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ART. XVI.—On an Ancient Inscription in the Neu-chih Language

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ART. XVI.—*On an Ancient Inscription in the Neu-chih Language.* By A. WYLIE, Esq., of Shanghai.

[Read 4th February, 1860.]

AN indigenous record of the nomade tribes of Tartary, who shook the world with their conquests during the middle ages, would no doubt form an interesting episode in universal history. Although the Mongols made their power to be felt from east to west, comparatively little was known in Europe of their actual condition ; but that little is sufficient to stimulate curiosity, and while the names of Genghiz and Tamerlane have gained a world-wide celebrity, very much that pertains to their people, as a nation and as individuals, is left to be filled up by the imagination. Tokens of former grandeur are still to be met with in the northern wilds, suggesting to the mind of the traveller a host of questions, which receive no satisfactory solution from the erratic nomades who inhabit those sterile regions. How many monarchies were overthrown by these children of the desert ; how many kingdoms reduced to desolation ; how many nations subdued, their power broken, and their inhabitants dispersed ? Questions allied to something higher than the mere inquisitive faculty attach to some of these points ; and, while we scan the *débris* of bye-gone generations, we are impelled by the conviction that all efforts in that direction are auxiliary to the more mature knowledge of the history of the human race.

Among the nations that succumbed to the Mongol sway, one not the least powerful was the tribe which held the supremacy in North China during the twelfth century, known as the Kin dynasty. The chiefs of this people had shown a remarkable power of development and adaptation to their altered circumstances. Emerging from the mountain wilds on the north-east of China, it was the care of the Neu-chih race, on first attaining imperial power, to frame a code of laws, institute officers and tribunals, and adopt those means which seemed most likely to secure their permanence. An astronomical board was established, and a new system of mathematical chronology invented. A board of history was appointed, and the annals of the empire thus

secured to posterity. Previous to this a new written character had been invented, under the special patronage of the first emperor, the very singular circumstances connected with which forms the occasion of the following remarks, for the information regarding which, as for many other kindred questions, we are altogether dependant on the Chinese records.

And here it is worthy of observation that the Chinese, although scrupulously adhering to their own peculiar ideographic written language from time immemorial, have also, from a very early period, been cognizant of various written systems used by neighbouring nations, of an alphabetic or syllabic character. Early intercourse with the Japanese has left no perceptible impression on the written language of the Chinese, while, in that of the former, the influence of the Chinese is sufficiently obvious. Not so the result of the Buddhist migrations from India ; they have left an indelible stamp on the literature of the empire. Piles of Sanscrit lore were translated into the native character ; much of the Hindoo philosophy and modes of thought have been rendered familiar ; a very extensive addition has been made to the number of the Chinese characters, and they have even succeeded in introducing a system of syllabic spelling. But, although the Devanagari alphabet, which is said to be the most perfect in existence, had been so long before the eyes of the scholars of the empire, we find no steps taken towards its adoption, in place of the time-honoured characters of China ; and now, after a lapse of thirteen centuries, there remain in China but a few vestiges of this character, in books, and on monumental tablets and vessels, without living expositors to throw light on the mysteries, which are thus rendered still more obscure. The Ouigours and progenitors of the Turkish nations were early in the habit of corresponding with the Chinese Court in written characters peculiar to their respective tribes. It is known that the Syriac alphabet was introduced into China so early as the seventh century, by the Nestorian missionaries. The frequent intercourse of the Arabs with China, from early times, would warrant the belief that the Arabian alphabet must have been long familiar to the eyes of the Chinese, especially during the Yuen dynasty, when they enjoyed a large share of the imperial patronage ; although it does not appear that they have ever done much towards the translation of their books into Chinese ; and, even to the present time, the greater part of the rituals and religious books of the Mohammedans are still in the Arabic character.

But besides the knowledge of foreign systems of writing in China, several alphabets have been produced, and have run their course,

within the limits of the empire, introduced at successive periods by various Tartar races who have gained a temporary ascendancy.

