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*dBa'bzhed. The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet: Translation and facsimile edition of the Tibetan text* by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften, Band 291) 121pp., 32pl.

Reviewed by Rudolf Kaschewsky

The cooperation between the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences and the Austrian Academy of Sciences has produced a new publication of the highest value: the undisputed earliest version of one of the most authentic chronicles of Tibetan history (in Dan Martin's chronologically arranged *Tibetan Histories* the 'Sba-bzhed' is the No.1). This work presents details on the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, the erection of the famous temple of bSam-yas, and the "historically still shadowy Chos-Bon contest" (as P.K. Sørensen in his preface, p. x, rightly calls it), and, finally, the debate between the Indian and Chinese interpretations of Buddhism (AD 792-794).

In fact, we have known of the existence of a chronicle bearing this (or a similar) title since A.I. Vostrikov's *Tibetskaja istoriceskaja literatura* (1937 and 1958; this

meritorious book is lacking in the bibliography) and R.A. Stein's first edition of the text (1961), and it was already quite clear that this work constitutes a unique source of high authenticity. However, there were obviously "numerous additions, modifications and updatings" (Introduction, p. 2) in the versions then known.

The most interesting question is concerned with differences between the text edited and translated in this book and previously available versions. The answer is clear: this dBa'bzhed "predates the extant sBa bzhed versions, or at least represents an early and different elaboration" (as stated on the back cover of the book). In the chapter 'The Problem of Dating' the authors are cautious enough not to indicate an exact date, but they present various proofs of the relative antiquity of the work.

The Tibetan text is presented in a quite legible facsimile edition and the translation is highly accurate. In fact, each strange or uncommon word has been carefully discussed, and remaining ambiguities and uncertainties have frankly been admitted. Therefore, and especially in view of the 'ancient terminology' (discussed on pp. 11ff.), an index of words—or at least of those expressions whose meanings the translators have elaborated with utmost accuracy—would have been highly appreciated.

Also, the names occurring in the text have been explained in a very reliable way, with many elucidating quotations from other historical texts, above all from the ancient Chronicle of Dunhuang. There are very helpful indices of personal names, geographical names and Tibetan texts. Among the names, some are missing, e.g. Khri'phang gsum (fol. 29b, translation p. 101), dBa' Rad na (who is dealt with not only on fol. 20a, but also fol. 17b/p. 72), Zhang bTsan bzher (fol. 28b/p. 100; fol. 30a/p.102), Shakya pra bha (fol. 17b/p.69), and Sru Yang dag (fol. 19b /p. 79).

The bibliography contains Tibetan, Chinese and Western 'sources'. (One wonders, of course, why the purely secondary Western treatises are also named 'sources'.) Of the Tibetan (mainly historical) texts, with very few exceptions only modern 'editions' (published in the People's Republic of China between 1978 and 1995) are mentioned, in spite of the fact that in most cases facsimile editions of the original texts are available.

To sum up, the book under review is beyond doubt a milestone in the investigation of ancient Tibetan historiography.