AN INVASION OF THE NORTH INDIA AFTER HARSHA'S DEATH

—MYNAK R. TULKU

The story of a Simo-Tibetan invasion of North India in the reign of Ajuna, the usurper of Harsha's throne, is recently discussed by a scholar in Chinese language and history in Vivers-Bharati Annals Vol. XI, 1971, X (Narayan Chandra Sen: Accounts of India and Kashmir in the Dynamic History of the Tang Period). Since our publication of flu-Im-Im-h-mul, the earlier version of Deh-thar-dam-po (The Red Annals, Nampung Institute of Tibetology, 1981) is referred therein as a principal source, I may be permitted to present in detail to 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 Simo-Tibetan invasion as in the print of the Nampung Institute of Tibetology (P 9) are """"marshal"""". A literal translation in English may be made thus: "The envoy sent to India by Tai Tsong was conveyed in Magadha. Having heard the (Indian) victory Tibetan sent an army and Magadha was conquered."

Different Tibetan versions were collected by Gesun Chlopel (Dga-'dun-dhogs-'phal) the well-known 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 Dey-thar-po fo The White Annals is now available in modern print (Tibetan Freedom Press, Darjeeling 1966).

When Harsha (Tib. Dga-'du) was alive he sent a Brahman (Tib. Brany-sa) to present gifts to the Chinese emperor. Harsha was the author of the drama Nagendra (Tib. Klu-lun-tu-dga-'ba-li-gor) which one finds in Tanjor (Bhutan). There is a Sanskrit Avadhana (Tib. Ngos-gi-tshog) in verses which was written by Barubshat (Tib. Nga-pa gyi-da-ba) in India. In the 22 year of Chang Tsen and 1132 years after the passing away of the Lord Buddha, the (Chinese) emperor
(T'ol Tsong) sent an envoy named Wang Hium Ts'o (Tib, Wang-han-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 baggage. Wang Hium Ts'o to 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-bas-en-Sgyam-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 Hirhanta. 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 river. 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'ol Tsong died a statue of the Tibetan king was made in front of the temple 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 Songtsen 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 Sessanka'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, Chokrugal/Skt Dharma). Thirdly, Arjuna's treatment of Chinese envoy gave the Tibetan king an opportunity to vindicate the Dharma in Phgyul (Phug-yul/Skt Arthaburj) itself as well as to prove the superiority of the Tibetans over the Chinese.

Two very significant facts in Gedu Chruphel's account are (1) 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 Hirhanta, and Gedu Chruphel included Malia, Salva, Llichwhi, Vri and Sanyakula in Hirhanta. Scholars of Sanskrit and Chinese may consider whether Hirhanta can be derived from
Hranyavati (cf. L. Pesch: *Northern India according to the Shui-ch'ing-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 Chophel 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 (*Shino-Indian Studies*, Vol. 1, part 2, p. 99).