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Haslund's "Toregut Rarelro" Deciphered

Henning Haslund-Christensen, the Danish explorer in Mongolia, was born on August 31, 1896, in Copenhagen. He saw Inner Asia for the first time when he joined the Danish expedition to Uliyasutai, Western Mongolia, organized by Karl Krebs, from 1923 to 1926. His experiences on that expedition are vividly described in his first book, *Jabonah, or Tents in Mongolia*. Then from 1927 to 1930 he joined Sven Hedin's Sino-Swedish Expedition to Inner Mongolia and Central Asia. Haslund recounts his adventures on that expedition in his second book, *Zajagan, or Men and Gods in Mongolia*.¹ Thereafter, he was commissioned by the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen to undertake still another expedition to Eastern Mongolia, on which he collected anthropological materials from 1936 to 1937. The date of his death, 1948, is supplied in Prof. Pentti Aalto's letter to Junko Miyawaki stamped December 18, 1994.

In February of 1928 Haslund was together with Hedin in Urumchi, where the expedition was warmly received by Military Governor Yang Tseng-hsin of Sinkiang. Governor Yang was assassinated in July. In September Haslund left Urumchi to visit Öreget, the city built by the khan of the Old Torgut Horde on the Juldus in the Tien Shan Mountains north of Karashahr. The lunar New Year came while he was staying at Öreget in February, 1929. He took this chance to visit the Torgut monastery of Shara Süme, located at the distance of one-day journey north of Öreget, to observe the Buddhist ceremony celebrating the beginning of the Iron-Serpent year. In the well-stocked library of the monastery he came across a curious old document titled "Toregut rarelro", which he had old lamas read for him.

According to what Haslund tells us in his book *Zajagan*, "Toregut rarelro" consisted of a collection of loose leaves of a kind of shantung which lay packed between two richly carved and painted slabs of wood, which in

¹ Henning Haslund, *Men and Gods in Mongolia (Zajagan)*, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd, 1935.

their turn were wrapped in several layers of leather and brocade. The leaves, six by fifteen and three-quarters inches in size, were written in Torgut script (meaning *todo*) in black and red, and the chronicle had evidently been recorded by various persons and at different times. The writing of the introductory leaves was faded and hard to read, but one could nevertheless form the conclusion, from the tone of the introductory words, that the writer had been a lama.

The original introduction to "Toregut rarelro", quoted by Haslund, reads in the English edition as follows.

TOREGUT RARELRO

Om, sain amorolan boltora (O that fortune may continue)

Inspired by the life of the three worlds and Lama nome'en Khan Bogdo Tson Khapa I insignificantly meditate and acquire strength to write this book which contains the family tree of the *khochin* (old) and *shene* (new) Torguts' Khan noyen.

In Enet-keghien oron-etse (India) was born Geril Däre Khan (Khan of supreme radiance). He later travelled to Sinanfu where Khara kitad lived.

There "he captured" the golden signet and became Khan. Before that happened Khara kitad had had no Khan or *noyen*. For many many years after Khara kitad was ruled by his descendants and one of these bore the name of Naren Khan (The Sun Khan).

Naren Khan had thirty sons, and the eldest became Tangman Khan who also had many sons, and one of these was On-Tas.

On-Tas had contentions at home and left his homeland with nine followers. After long journeying On-Tas came with his following to his mother's elder brother Gramin Khan who ruled in Mörindäva.

Gramin Khan gave On-Tas many people to rule.

On-Tas dwelt there for many years, after which he determined to travel out among the Mongols and came to Jenghiz Khan.

Jenghiz Khan gave On-Tas his daughter and many people to rule, and On-Tas took up his abode in Böge Mörin.

Three generations of On-Tas ruled there, and the fourth descendant was Kibving Noyen.

Kibving Noyen sent Tushure with five others of his men to the Öret Khanate to see whether it was good land.

When Toro Taiji Khan of Öret saw Kibving Noyen's six messengers he burst out: "*Önge, biye sahan tanar yun iche turelluk biyetai sahan olos bie*" (What tall and stately men you are).

