

## A NEWLY IDENTIFIED FRAGMENT OF THE *TIBETAN ROYAL ANNALS* IN ST. PETERSBURG\*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the *Tibetan Royal Annals* is, together with the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, one of the most important Dunhuang Tibetan documents for understanding the history of the Old Tibetan Empire. Since J. Bacot, F.W. Thomas and Ch. Toussaint first published transliterations and annotated translations of *Royal Annals* (Bacot *et al.* 1940-46), numerous studies concerning the *Annals* have been published.<sup>1</sup> While examining the Old Tibetan texts kept at the Academy of Russian Sciences in St. Petersburg in 2009, I realised that one of the fragments contains passages which are similar to those in the *Annals*. The fragment may possibly represent a previously unknown version of the *Annals*. The aim of this paper is to introduce this newly found fragment and discuss its relation with the two known versions of the *Royal Annals* (hereafter referred to as *Annals* I and *Annals* II).

### 2. Dx 12851

The fragment is now preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, the Academy of Russian Sciences (St. Petersburg branch) with the site number of Dx 12851.<sup>2</sup> The size of the fragment is 16 cm (in width) x 12.6 cm (in height). The recto side is a part of the Chinese Buddhist sūtra, *Dafang Guangfu huayen*

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\* I would like to thank Dr. Irina Popova, Director of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St.Petersburg), for kindly permitting me to publish this fragment, Dx 12851. I also would like to thank Prof. Tsuguhito Takeuchi of the Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, Dr. Yoshiro Imaeda of the C.N.R.S. (Paris), and Dr. Brandon Dotson of Oxford University for valuable comments. Needless to say, responsibility for any errors remains with the author.

1 The most recent and extended study with a full annotated translation is Dotson 2009, where Dotson summarises the history of the study of the *Old Tibetan Annals* (Dotson 2009: 15-16).

2 A black and white photograph of the fragment has been so far published in *Ecang*, vol.16: 180.

*jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 (*Buddhāvataṃsaka-nāma-mahā-vaipulya-sūtra*).<sup>3</sup> The verso side contains six lines of Tibetan. Six horizontal lines and one vertical line at the right margin are drawn. We suppose that a line at the left margin was also drawn. On the remaining portion of the fourth line, no text is written but the continuing and ending portion of the third line must have been written on the lost portion of the fourth line. The horizontal (six lines) and vertical (a line at the right margin) guidelines are drawn for the Tibetan texts and a space between horizontal guidelines is kept wide.



Fig.1: Reconstructed Image of the Manuscript

The writing style of Tibetan is *dbu-can*, containing several features of Old Tibetan writing such as reversed *gi-gu* and *da-drag*, which are common in Dunhuang documents. These palaeographical features clearly indicate that the Tibetan text was carefully prepared and written. Moreover, the above-mentioned features of the text of our fragment remind us of that of *Annals I* and *II* (see Section 7).<sup>4</sup> A closer investigation of the text in comparison with the previously known *Annals* reveals that it is a work of the same kind as the *Annals*, which we will discuss in more detail below.

### 3. THE ROYAL ANNALS

Two versions of the *Royal Annals* were discovered among the Dunhuang documents; namely, the *Annals I* (P.t.1288 + IOL Tib J 750) and *Annals II*

<sup>3</sup> *Taishō* No.279. vol.10: 415b3–b10.

<sup>4</sup> The digitised images of *Annals I* (P.t.1288 + IOL Tib J 750) and *II* (Or.8212.187) are now available on the web site of the International Dunhuang Project (<http://idp.bl.uk>). The same images are included in Dotson 2009: 303-314.

(Or.8212.187). Both versions are fragmentary. The *Annals I*, of which the beginning and end are missing, contains the reports from the year 629 (?) to 747, while the *Annals II* contains the reports of the years 743-747 and 755-763.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the reports of five years (743–747) are available in both versions .

Two versions of the *Annals* contain a series of a concise annual reports. Each report begins with a dating formula “it fell on the year of xx [= animal sign] (xx’i lo la babs te)” (Dotson 2009: 12), which is followed by the locations of the Emperor’s residence and of the conference held twice a year. These two versions of the *Annals* contain the yearly report of Central Tibet as well as of Mdo-smad (a region including the present day Amdo) from 704.