We cannot speak with certainty in this matter as to the achievements of the Topakwei Tartars, while they held rule in the northern parts of China, as the Northern Wei dynasty, during the fifth century of the Christian era, though there is ground to believe that they had a particular character for writing their original language. Thus we read in the history of the Suy dynasty,¹ that when the Wei Tartars took possession of Lo-yang, they were unacquainted with the Chinese language; and their emperor, Wan-te, gave orders to How Fo-how and Ko Seih-ling to translate the *Haou King*, or "Book of Filial Piety, into the Court language." In the bibliographical section of the same work² the names of nine other books relative to the language of that people are given. The names of three books on the language of the Seen-pei, a neighbouring tribe, are also preserved in the same place.

We know that the Tsi-tan Tartars, who established themselves in China about the middle of the tenth century, as the Leaou dynasty, had a peculiar alphabet; and as there was a close relation between it and the one we are now about to consider, it will be well to quote the short account of this writing as given by the Chinese, this being the only source from which we can gather any light on the subject. In Ma Twan-lin's great work, the *Wăn hĕn t'ung k'âu*, "Antiquarian Researches,"³ we read that A-paou-ke, the first emperor of the Leaou, having a great number of Chinese in his service, they instructed him, by an adaptation of the Chinese official hand with certain additions and contractions, to construct several thousand characters, and these were used to replace the wooden tallies which they had employed hitherto.⁴ The history of the Leaou dynasty further informs us, that in the 1st month of the year 920, on the 2nd day of the cycle, the formation of the Tsitan capital letters was commenced, and on the 14th day of the 9th month, being the 39th day of the cycle, the new characters having been completed, an edict was issued ordering their general adoption.⁵ The silence of history leaves us to conjecture as

¹ Book 32, p. 18.

² Book 32, page 22.

³ Book 345.

⁴ See also Rémusat's *Recherches sur les langues Tartares*, p. 77, and Translation of the Ts'ing wan k'e mung, Introduction, p. xviii.

⁵ *Leaou she*, "History of the Leaou Dynasty," Book 2, p. 1. The same passages are reproduced in the *Hung kĕn lŭh*, "Middle Age History," Book 202, p. 7, and the *Suh Wăn hĕn t'ung k'âu*, "Supplement to the Antiquarian Researches," Book 184, p. 31. These several quotations are translated into French, by Rémusat, in his *Recherches sur les langues Tartares*, p. 77.

to the result of this experiment. The only instance we find of the actual employment of these characters on record is on the 29th day of the 9th month of the year 924, when an imperial edict ordered the memorial tablet of the Emperor P'ih-gō to be rubbed down, and have his military enterprises recorded on it, in Tsitan, Turkish, and Chinese characters.¹ Future research may possibly discover some traces of this national literature in the northern parts of the empire, when a short vocabulary of the Tsitan language, which is inserted at the end of the Leaou history,² may be of some service in the deciphering of any such inscriptions. A glossary of this language is also to be found in the *Tszè h'ö t'ên*, "Canon of Written Characters."³

Remotely allied to the Tsitan Tartars was the Neu-ch'ih tribe, who had been for some time gaining an ascendancy, and eventually became the successful rivals of the Leaou monarchy. The latter state came to an end soon after the establishment of the Neu-ch'ih as the Kin dynasty, in the early part of the 12th century. The Neu-ch'ih being still without any written character, a partial knowledge of the Tsitan, and also of the Chinese, was acquired from the people of those nations who had been taken captive by the Kin. Taking advantage of this circumstance, a scholar, named K'uh-shin, received orders from the Emperor Tae-tsoo to invent a set of characters on the same principle as those of the Tsitan, and based on the Chinese pattern hand characters, but suitable for writing the Neu-ch'ih language.⁴ These characters when completed were authorized by imperial edict, and ordered to be brought into general use, in the 8th month of the year 1119, on the 26th day of the cycle.⁵ In 1138, the Kin emperor, He-tsong, having invented a set of small Neu-ch'ih characters, those which K'uh-shin had invented previously were termed capitals,⁶ and the small Neu-ch'ih characters were published through the empire by an edict, on the 28th day of the 1st month.⁷ These were first brought into use officially in the 5th month of the year 1145, on the 55th day

¹ *Leaou she*, Book 2, p. 5; *Hung k'ên l'uh*, Book 202, p. 9; *Suh W'än h'ên t'ung k'au*, Book 184, p. 31.

