos par/..... rnal mar bkug go*" Another reference to the same events is in THD p 101 "*myang mang po rje zhang snang gis/sum kham's tham 'shad' bangs su dgug par bka' stsal to / /*". The annals fragment seems to be closer to the former passage and I have, therefore, taken my reconstruction from there; but "*'bangsu bkug (or dgug) go*" would be a possible alternative.

4. and 5. cf THD p 111 lines 13 sq and specially lines 22—27 : ‘*ung nas zhang snang gi bran/pa tshab gyim po ‘khu ste/zhang snang bkum ste / /*
6. The formula “*de nas lo x x na*” is found at the beginning of each section of the chronological summary with which the published text in THD opens. For the later part of the line see THD p 111 lines 10—11 : “ ‘*ung gi ‘og du btsan po zhabs kyis btsugs ste / byang lam du mu byung ma drangs par / / rgya dang ‘a zhas dpya’ gcal lo /*” It may be noticed that the king’s name is given throughout this fragment as Srong Rtsan. The form Srong Brtsan is used in other parts of THD and also in several inscriptions of the VIIIth century. It is accepted by later Tibetan writers and I use it in the body of this paper.
7. *dmag drangste* is a speculative reconstruction. Some such phrase seems certain. *Dra ma drangste*, a possible alternative, seems to be used more of an attack on a specific place rather than of the launching of a general campaign. On the analogy of THD p 111 lines 10-11 the phrase might have been *dmag ma drangs par*, suggesting that the enemy gave in without the need for a fight, a flattering historical inaccuracy which might not, perhaps be expected in the annals portion of THD.
8. *lo gsum* is suggested after comparing the small remnant of the letter which precedes *na*, with other possible endings: *gnyis* would be the only other possibility but in other sections of the summary the time interval is either three or six years.
9. *Mkha*’s *Sregs* must, I think, be a personal name; and it is no more than a coincidence that it should contain the syllable *sregs* (burn) when Btsan Srong died by fire. *Kha* appears in several other names but I know no other appearance of *mkha*’s; *sregs* is found in e.g. Rgyal Sum Sregs (THD p 35) and Lho ‘Dus Sregs (THD p 41). No surviving Tibetan clan name ends ... *lta*; there is a personal name Rgyal Ta (THD p 63) but on the analogy of the *bran* (subject) Pa Tsab in line 5, *zhal ta* (servant) seems the best suggestion here.

10. The activity described as 'khus, implying disaffection and treachery, is regularly followed by the death of the victim and there can be little doubt that Btsan Srong, of whom no more is heard, died by fire as a result of some such treachery. *Dgung du gshegs* would fit the gap exactly; but if the expression "went to heaven by fire" seems strange, the alternative *tshigs nas bkrongso* (or *gum mo*) would be possible. I prefer *dgung du gshegs* which is the regular usage for the death of royalty.

Translation

Passages based on reconstruction of the text are underlined.

..... Myang Mang Po Rje Zhang brought about the submission of all the Sum pa also. ..turning treacherous; at Snying Drung

Then after x years when Myang Zhang Snang became disloyal, his subject Pa Tsab betrayed him so that Zhang Snang was accused and put to death. Mkhaz Sngur Ba was destroyed.

Then after x years the Btsan Po Khri Srong Rtsan set out on the north road and made war on the 'A Zha and China. Both China and the 'A Zha offered tribute.

Then after three years, when the Btsan Po, the elder brother, Srong Rtsan and the younger brother Btsan Srong had been reconciled, Mkhaz's Sregs, the servant of the younger brother Btsan Srong, betrayed him and the younger brother died in his bed by fire.