From the word *turelluk* (tall, stately) came later the word *toregut*.

Toro Taiji gave his daughter to Kibving and two hundred and fifty tents for him to rule over.

The two hundred and fifty later became many, and Durebet Öret (the four Öret) later became one.

The family tree of the Khans from Geril Däre is not written here but is among the archives of Khara kitad.

Geril Däre Khan was very mighty and pious, and his descendants reign to this day.

Kibving Noyen became Wang Khan.

His eldest son was Boro Örolök Khan, and his son was Shykyr Daichin who had many sons.

The eldest was Toregut Khan, and the rest were

Khobok Säiri Chin Wang,

Taburn Notog (Khara Ossun) Jy Wang,

Döoner Beile

Taburn Notog Beise.

Döoner Gyn.

Khobok Säiri Taiji, two.

Döoner Taiji.

Etsini Beile.

Wang Khan's fifth son Losang became Jingin Beile and his son Oskhon Chabchin became Altai Jy Wang.

One of Oskhon Chabchin's sons became Altai Beise.

Now let us examine quasi-historical information on the Torguts contained in this text.

First, the title, *Toregut rarelro*. The word *rarelro* must reflect Tibetan *rgyal rabs*, meaning 'genealogy of kings'. When it was borrowed into Oyirad, it apparently was pronounced *rgalrab* and spelled *rglrb* in todo without vowel "a" as if it were in original Tibetan. Then Haslund's informant misread the final "b" for an "o" and thus produced *ragalro*, which was in

turn transcribed by Haslund *rarelro* revealing his Danish linguistic background.

The same phonological peculiarity of transcribing Mongolian γ/g with *r* shows up in the first line preceding the main text. “*Om, sain amorolan boltora*”, obviously renders, however imperfectly, the Buddhist Mongolian incantation “*Om, sayin amu γ ulang boltu γ ai*”, meaning ‘Om, may there be peace and well-being’.

In the second paragraph of the main text, we have “Enet-keghien oron-*etse*”, which is obviously Mongolian *enedkeg-ün oron-ača*, or ‘from the land of Indians’, phonetically rendered. Here the ultimate progenitor of the Torgut royal lineage is identified as Geril Däre Khan, who is said to have been born in India and migrated to Sinanfu in China. Khara kitad (Mo. *qara kitad*), here used to denote China, translates Tibetan *rgya nag*, literally ‘black extent’ which contrasts *rgya gar* (white extent) for India. In this context Sinanfu, where the khan settled, cannot be anywhere else but the city of Hsi-an in Shensi.

True historical identity of this Geril Däre Khan, supposedly the very first khan of the Chinese, is revealed in the reference to the signet he found in Sinanfu and symbolized his royalty. He is nobody other than Shih-huang-ti of Ch’in, the first Chinese emperor, whose ancestors were of nomadic Western Jung origin, who had moved in from the Kansu steppes to settle down in Shensi. The city of Hsien-yang, former Ch’in capital, is located quite close to Hsi-an. The signet found there by the khan reflects the famous jade seal of imperial succession created by Shih-huang-ti, to which the earliest historical reference occurs in Pan Ku’s *Han-shu*, in connection with Wang Mang’s successful attempt at usurping the Former Han throne in the year 8.

Even the name of the khan supports his identity with the first Chinese emperor. The latter’s posthumous title in shortened form, Shih-huang, or ‘the first shining one’, is reflected in Geril Däre (Mo. *gerel degere*), meaning ‘exalted by light’.

The expression “For many years after Khara kitad was ruled by his descendants” is simply a way of saying that Shih-huang-ti of Ch’in was followed by many emperors of other Chinese dynasties. Then comes Naren Khan and his son Tangman Khan. No use trying to identify them with any Chinese emperor. Only the latter’s son, On-Tas, can be identified with a historical figure, though not Chinese.

On-Tas leaves his homeland with nine followers, and, after roaming among strange peoples for many years, comes to Chinggis Khan to settle down under the latter's protection. This description strongly reminds us of Toghhoril Ong Khan of the Kereyid, who used to be Chinggis Khan's master in the latter's early political life.

