A FRAGMENT FROM TUN HUANG

—H. E. RICHARDSON

My article "How Old Was Strong Brtsan Sgam Po?" in Vol II, No. I of this Bulletin refers to a damaged passage at the beginning of the ms 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 Tun 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 Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris with the number Pelliot Tibétain 1288 (formerly Pelliot 225); 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 Strong Brtsan Sgam Po. That event is mentioned in the Chinese Tang 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 Tang Annals suggests that Strong 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 ms 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 summarized, thus

33
taking the record back to 641 when the Chinese princess Múi Ch'eng arrived in Tibet as bride to Strng Btsan 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 années 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 supérieure est laceree sur le cote gauche. On peat constater cependant qu'il ne manque pas necessairement une partie superieure. Les premiers alinées, dont les tetes marquent, ne se terminent pas comme les alinées des annes?". Examination of a photographic copy of the mss, kindly made available by the Bibliothèque 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/nying drung
2. ........................... um pa'a/mtha'dug kyang
3. ..............................
4. ........................... snang glo ba rings nas/kho na'i
   bran pa tab gyim po/
5. ........................... bkyon phab nas bkumo/mkhar sngr ba
   bshig go/
6. ........................... / brsan pa khri srong rtsin gnyis/shuld byang
   lare du byang ste/ 'a zha dang gya la'a
7. ........................... dang 'a zha gnyis dpya' gcaltso/

34
8. ......... na'a/btsan po ge'n srong rtsan dang/geung btsan srong gys no'd sas/geung

9. ......... l ta mkhla's sregs 'khus.te/mnyal gyi ge'en te/ geung 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 'khus.te in l. 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 kl gu bat, 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' deg drags gi lab snyi 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 ms.

4. Only part of the superscribed s is visible but the context and comparison with THD p 111 makes snang certain.

5. In other passages of THD where this name occurs there is doubt whether it is sngur ba or sdar 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.

35
1. 'khun nas/snying drung

2. .................. nyang bang po rje zhang snang gi" sum pa'a/ mtha' dag kyang

3. tsan mar blkug go/

4. de nga lo x x na'/ nyang mang po rje zhang snang glo bs rings nas/kho na'i brane pa tsab gym po

5. 'khusti/nyon zhong mang la bkhyun phab nas bkunu/mkhar vagur ha bahig go/

6. de ngal la x x na'/bsan po khris srong rtsas gyis/shuld byang lare du byung ste'a zha dang rgya la

7. daang drungs/rgya daang 'a zha gnyis dpya' gealto/

8. de nas lo gwa'n na'/bsan po geen srong rtsan dang/ gcung btsan zrong gyis nold nas/geung

9. bsan zhang gi zhal ta mtha's sregs 'khusti/mnyal gyi geen nh/gcung btsan zrong/zhugsu

10. gcung du glegs/

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 : "bsnas po srong btsan sgyam po'i riegl la / sna' bangs ni 'khas'/. In that passage the death by poisoning of the father of Srong Britsan 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. 3d THD p 111 lines 1-7: "nyang gi og du nyang mang po rje zhang gibs/sun pa mtha' dag dmar/gyis gdb mi (go-par), . . . , real mar blkug ge" Another reference to the same events is in THD p 101 "nyang mang po rje zhang snang gibs/sun kha' nyi shad djang su dgu g par bka' stsal tu /". The annals fragment seems to be closer to the former passage and I have, therefore, taken my reconstruction from there; but "'bangs blkug (or dgu) go " would be a possible alternative.
4. and 5. cf THD p 111 lines 13 sq and specially lines 22–27: 'urg nas zhang smong gi bran 'pa tshab gyim po 'khu stel'zhang snang bkun 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: "'jug gi 'og du btsan po zhal's kyis btsugs ste / byung lugs du na byung ma drangs par / rgya dang 'a zhas dphyas gcal lo /". It may be noticed that the king's name is given throughout this fragment as Srong Ritsan. The form Srong Britsan 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. drung drangs is a speculative reconstruction. Some such phrase seems certain. Dets ma drangg, 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 dno ng na 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 Bstan Srong died by fire. Khra 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 "tha, implying disaffection and treachery, is regularly followed by the death of the victim and there can be little doubt that Btsan Stong, of whom no more is heard, died by fire as a result of some such treachery. Droog du gelego would fit the gap exactly; but if the expression "went to heaven by fire" seems strange, the alternative tsongs nas bkra-sga (or gum mgo) would be possible. I prefer droog du gelego which is the regular usage for the death of royalty.

Translation

Passages based on reconstruction of the text are underlined.

...turning treacherous; at Swaying Droog

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

Then after x years the Btsan Po Khri Stong Rtsan set out on the north road and came 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, Stong Rtsan and the younger brother Btsan Stong had been reconciled, Mka's Seags, the servant of the younger brother Btsan Stong, betrayed him and the younger brother died in his bed by fire.