

AN INVASION OF THE NORTH INDIA AFTER HARSHA'S DEATH

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The story of a Sino-Tibetan invasion of North India in the reign of Arjuna, the usurper of Harsha's throne, is recently discussed by a specialist in Chinese language and history in *Visva-Bharati Annals* Vol. XI. Item No. 2 (Narayan Chandra Sen: *Accouuts of India and Kashmir in the Dynastic Histories of the T'ang Period*). Since our publication of *Hu-len-deb-ther*, the earlier version of *Deb-ther-dmar-po* (*The Red Annals*, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 1961) is referred herein as a principal source, I may be permittad to present in *Bulletin of Tibetology* certain facts from Tibetan tradition with my reading of the relevant lines in *The Red Annals'*

The earlier version of *The Red Annals* is in archaic style and in places the expressions are rather cryptic. The relevant words about the Sino-Tibetan invasion as in the print of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (P 9) are “ཕྱི་རྒྱལ་གྱི་མཁན་པོ་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་པ་བཏང་བ་མ་གཞིར་བཅོམ་

པས་རྒྱལ་བ་བོད་ཀྱིས་ཐོས་ནས་དམག་བཏང་ནས་མ་གཞིར་བཅོམ། ”. A literal translation in English may be made thus “The envoy sent to India by T'ai Tsong was conquerd in Magadha. Having heard the (Indian) victory Tibetans sent an army and Magadha was conquered”

Different Tibetan versions were collected by Gedun Chhopel (Dge-'dun-chhos-'phal) the well-kuown Amdo scholar who took interest in ancient inscriptions and old books in the manner of the modern western scholarship. He was a well-known figure in the second quarter of this (Christian) century and his *Deb-ther-dkar-po* or *The White Annals* is now available in modern print (Tibetan Freedom Press, Darjeeling 1964) I give below a free translation from PP. 75-76 of this book.

‘When Harsha (Tib Dga'-ba) was alive he sent a Brahman (Tib. Bram-ze) to present gifts to the Chinese emperor. Harsha was the author of the drama Nagananda (Tib. Klu-kun-tu-dga'-ba'i-zlo-gar) which one finds in Tenjur (Bstan-'gyur). There is a Sanskrit Avadana (Tib. Rtogs-brjod) in verses which was written by Banabhatta (Tib-Nags kyi-dpa'-bo) in India. In the 22 year of Cheng Kawn and 1192 years after the passing away of the Lord Buddha, tha (Chinese) emperor

(T'ai Tsong) sent an envoy named Wang Hiuan Ts'o (Tib. Vang-hen-tse) and thirty other horsemen were sent to India. At that time Harsha was already dead and they witnessed the time when the country was not in peace. Harsha having no son, the minister Arjuna (Tib. Srid-sgrub) was on the throne and was causing great harm to Buddhism. (Arjuna) conquered the (Chinese) envoy and killed most of his friends and looted the baggages. Wang Hiuan Ts'o himself and few friends escaped in the dead of night and reached Nepal, which was under Tibet and sought the refuge with Songtsen Gampo (Srong-btsen-Sygam-po). The Tibetan king sent a crack regiment of 1,200 Tibetan soldiers and 7,000 Nepali cavalry to India. With the envoy they reached Hirahita. In round about three days battle they (Tibetans) captured the main capital. They killed about 3,000 Indians and about 1,000 were thrown into the nearby rivers. King Arjuna escaped but he brought new army and offered yet another battle but at last he was defeated by the Tibetans and he (Arjuna) with relations were caught alive and sent to Chinese emperor. The emperor was very pleased and when T'ai Tsong died, a statue of the Tibetan king was made in front of the tomb as a mark of remembrance for his deeds".

I do not intend to enter into the many disputed points about this particular Sino-Tibetan invasion after Harsha's death, and would only emphasize certain facts firmly handed down in Tibetan tradition. First, there were several Tibetan invasions into different parts of Northern India in the time of Songsten Gampo and his successors; such invasions into Chian in the east and Li-yul, (Eastern Turkistan) in the north are admitted by modern historians. Secondly, after Harsha's death Buddhism not only lost its state patronage but was undergoing much persecution; in Eastern India Sasanka's persecution of Buddhism in Bengal itself is well known; such conditions might have invited the anger of the great Tibetan protector of Dharma (Tib. Chhos-rgyal/Skt. Dharmaraja). Thirdly, Arjuna's treatment of Chinese envoy gave the Tibetan king an opportunity to vindicate the Dharma in Phagyul ('Phags-yul/Skt. Aryabhumi) itself as well as to prove the superiority of the Tibetans over the Chinese.

Two very significant facts in Gedun Chhophel's account are (i) description of the Indian region which the Tibetans invaded; and (2) the identification of the statue in front of the Chinese emperor's tomb. The region is called Hirahita, and Gedun Chhophel included Malla, Sakya, Lichchavi, Vriji and Kanyakubja in Hirahita. Scholars of Sanskrit and Chinese may consider whether Hirahita can be derived from

Hiranyavati (cf L. Petech : *Northern India according to the Shui-ching-chu*, PP. 25-33 ; Rome 1950). The statue which was placed in the front of the Chinese emperor's tomb is that of Tibetan king and not that of Indian king held as prisoner.

Gedun Chhophel does not say that both Songtsen Gampo the victor and the Indian king the prisoner were commemorated in statues as some Chinese sources, reported by the Indian Sinologist Professor Bagchi, suggest (*Sino-Indian Studies*, Vol. 1, part 2, P. 69).
