

Preface and Acknowledgements

The writing of history is of course very important to the formation of identity, and the *Old Tibetan Annals*, Tibet's first known history, is no exception. The *Old Tibetan Annals*, however, is not a heroic foundation myth of the Tibetan Empire or the Tibetan people, but a laconic document written by and for court historiographers. It is partially the document's minimalist nature and the lack of any narrative structure or obvious authorial imperatives that lends the *Old Tibetan Annals* its status as the single most reliable document for early Tibetan history. The royal historiographers who authored the *Annals* were not in the business of writing an engaging or enlightening document, they provide no interlinear comments on the events they record, and they take for granted the transparency of the bureaucratic jargon they employ. As such, there is little or no continuity to the events recorded.

This is not to say that the *Old Tibetan Annals* is "reticent" or defective in some way as a source for Tibetan history. It lacks a unifying narrative, but narrative is not the business of the bureaucrat. It is perhaps this lack of narrative structure that accounts for the esteem historians have for the *Annals* as a privileged historical source: it is far easier to fit such laconic data into one's own historical narrative than it is to reinterpret an already plotted story. Aware of the fact that any attempt to contextualize the *Annals* is to interpret its data within the framework of a just such a "story" that is inevitably a product of the historiographer's own time and place, I have tried to remain faithful to its annalistic form in my translation, but have, via the media of footnotes and a long introduction, effectively transformed the document and contextualized it within a structure familiar to contemporary historians and academics. To do so, some might argue, does violence to the form of the *Annals* and falls prey to a tendency to impose narrative on such forms of historiography. I disagree. I would argue that appreciation for a given form does not preclude the historian's transformation of that form in order to suit his or her purposes. Therefore, while I remain conscious of the unique form of the *Annals*, I elucidate its content with annotation. Indeed (and perhaps this is due to our need for a "story," for which I can offer no apology), a translation of the *Old Tibetan Annals* without the benefit of such contextualization would probably be better suited to an art gallery or experimental theatre. I must emphasize that this is not a value-laden judgment against a minimalist form; the annalists succeeded in writing annals.

The introduction is divided into seven sections. It opens with a general discussion of the *Annals*, its form, and content. This is followed by a short diachronic history of the period covered, and then a discussion of the *Old Tibetan Annals'* contributions to the elucidation of certain historical problems. The third section of the introduction, "Succession and Marriage and the Tibetan Royal Line," considers the rules governing royal succession, the structural relationships of the Tibetan emperors to their maternal and paternal relatives and to the ministerial aristocracy. It goes on to consider the practice of dynastic marriage and the role of Tibet's princesses in forging important alliances. The fourth section of the introduction, "Historical Geography and the *Old Tibetan Annals*" examines the territorial extent of the Tibetan Empire, and complements Guntram Hazod's annotated cartographical survey in Part III of this book. The fifth section of the introduction, "Administration and Administrators in the *Old Tibetan Annals*," discusses many of the administrative measures found in the *Annals* and reviews our knowledge of these and of the functionaries responsible for them. The sixth section of the introduction, "Class and Rank in the Tibetan Empire," reviews the system of ranks employed by imperial Tibet, and the nature of early Tibetan society in general, with reference to class, exchange, and inheritance. It also details the chain of command and in this way contextualizes the administrative measures found in the *Annals*. The long introduction closes with a discussion of the linguistic and orthographic features of the *Old Tibetan Annals* and an explanation of the editing conventions employed here.

The core of this work, an annotated translation of the *Old Tibetan Annals*, is accompanied by transliteration, which follows each individual yearly entry. The transliteration differs slightly from previous transliterations by paying closer attention to Tibetan punctuation. Presented together with the translation, this facilitates easy access to the Tibetan text. Photographic reproductions of the documents themselves appear at the end of the work. While the footnotes are lengthy in places, they are generally viewed in this case as a necessary evil, and are meant to contextualize events that would otherwise remain quite opaque. They are reduced somewhat by the inclusion of a long introduction, which locates the document within its historical and cultural context.

The annotated translation of the *Annals* is followed by five appendices meant to complement the body of the work. Appendix One contains annalistic entries found in other Old Tibetan documents. Appendix Two lists the dates for the royal succession of Tibetan emperors and presents an abbreviated royal genealogy taken from the Old Tibetan document PT 1286. Appendix Three presents translations of passages from the Zhol Pillar and the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* narrating the final event described in the *Annals*—the Tibetan sack of the Chinese capital. Appendix Four presents an abbreviated version of the “Succession of Chief Ministers,” which forms chapter two of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, which is compared with the dates given in the *Annals* and other contemporary sources. In a similar vein, Appendix Five lists the regimes of Khri Srong-lde-btsan, Khri Lde-srong-btsan, and Khri Gtsug-lde-btsan as recorded in their respective edicts.

The appendices are followed by Guntram Hazod’s annotated cartographical survey of the historical geography of early Tibet and the territorial divisions and place names in the *Annals*. This includes annotated maps of the minor kingdoms, the ancient pre-imperial principalities, and a brief survey of relevant burial sites; annotated maps of the eighteen shares of power; the geography of the four Horns of Tibet; the locations of the thousand-districts and administrative districts; the court sites and council sites named in the *Old Tibetan Annals*; and the results of recent expeditions that have led to the identification of Nyen-kar. The place names are documented not only with textual sources, but also with recourse to archaeological evidence and *in situ* fieldwork, and this work includes photographs and satellite imagery in addition to more conventional maps.

For ease of reference there is a table that records the royal residences, council sites, foreign visits, and “royal events,” an index of place names, an index of personal names, and a glossary.

The idea for this book began five years ago when I first attempted a translation of the *Old Tibetan Annals*. Like most good ideas, it is one that many others have had before, and I am grateful to those who have, in the spirit of collaborative scholarship, offered their comments and guidance on various points. First and foremost, I must thank Nathan Hill, who read the first draft in 2003, and whose comments to that and subsequent drafts significantly improved its form and content. His linguistic expertise and eye for precision served as a much-needed corrective to my sometimes too figurative renderings. I am also particularly indebted to Helga Uebach, Per Sørensen, Kazushi Iwao, and Sean Gaffney for their comments and insights. I am also thankful to Kazushi Iwao and Nathan Hill for their assistance with Japanese sources, and to Dongzhi Dorje and Brenda Li. Needless to say, any mistakes that remain are entirely my own.

It is a great privilege to include in this book Guntram Hazod’s maps of imperial Tibet. These are, I believe, the best maps of their kind, composed and annotated by one of the foremost scholars of early Tibetan historical geography. Apart from his willingness to include this excellent work in the book, Guntram Hazod has also shepherded the book through the publication process, and continued to share freely his ideas on many topics, for which I am deeply grateful. I am also indebted to his work and the work of Anna Hazod in undertaking the layout and formatting of the publication.

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The book is also greatly enhanced by the inclusion of reproductions of the *Old Tibetan Annals* itself. For this I am deeply thankful to the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften for covering the cost of reproductions and permissions from the British Library in London and the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. My thanks also to Sam van Schaik at the International Dunhuang Project.

The publication of several of the documents of the Pelliot collection in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Stein collection of the British Library, along with syllabic indices, has been particularly useful to this undertaking, and the digital reproduction of these manuscripts online by the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) has rendered the texts more easily accessible. Most recently, Old Tibetan Documents Online (OTDO) has transliterated several Old Tibetan documents and created an online concordance tool that is of crucial importance to lexicon building. A debt of gratitude is owed to all of those involved in these excellent projects.

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