Apart from the *Royal Annals*, we have one more *Annals*-type text called *The Annals of the ’A-zha principality* (hereafter referred to as *’A-zha Annals*). Differing from the *Annals I* and *II*, it consists of the yearly report of the *’A-zha* principality under Tibetan rule alone. According to Uray (1978), it covers the years 706-715.

As will be seen below, the newly found fragment bears reports of the years 703 and 704. These two years were among the momentous periods in the history of the Old Tibetan Empire during the early 8<sup>th</sup> century: in particular, this was when the young *btsan-po* Khri-’dus-srong (r. 676-704) departed to the country of Myva on the southern borders of Tibet for a political campaign and died in battle there in 704. The following year “the emperor, the elder brother” Lha-bal-po (or Lha)<sup>6</sup> was enthroned but was soon forcibly dethroned most likely by the powerful queen mother Khri-ma-lod, who enthroned her infant grandson Rgyal-gtsug-ru instead.<sup>7</sup> The yearly reports contained in our fragment record a part of these significant events.

#### 4. TEXTS OF THE NEW FRAGMENT

The text of our fragment is given below, followed by the parallel passages from the *Annals I*. The text is divided into two parts according to the original paragraph construction. The phrases in the *Annals I* that overlap with our fragment are underlined. A provisional translation is placed under the text. The translation of the *Annals I* is based on Dotson 2009.

5 The reports between 748-754 are originally missing in both versions.

6 Beckwith (1983: 4, n.9) pointed out the possibility that his name was Lha only, and that he was deposed from Bal po, where was one of the main imperial palaces at the time.

7 See Beckwith 1983, Kapstein 2000: 216-218, n.41 and Dotson 2009: 23-24.

**Dx 12851 v, ll.1-4 (Part 1)****Annals I (IOL Tib J 750, ll.92-94)**

[text]

(1.1) [. . .] [r]gya'I po nya kam keng phyag 'tsald [+3] [-ma/m . . .]

(1.2) [. . .] myIg na bzhugs // khu 'byur lod btsan bkum // btsan po [. . .]

(1.3) [. . .] bzhugs / [-]d yul gyI dgun 'dun skyI [byang] II [. . .] [1.4] [. . .]

[translation]

'The Chinese emissary Kam-keng paid homage. . . [the mother] resided at [Rnang-pho Dur]-myIg.

Khu 'Byur-lod-btsan was killed. Btsan-po . . . resided at . . . The winter conference of the [Tibetan] region [was held at] Li . . . in the north of Skyi . . .'

[text]

(1.92) \$ / yos bu'I lo la / btsan po dbyard glIng gI 'ol byag na bzhugs shIng / rgya'I po nya kam keng phyag 'tsald / (1.93) mdo smad gyI dgun 'dun yol gyI ci 'bosu bsdus / yum rnang pho dur myIg na bzhugs shIng / khu 'byur lod btsan (1.94) bkum / dgun btsan po 'jang yul du gshegste / 'jang phab / par lo gcIg /

[translation]

'In the year of the hare, in the summer the Btsan-po resided in 'Ol-byag in Gling. The Chinese emissary Kam-keng paid homage. The Mdo-smad winter council was convoked at Ci-'bos in Yol. The mother resided in Rnang-pho Dur-myig, and Khu 'Byur-lod btsan was killed. In the winter the Btsan-po departed to the country of 'Jang, and sacked 'Jang. So one year.' (The translation of IOL Tib J 750 is based on Dotson 2009: 102 with minor modifications)

**Dx 12851 v, ll.5-6 (Part 2)**

**Annals I (IOL Tib J 750, ll.95-98)**

[text]

(1.5): [. . .] pa [-]ngs [+2] yum khrI  
ma lod kyI po brang 'o dang na bzhugs  
[bo-] yul gyi dbyar

(1.6): [. . .] btsad / dgun btsan po khrI  
'dus srong myva yul du cab srId la  
gshegs gshegs

[translation]

'the court of the mother Khri-ma-lod  
resided at 'O-dang. In the summer of  
the [Tibetan] region, [. . .] was decided.  
In the winter, *Btsan-po* Khri-'dus-  
srong departed on a political campaign  
to the country of Myva (and departed  
[to heaven]).'

