The Turgut were one of the tribes of the “Eleuth” Kalmuks (Oirat in their own language). Under pressure from their neighbors, the Sun-gar Mongols, they left their lands in 1600 and migrated westward into Russian territory. They finally settled on the lower Volga in 1616.

For a long time they were left in the main undisturbed; but when Russian power expanded in the 18th century, the Turgut became liable to taxation and military service. In addition, they were unpopular with their neighbors, both Christian and Moslem, because of their Lamaist religion. Gradually they made up their minds to return to China, in which decision they were undoubtedly influenced by the news about the new strong Manchu Empire. Tulishen, a high Manchu official, actually visited the Turgut in 1714.1

The great exodus of the Turgut under the leadership of Ubashi Khan began in December, 1770. Altogether 169,000 men, women, and children started on their way to the distant Chinese border. They were the majority of the Turgut people, but not the whole nation; some remained in Russia and are still there today.

When their departure was discovered by the Russian authorities, orders were issued to pursue them. For the next few months they were attacked by bands of Bashkirs, Kirghiz, Kazakh, and Cossacks until they reached Chinese territory in Ili after a last frightful battle which was decided by the intervention of Manchu cavalry (1771). By that time, their original number had shrunk to a mere seventy thousand.

The epic return of the Turgut from Russia to China was described by the French Jesuits Mailla and Amiot, who were contemporaries of the event in Peking, in the Mémoires concernant les Chinois etc., and by de Quincy in his book The Revolt of the Tartars (1837). The story is retold by Sven Hedin in his Jehol.

The Ch’ien-lung Emperor was so gratified by the voluntary return of the Turgut to his own empire that he considered this one of the principal events of his long reign. He commemorated it by two quadrilingual inscriptions (Manchu, Chinese, Mongol, Tibetan) engraved in stone and set up in front of the Lamaist temple, the Potala, in Jehol, the imperial summer residence 110 miles north of Peking. One of these inscriptions was translated by Amiot in the above-mentioned Mémoires; the other is the subject of the present study.

It was published as a rubbing in the Epigraphische Denkmäler aus China by B. Laufer and O. Franke (Berlin, 1914). The Manchu text, which was edited by the Emperor himself, is given on plate 68. The text contains several illegible passages, where the writing has worn off, but the general sense is perfectly clear.

The Ch’ien-lung Emperor first expresses compassion with the fate of the Turgut and then details the measures taken for their relief. His report casts an interesting and favorable light on China’s material resources and organizational ability at the end of the eighteenth century.

When the Turgut approached the Chinese border in July, 1771, the Emperor was informed of their progress by frequent messengers, and the necessary provisions for their relief were prepared in time. General Shuhede2 was appointed special commissioner, and similar tasks were given to the Banner Commander of Kalgan and the Governor of Shanxi.

The Turgut were settled in the Ili region, which had been partly depopulated in recent wars and uprisings. Since the refugees were destitute, the necessary initial capital had to be provided for both cattle breeding and agriculture. The Emperor mentions these imposing figures:

185,000 head of cattle, including horses and sheep
41,000 bushels of rice and wheat
20,000 packages of tea
51,000 sheepskin jackets
61,000 linen garments

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1 A. W. Hummel, Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period, (Washington, 1943), under Tulisen.

2 Hummel, l. c. under Shu-ho-tâ.
59,000 pounds of cotton
400 felt tents (yurts)
200,000 taelms (ounces of silver) for cash expenses.

The leaders of the tribe were called to the imperial summer residence at Jehol and received in a solemn audience. The most important of them were raised to the rank of princes and given costly presents, such as saddled horses, elaborate quivers, yellow riding jackets (a special imperial honor), and peacock feathers (another distinction for meritorious officials).

The Potala Temple in Jehol (so called after the famous Potala in Lhasa), before which the stele with the inscription was placed, has a special connection with America. A replica was made in China and shipped to the USA where it was erected at both the Chicago (1934) and New York World Fairs (1939). It is now packed away at Oberlin, Ohio, waiting for its final fate. It is to be hoped that a proper place will be found for it. The author has been unable to find out what happened to the original inscribed stelae in Jehol. The descendants of the returned Turgut are reputedly still in Ili.

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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Göbl, Robert: Sasanische Numismatik, Handbücher der Mittelasiatischen Numismatik, Band I, (Braunschweig, Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1968), VII + 100 pp., mit 16 Prägetabellen und 16 Münztafeln, DM 45.—

Relying on his profound, scholarly erudition and supplying his own research experience, Dr. Göbl has produced a valuable book containing a systematic survey of nearly all aspects of the Sasanid coinage and of the pertinent numismatic methodology.

Following a brief introduction (pp. 1—3) the author presents an analytical register of the pictorial elements and of their positional occurrence on the Sasanid coinage (Das Münzbild, pp. 5—24). In the third chapter (Die Nominalien, pp. 25—30) the author discusses the metallic categories of the coinage, its denominational specifications, as well as the problem of the exchange ratio between the gold and silver issues. Chapters Four (Organisation und Münzstätten, pp. 31—33), Five (Münztechnik, pp. 34—37), and Six (Münzeichen, pp. 38—40), supply information about the administrative and technical organization of the operations of the Sasanid mints, about the technological aspects of the coining processes, and about the art of the coin-die engraving. In the seventh chapter (Ergebnisse der Münzordnung, pp. 41—45) the author proposes a typological categorization of the evolution of the coinage, which is related to individual Sasanid sovereigns. This is followed by a brief note (Kontermarken, p. 56) about the counterpoints, or rather their absence on the regular Sasanid coins. Chapter Nine (Materialfragen, pp. 57—59) raises the problem of the professional handling of the available Sasanid numismatic materials to promote a better understanding or even a solution of many historical questions. This entails the attainment of two essential prerequisites: a) the compilation of a corpus embracing all Sasanid numismatic specimens and pertinent realias; b) analytical survey of all accessible and as yet intact hoards.

Chapter Ten (pp. 60—63) dealing with modern forgeries is followed by a sketch of the Sasanid history (pp. 64—72). The remainder of the book consists of explanatory details relating to the materials presented in copious tables and plates. The latter are preceded by a list of decoded mint-symbols (pp. 84—85); by bibliographical notes (pp. 86—87); an extensive bibliography (pp. 88—93); a general index (pp. 94—99); a genealogical table of the Sasanid dynasty (p. 100); and a map showing the location of the identified Sasanid mints.

The neatly organized and executed illustrative materials contain sixteen tables with drawings of the pictorial and inscriptive elements, arranged according to their historical evolution, as well as fifteen plates with reproductions of 235 coin specimens covering the entire span of the Sasanid dynasty. The sixteenth and last plate shows nineteen examples of modern forgeries.

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Information obtained from Professor G. Baxter of Harvard.