According to *Sheng-wu Ch'in-cheng-lu*, *Yüan-shih*, Rashid al-Din and *The Secret History of the Mongols*, Paragraphs 150-151, Toghhoril was a son of Qurjaquz Buyruq Khan of the Kereyid. After the father's death, Toghhoril killed his brothers and became khan. His uncle Gür Khan attacked and defeated him at Qara'un Qabchal. Thus chased out, Toghhoril fled with a hundred men to Yesügei, father of Temüjin Chinggis Khan. Yesügei rode out with his own men and drove Gür Khan away to the Tanguts, thus restoring the Kereyid people to Toghhoril. In gratitude Toghhoril swore *anda*-brotherhood with Yesügei. Later Erke Qara, another brother of Toghhoril, fearing for his life, took refuge under Inancha Khan of the Naimans. Inancha Khan sent his army against Toghhoril and drove out the latter. Toghhoril fled by way of the Tanguts, the Uyghurs and the Qarluqs until he reached the Gür Khan of the Qara Qitay Empire on the Chu. He was not well received there, left again and headed back eastward by way of the Uyghurs and the Tanguts. He was so impoverished on his way that he had only five goats with him, whose milk was his main diet, and he also drank blood of his camels. When Toghhoril reached Lake Güse'ür in Mongolia in that state, Temüjin, who remembered Yesügei's old *anda*-brotherhood with Toghhoril, went to meet and received the latter offering plenty of assistance in livelihood. Their meeting took place in 1196, just when the Jušen Chin Empire was undertaking a large-scale military campaign on the bothersome nomadic tribes on its northern border. Temüjin and Toghhoril jointly cooperated with the Chin forces and the emperor rewarded them with titles. Toghhoril was created *wang* (king), to be known as Ong Khan from then on. Temüjin was appointed *ja'ud-quri*, which presumably meant centurion. Thereafter Toghhoril Ong Khan and Temüjin always worked together, until they had a fallout in 1203. In the end Temüjin surprised Ong Khan in the latter's camp at Mount Jeje'er Öndör, taking the Kereyid troops prisoner. Ong Khan fled into the Naimans and was killed by the Naiman border guards. That was the end of the two-century-old Nestorian-Christian kingdom of the Kereyids.

All Mongolian and Kalmyk chronicles concur in calling the Torgut princes descendants of Ong Khan of the Kereyid. Then it is obvious that

Gramin Khan, under whose protection On-Tas spends some time before coming to Chinggis Khan, is no other than Gür Khan of the Qara Qitays.

Then comes Kibving Noyen, who is here said to have been the first Torgut chief to join the Four Oyirad tribal confederation. Ghabang-shes-rab's *History of the Four Oyirad*, the oldest extant Volga-Kalmyk chronicle, says: "The first Torgut who joined the Oyirad was Kivang".

This Kibving/Kivang sends messengers to Toro Taiji Khan of Öret. Toro Taiji here is Toghon Tayishi, the famous Oyirad leader who succeeded his father Mahmud on the latter's death in 1416, defeated and killed Arughtai Tayishi of the Mongols in 1431, put up Tayisung Khan, a Khubilaid prince, on the throne in the following year, and held sway over all Mongolia until he died and was succeeded by his son Esen in 1443.

Toghon Tayishi's exclamation here is to be read more correctly: "*Öngge beye sayiqan tanar yum; yeke törölki beyetei sayiqan ulus bui*", meaning 'How good-looking in complexion and constitution you are! You are indeed a good-looking people, who are of great birth and body.' Of course *törölki* (birth), here spelled *turrelluk*, does not mean 'tall, stately'. Nor is it plausible to derive the tribal name Torgut from *törölki*. *Turγaγud* is none other than Turkic *turγaq*, 'watchman, guard', in Mongolicized plural form.