[text]

(1.95) \$ / 'brugI lo la bab ste / dpyId  
kho brang tsal du rgyal btsug ru bltam  
/ dbyard btsan po yab rma grom gyI  
yo (1.96) tI cu bzangs na bzhugs shIng  
/ yum khrI ma lod yar 'brog gI 'o  
dang na bzhugste / 'dun ma brag sgor  
(1.97) 'dus / dgun btsan pho chab srId  
la myva la gshegs pa las / dgun du  
gshegs / yum khrI ma lod lhas (1.98)  
gang tsal na bzhugste / 'dun ma byar  
lIngs tsal du zhang khrI bzang stag tsab  
gyIs bsdus par lo chig /

[translation]

"It fell on the year of the dragon, In  
the spring Rgyal Gtsug-ru was born  
at Kho-brang-tsal, In the summer the  
Btsan-po, the father, resided in Yo-ti  
Cu-bzangs in Rma-grom. The mother,  
Khri-ma-lod, resided in 'O-dang in  
Yar-'brog. The council convened at  
Brag-sgo. In the winter the Btsan-  
pho departed on a political campaign  
to Myva, but departed to heaven. The  
mother, Khri-ma-lod, resided in Lhas-  
gang-tsal. Zhang Khri-bzang Stag-tsab  
convened the council at Byar-lings-  
tsal. So one year." (Dotson 2009: 102-  
103)

## 5. COMMON EVENTS BETWEEN DX 12851 AND ANNALS I

The following four events are recorded in both our fragment and the *Annals I*.

- (1) The messenger from China in Part 1 (1.1).

Our fragment records the coming of a Chinese emissary named Kam-keng, who is apparently identical with a Chinese emissary Kam-keng<sup>8</sup> arriving at the Tibetan Royal court in the summer of the year of the hare, i.e. 703, in *Annals I*.

- (2) The killing of Khu 'Byur-lod-btsan in Part 1 (1.2)

Our fragment mentions the killing of Khu 'Byur-lod-btsan. This occurrence is also recorded in the entry of the summer of 703 in the *Annals I*.

- (3) The residences of the mother Khri-ma-lod in Part 2 (1.5) and Part 1 (1.2)

Our fragment reports that the court (*pho-brang*) of the emperor's mother Khri-ma-lod was at 'O-dang. The *Annals I* also reports that "Khri-ma-lod resided at 'O-dang in Yar-'brog" in the summer of 704. Moreover, [. . .] *mylg* in 1.2 of our fragment is quite possibly the last syllable of Rnang-po dur-myig, the residence of the mother Khri-ma-lod in the summer of 703 in the *Annals I*.

- (4) *Btsan po* Khri-'dus-srong's campaign to Myva and his death in Part 2 (1.6).

According to the *Annals I*, the Tibetan emperor Khri-'dus-srong departed on a campaign to 'Jang in 703 and to Myva in 704 then 'departed to heaven' in 704. Actually, as the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and Chinese sources reveal, he died in a battle in the southern direction.<sup>9</sup> The second part of our fragment also records his campaign to the country of Myva.

The verb *gshegs* 'to depart' is written twice in the fragment (*cab srId la gshegs gshegs*). This phrase admits of two interpretations: the duplication of the verb *gshegs* or a corruption of a phrase such as *dgun du gshegs*, which appears in the *Annals I* (1.97).

These correspondences between the two texts strongly indicate that our fragment bears an *Annals*-type text. Moreover, (1) and (2) appearing in part 1 of our fragment are apparently identical with the two events recorded in 703 (the *Annals I*), while (3) and (4) correspond to those in 704. Thus we can conclude that part 1 of our fragment bears the entry of 703 and part 2 contains that of 704.

