

STUDY ON EARLY TIBETAN CHRONICLES

REGARDING DISCREPANCIES OF DATES AND THEIR ADJUSTMENTS

BY

BUNKYO AOKI

A report of study for 1954–1955 by the subsidy
from The Ministry of Education, Japan

*Photolithographed and published by the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai
(The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Tokyo, Japan.)*

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Regarding Discrepancies of Dates

And their Adjustments

INTRODUCTION

The object of the study is to adjust the discrepancies of the dates observed in the early Tibetan chronicles between the sixth and the tenth centuries.

As we learn from the historical works on the early Tibetan chronicles, given by series of Tibetan scholars of the modern ages, we cannot help being confused with the dissimilarities of the dates indicating the Christian eras which are calculated from the Tibetan sexagenary cycles, according to the authors' respective bases of periods.

I fear it would be impossible to grasp the exact dates of the unified bases of periods, even in any new work that might be published hereafter, unless the conformity of the views is realized in such a way as to eliminate the discrepancies of dates in the Tibetan chronicles of early

(II)

days. It may^{be} said, therefore, that the solution of the problem depends upon the establishment of rectifying the discrepancies in a most reasonable and agreeable way.

I had opportunities to discuss this subject with native Tibetan scholars during my stay in Lhasa from 1912 to 1916, but failed to reach any satisfactory conclusion due to their little interest in this sort of subject. I received, however, an impression from the repeated discussions that there must have been something illusive in ancient chroniclers' method of reckoning the dates by means of the old system of the sexagenary cycles when it was used for measuring the periods of some ambiguous historical events.

It was not until 1939, however, that the discrepancies of dates in the Tibetan historical records were first said to be pointed out^{by} L. Petech in his work, *STUDY ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF LADAKH*, and later in 1946, by G. N. Roerich in his *BLUE ANNALS* or 'Deb-ther Sñon-po' (དེབ་ཐེར་སྟོན་པོ་). In the latter, especially, the author gives detailed accounts for the features of the inconsistencies of dates which are observed in the

(III)

Deb-ther Sñon-po, and conjectures that there might have been some misjudgement by ancient Tibetan chroniclers of the length of the so-called 'dark periods' after the Disappearance of the Buddhist Doctrine in the latter half of the 9th century. (BLUE ANNALS, Part I, INTRODUCTION, XVI - XVIII.)

Encouraged with this valuable suggestion by Roerich's book; I began arranging the outcomes of my own researches, the rough drafts having been made when I was in Lhasa, and finally decided to compile them into a systematic form, and announce them.

In this project the investigations have been analytically made of the dates of events regarded as the 'bases of periods', and the 'elapsed number of years' between the basic periods, all of which are stated in the Tibetan annals.

Among the dates or periods, the date of the Tibeto-T'ang Peace Treaty which was concluded by King Ral-pa-can (རལ་པ་ཅན་) with the emperor, Mu-tsung of T'ang (唐穆宗), in the ninth century, and that of the establishment of the Rab-
byuñ system in the eleventh century, have been proven

most essential to fixation of the exact period of standard for the study of early Tibetan chronicles.

The conclusion I have finally reached is that all discrepancies can be rectified both logically and practically by fixing the date of the ascension of the king, Glan-Darma, upon the year 841 A.D., and that of his death and the Destruction of the Doctrine, upon 901 A.D., and thereby I have learnt that all the incorrect dates between the sixth and the tenth centuries are properly adjustable without the least confusion.

I have also studied some of the Chinese historical records for the Tibetan events of the early ages in order to compare the dates with each other, concerning Dar-ma's death, and learnt that there is no radical difference between the Tibetan and Chinese annals, judging from the contexts of the passages as well as reasoning from the descriptions in the Chinese historical records as far as the Old T'ang History and the New T'ang History are concerned, but the so-called 'combined text of Old and New T'ang Histories' is excepted from the above view. It is then not

acceptable to take the date of 842 A.D., or the second year of Hui-ch'ang, 會昌二年, for that of Dar-ma's death, on interpreting the passages referred to Dar-ma, 達磨, in the New T'ang History. (新唐書, Tm. 216, vol. 141 B, f7-b.) 【Concerning the proper readings of the T'ang Histories, I am indebted to the prominent scholars of the Oriental Library (Tōyō Bunko) and the Institute for Oriental Culture, the University of Tokyo (Tōkyō Daigaku Bunka Kenkyū-sho.)】

I do not think, however, that the said conclusion is absolutely final, because it has been worked out within the limited scope of materials as given in chapter I. I do not know, therefore, if the present conclusion will be overturned, or endorsed, according to the different materials that might be found elsewhere.

I hope that the authorities of Tibetan studies will be kind enough to provide me with any possible suggestions which may complete this study.

In conclusion I wish to express my appreciations to the staff of Tōyō Bunko (The Oriental Library) of

Tokyo for providing me with liberal use of its facilities, especially the access to rare Tibetan texts; to Professor Dr. N. Tsuji of University of Tokyo, Professor Dr. W. Schiffer of Sophia University, Tokyo, Professor Dr. S. Elisséeff of Harvard University, Professor Dr. H. Richardson of St. Andrews, Scotland, all of whom gave kind considerations and encouragements to the announcement of this paper; and to Mr. T. Unno of University of Tokyo for his aid in smoothening out some English expressions.

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Bunkyo Aoki

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