² *Leaou she*, Book 46. A sample of these words has been translated into German, by Klaproth, in his *Asia Polyglotta*, pp. 194, 195.

³ Rémusat's *Mélanges Asiatiques*, Tome 2, p. 256.

⁴ *Suh W'än h'ên t'ung k'au*, Book 184, p. 31.

⁵ *Kin she*, "History of the Kin Dynasty," Book 2, p. 14; *Hung k'ên l'uh*, Book 214, p. 14.

⁶ *T'ung k'ên kang muh Suh p'ên*, "Supplement to the General History of China," Book 10, p. 42; *Suh W'än h'ên t'ung k'au*, Book 184, p. 31.

⁷ *Kin she*, Book 3, p. 20; *Hung k'ên l'uh*, Book 215, p. 10.

of the cycle.¹ The *Suk Wăn hēn t'ung kaôu* states, in a note, that the classics and histories of China were translated in this character. These are most probably now lost past recovery, but in a catalogue of the books in the Imperial Library at Peking during the Ming dynasty we have a list of fifteen books in the Neu-chih character, the last of which, called the *Neu chih tszé moo*, "Neu-chih Alphabet," would no doubt have thrown much light on the character of the Kin literature. As these fifteen works are probably all lost, it may be well to preserve the names of the others, which are as follows :—

Pwan koô shoo, "History of Pwan-koo."

K'ùng foo tszé sho, "History of Confucius."

K'ùng foo tszé yéu kwô chang, "Travels of Confucius."

K'ea yü, "Domestic Discourses."

K'ea yü hēn nǎng yén yü chuen, "Discourses of the Wise and Able, from the Domestic Discourses."

K'ëang t'áé kung shoo, "History of K'ëang Taé-kung."

Wò Tszé seu shoo, "History of Woo Tszé-seu."

Shih pǎ kwô tóu paôu chuen, Narrative of the Display of Rarities by Eighteen Kingdoms."

Sun pin shoo, "History of Sun Pin."

Shén yü shoo, "Treatise on Carriage-driving."

Hàè tséén kung shoo, "History of Hae Tseen Kung."

Hwang shé nèu shoo, "History of Madam Hwang."

Pih k'ea sing, "National Surnames."

Ha ta yang úrh kan.

The only direct evidence which we have of the actual use of the Neu-chih character, besides the books, is in the existence of two stone tablets, which will be noticed in this paper. One of these was engraved during the Kin dynasty, and the other at the end of the Yuen.

The annals of the Ming inform us of the establishment of a translatorial office, in connection with the national collegiate institute, in the year 1407. The object of this office was to facilitate the transaction of diplomatic correspondence with foreign nations, and the incumbents were charged with the study of eight different foreign languages. One of these was the Neu-chih; and the others were the Mongolian, Tibetan, Sanscrit, Bokharan, Ouigour, Birman, and Siamese. An examination of the students took place in 1426, by the members of the Han-lin institute; and this practice was repeated at intervals, those who distinguished themselves being appointed to

¹ *Kin she*, Book 3, p. 27; *Hung k'een lü*, Book 215, p. 13.

offices connected with the embassies. In 1470 a fixed number of interpreters were appointed for each of the nations above named; seven being the number determined on for the Neu-chih, but it was afterwards increased to nine.