8 Petech (1988 [1967]: 281), considering Kam keng as the phonetic renderings of Gan ging 甘卿 'the lord Gan,' equates him with Gan Zhao 甘昭, who was a Chinese emissary to Tibet in 711.

9 See Satō 1958-59: 398-401 and Beckwith 1987: 64-65.

## 6. UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE FRAGMENT

In spite of striking similarities, documented above, our fragment differs from the *Annals I* and *II* as follows:

Most significant is the target area of the records. While the *Annals I* and *II* record events in Central Tibet and Mdo-smad, our fragment records the events in a region called [*bo-*] *yul* in 703 or [*-*] *d yul* in 704. Given that the region name begins with *bo-* and ends with *-d*, we can reconstruct it as Bod-yul, ‘the land of Tibet,’ namely Central Tibet.

The location of the conference appearing in 1.3 of our fragment attests to this reconstruction. The text states that the winter conference of [Bo]d-yul ([*-*] *d yul gyI dgun ’dun*) was held in north Skyi in 704. Skyi is apparently the well-known region located near Lhasa along the Skyi-chu river.

Moreover, the phrase *bod yul gyi dgun ’dun* meaning ‘the conference of the land of Tibet’ is attested by the entry of 727 in the *Annals I*:

bod yul gyI dgun ’dun skyI lhas gang tshal du / zhang ’brIng rtshan khyI bus  
bsdus

‘Zhang ’Bring-rtsan-khyI-bu convoked the winter conference of the land of Tibet at the grove of Lhas-gang in Skyi.’

(IOL Tib J 750, 1.194. See also Dotson 2009: 116)

In the entry of 727, the conference convoked in the land of Tibet is called ‘the winter conference of the land of Tibet’ (*bod yul gyI dgun ’dun*). This is exactly the same expression as we find in 1.3 of our fragment: [*bo*] *d yul gyI dgun ’dun*. Thus, we can confirm that our fragment also records events in ‘the land of Tibet.’

In contrast, our fragment seems to record no events in Mdo-smad. Although the text is fragmentary, the extant part clearly shows that the entry of 703 ends with the event in ‘the land of Tibet.’ The entry of 704 also appears not to mention Mdo-smad because between the events of summer and those in winter there is not enough space for records on Mdo-smad.

As a matter of course, although there is the possibility that the missing part of our fragment may contain records of Mdo-smad, at the moment we can point out that the extant part of our fragment has no such records, and that this is a unique feature compared to the *Annals I* and *II*.

## 7. THE APPEARANCE OF THE TEXT

Several codicological features such as the writing style and the format of our fragment are quite similar to those of the *Annals I* and II.

(1) The Tibetan writing style here is *dbu-can*, containing several features of Old Tibetan writing such as an inversed *gi-gu* and *da-drag*, which are common in Dunhuang documents. The shapes of the characters are square and are written in a quite similar style to those in the *Annals I*. (Compare, for instance, *bkum* in l.3 of our fragment to the same term in IOL Tib J 750, l.93, the *Annals I*.) This means that, like the *Annals I* and II, the text of our fragment was written by a skilled scribe.

(2) The text on our fragment is written with horizontal guidelines except for the fifth guideline, on which no text remains. As the sentence on l.3 does not end at the end of the line, the last part of the sentence should have been placed on the missing part of the fourth guideline. The text begins again on the missing part of the fifth guideline. Thus the major part of the fourth line is kept blank. In fact, as we have seen above, this space matches with the division between the entry 703 and entry 704. This fact strongly indicates that each entry of our text originally consists of a single paragraph. Note that the *Annals I* is also composed of series of entries each consisting of a single paragraph.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it is most likely that our text originally had the same format as the *Annals I*.

(3) On our fragment, the Tibetan text was written on the back of a Chinese Buddhist scroll. It is worth noting that the *Annals I* and II, as well as the '*A-zha Annals* and several other important texts such as the *Chronicle* and *Legal texts*,<sup>11</sup> were also written on the backs of Chinese Buddhist scrolls.<sup>12</sup> The reason why scribes in Dunhuang chose to re-use the backs of Chinese scrolls for writing these important texts of the period, in spite of the fact that a great deal of paper of good quality was produced in Dunhuang,<sup>13</sup> needs to be investigated.