Boro Örölök Khan, here said to be Kibving Noyen's eldest son, phonetically corresponds to Boyigho Örlöq the Torgut chief, whose grandson Khoo Örlöq migrated with his tribesmen from Dzungaria to the Volga in 1630. Shükür Dayiching is actually the son of Khoo Örlöq, not of Boyigho Örlöq. Shükür Dayiching's grandson Ayuuki was made khan by the Tibetan Regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho in the name of the Sixth Dalai Lama in 1697. Ayuuki Khan's great-grandson was Ubashi Khan, who with his tribesmen revolted from the Russians, left the Volga and returned to the Ili to seek protection under the Manchus in 1771.

The last part in the introduction to "Toregut rarelro" simply enumerates the titles the thirteen ruling Torgut princes were given by the Manchus.

Losang, here said to be the fifth son of Wang Khan, is Lobzang Noyan, Khoo Örlöq's son and Shükür Dayiching's younger brother. Lobzang Noyan's great-great-grandson Mementü became the first Doroi Jirgalang Beile, jasak of the Torgut Banner on the Jing River. Oskhon Chabchin, here said to be Lobzang's son, is really Oyighon Chabchaachi, who was Boyigho Örlöq's son and Khoo Örlöq's uncle. Oyighon Chabchaachi's sixth-generation descendant was Shereng, the founder of the Doroi Biliktu Giyün Wang

Banner in the Altai. Shereng's paternal cousin was Baatur Ubashi, who had a son by the name of Shara Keüken. The latter became the founder of the Gūsai Ucaraltu Beise Banner, south of the Altai Mountains.²

All these genealogical inaccuracies prove how much the Torguts had lost in the way of historical tradition by the time when Haslund's "Toregut rarelro" was written down, presumably as late as the nineteenth century. The only passage we can appreciate in the text, though not historically, is the Torgut tribal pride reflected in Toghon Tayishi's exclamation, "How good-looking in complexion and constitution you are! You are indeed a good-looking people, who are of great birth and body."

² To make understanding these lines easier, Haslund's own account of the Torguts' political organization and geographical distribution is quoted below from his *Zajagan*, pp. 262-263:

The aggregate number of the Torgut tribes were stated at figures so divergent as eighty and a hundred and twenty thousand. Of the organization of the tribes I learned as follows: Each of the thirteen Torgut principalities is ruled by its *Jassak* (hereditary chief), but the chief of the Khara Shar tribe is the Khan of all the Torguts, and the other twelve are subordinate to him for military and other important purposes.

Of the twelve subordinate chiefs two bear the title of *chin wang* (prince of the first rank), two of *chün wang* (prince of the second rank), one of *kung* (duke of the first rank), and three of *taiji* (noble of the first rank). Each *hoshun* (principality) has a *ustlakchi* who is its civil administrator and is appointed by the chief.

For military purposes each *hoshun* is divided into *sumon* (arrows) of which five constitute a "banner" under the command of a *gusdä*. The military strength of a *sumon* is recruited from one to two hundred tents and is under the leadership of a *meiren*. The total Torgut force under the Regent's command amounts to a hundred and fifty four *sumon* of which fifty-four are furnished by the Khara Shar tribe alone.

In addition the Regent has a personal bodyguard of fourteen hundred picked and well-equipped warriors who bear the name of honour *bator* (heroes).

The various tribes live a nomad life each in an allotted territory, and nine of these are so situated as to form a barrier round the Khara Shar tribe. The ten Torgut tribes who thus dwell near to one another are named in common Khochin Torgut (the old Torguts), and to them also belong, theoretically, the distant Etsin-gol Torguts.

The two tribes in the Altai are called Shene Torgut (the new Torguts), because they returned from the Volga later than the ten tribes settled in Sinkiang. The chiefs of the twelve tribes constitute, with the chief of the Etsin-gol Torguts, *araben-gurben tamag-tai noyen* (the thirteen signet-bearing princes).

The most important grazing grounds of the Khara Shar Torguts lie by the Tsoltus whose watering places they share with three Khoshut tribes.

Other large Torgut settlements lie by the rivers Jirgalan, Chingho, Hobog Sairi, Bulugon, Tekes and Khunges and beside the Eren Habirga mountains.