10 See for example the reproductions of P.t.1288 + IOL Tib J 750 in Dotson 2009: 303-314 or the IDP website.

11 IOL Tib J 753, P.t.1071, 1072, 1073 and 1075. See Uray 1979: 277, n.4.

12 See *Paris catalogue* 6: 67-70, 96-100.

13 The high quality of paper made in Dunhuang was very famous in East Turkestan. In an Uighur Buddhism document, the scribe lays special stress on using paper made in Dunhuang (Kudara 1983: 202). A Tibetan official document, P.t.1128, attests that paper was levied as tribute (*dpya'*) under the Tibetan Empire in Dunhuang. See Iwao forthcoming.



These points demonstrate that our text, the *Annals* I and II, and the 'A-zha *Annals*, all of which were copied at Dunhuang, were prepared in the same way.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

(1) The newly discovered Dx 12851 is the *Tibetan Royal Annals*. The extant part bears two years: 703 and 704.

(2) Dx 12851 covers events in Central Tibet.

(3) It is highly likely that various *Annals*-type texts simultaneously existed in Dunhuang and were copied in the same way.

\* \* \*

Uray (1975) once pointed out that the *Royal Annals* was used as a reference for dating official documents. Takeuchi (1995: 25, n.5), agreeing with Uray's idea, further suggests the possibility that, besides *Annals* such as the *Annals* I, II and our fragment, "a local annals was composed in each *khrom* [= military government] and that these local annals were used as reference for local documents such as contracts." Thus it is supposed that various types of *Annals* existed at the same time. The *Annals* fragment from the St Petersburg collection that is studied in this article is a new addition to the corpus. It is a discovery that opens the possibility that yet other versions of the *Annals* may be found in the future.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### *Ecang*:

*Eluosi Kexue yuan Dongfang Yanjiusuo Sheng Bidepu Fensuo Cang Dunhuang Wenxian*  
俄羅斯科學院東方研究所聖彼得堡分所藏敦煌文獻 . 17 vols. Shanghai 上海:  
Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1992.

### *Paris catalogue 6*:

Wang-Toutain, F. (ed.), *Catalogue des manuscrits chinois de Touen-houang*, vol.6.  
Paris:École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2001.

### *Taishō*:

Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭 (eds), *Taishō Shinshū*  
*Daijōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, 100 vols. Kyoto, 1924–34.

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## APPENDIX: TEXTS

**Dx 12851, verso**

- 1: [. . .] [r]gya'I po nya kam keng phyag 'tsald [+3] [-ma/m. . .]
- 2: [. . .] myIḡ na bzhugs // khu 'byur lod btsan bkum // btsan po [. . .]
- 3: [. . .] bzhugs / [-]d yul gyI dgun 'dun skyI [byang] II [. . .]
- 4: [. . .]
- 5: [. . .] pa [-]ngs [+2] yum khrI ma lod kyI po brang 'o dang na bzhugs [bo-]  
 ] yul gyi dbyar

6: [. . .] btsad / dgun btsan po khrI 'dus srong myva yul du cab srId la gshegs  
gshegs

**Dx 12851, recto**

- 1: □□身□ [
- 2: 間苦受究竟 [
- 3: 非行依如幻業而成 [
- 4: 無性故一切衆生語 [
- 5: 身故爾時善財童 [
- 6: 生心之所樂現超過一切世 [
- 7: 現超過他化自在天女身乃 [
- 8: 王天女身或現超 [

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Old Tibetan Documents Online Monograph Series Vol. III  
New Studies of the Old Tibetan Documents: Philology, History and Religion

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2011年(平成23年)3月8日発行

編者 今枝由郎・Matthew T. Kapstein・武内紹人

発行者 東京外国語大学 アジア・アフリカ言語文化研究所

〒183-8534 東京都府中市朝日町3-11-1

印刷 日本ルート印刷出版株式会社

〒135-0007 東京都江東区新大橋1丁目5番4号 永谷ビル1F

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ISBN 978-4-86337-071-5

Printed in Japan