On the accession of the present Manchu dynasty, in 1644, we find they re-established this Translatorial Office, the same year, adding two sections in addition to the eight previously existing. These were the Pa-pih and the Pih-yih, two nations on the south-west of China. A president was appointed, and fifty-six professors; and the following year another section was added, consisting of thirty interpreters, for the tributary nations. In 1659 the section devoted to the Neu-chih language was suppressed, as also that for the Mongol.¹ The Manchus being actually descendants from the Neu-chih Tartars their language is almost identical, and it is probable that, by that time, the Manchu literature had already supplanted the Neu-chih character.

Most of the preceding facts were known to that singularly acute orientalist, Abel Remusat, when he wrote his *Recherches sur les langues Tartares*; but, not having seen a specimen of the writing in question, he was led to form an hypothesis, which must at least in part fall to the ground. On the 78th page of the work above mentioned, he says: "It is not impossible that the countries which were under their domination still contain stone monuments, with inscriptions destined to perpetuate the remembrance of treaties of peace, of decisive battles, and splendid actions. It is customary, in China, to erect tablets on such occasions, and the Tartars frequently conform to this practice. If any such could be found, with inscriptions in the characters of the Leaou or the Kin, we should be enabled to speak from knowledge, in deciding whether the Tartars had adopted the Chinese characters purely and simply, or whether they had subjected them to some such corruption as those alluded to above; whether they had adhered to what others had thought out before them, or whether they had themselves taken a step in advance in this career, which is open to inventive and perfective genius. For want of such decisive monuments, being unprovided even with such Chinese works as could supply the want in presenting us with syllabaries, with alphabets, or with words expressed in the characters in question, we are reduced to conjectures

¹ These details respecting the Office of Translators are taken from Rémusat's *Recherches sur les langues Tartares*, pp. 218-20, and *Mélanges Asiatiques*, Tome 2, pp. 248, 249. He quotes from a work called the *Pian-i-tian*, which I have not seen, and part of which is extracted from the, *Ming hway t'ien*, "Statistics of the Ming Dynasty."

11. $\log_2$ with base two & here $\log_2 64 = 6$

[illegible]

融餅煨炙醅糟煨航松左黑悅然主同飯稔

大金皇弟都統經略郎君嚮呂疆場無事獵
于梁山之陽至唐乾陵殿廡頽然一無所睹
爰命有司鳩工修飾今復謁陵下繪像一新
回廊四起不勝欣懌與醴陽太守酣飲而歸
時天會十二年歲次甲寅仲冬十有四日
尚書職方郎中黃應期 省州刺史王圭从
行奉 命題

regarding the system of writing followed by the Tsitan and the Neu-chih."

After a careful examination of a considerable number of works on lapidary inscriptions, I can only find a record of the existence of two in the Neu-chih character. The first of these was erected in the year 1134, at the imperial mausoleum at Keen-chow, in Shen-se province; and a transcript of the same is to be found in a work of the Ming dynasty. As this is almost the only existing specimen of a lost (written) language it will be well to state the particulars with some minuteness. The work in which this curious piece is published is called *Shih mih tseuen hwa*, "Choice selections from lapidary literature," by Chaou Han, and is dated 1618. It is in eight books and contains nearly 300 inscriptions. It was reprinted during the present dynasty, in a collection, consisting of a new edition of 184 different works, in thirty packets, known by the name *E poo sow ke*, "Assemblage of rarities from the garden of arts." It was also reprinted in a reduced size, in another similar collection, about the end of last century called *Che puh tsuh tse ts'ung shoo*, "Repository of the knowledge of one's deficiencies." In this edition the inscription is printed so close that it is difficult to know how to separate the words from each other.

A transcript is given here, the size of the original work, together with a version in Chinese, which stands on the left of the Neu-chih inscription on the tablet.

The following is a translation of the inscription, according to the Chinese version :—

"The local military director and prince of the blood, brother to the emperor of the Great Kin dynasty; having enjoyed a season of tranquillity within the boundary of his jurisdiction, was hunting on the south side of Leang Hill. On coming to Keen-ling (the imperial sepulchres) of the Tang dynasty, finding the pavilion and side buildings in a state of decay, every vestige of magnificence having disappeared, he gave orders to the local authorities to assemble artisans to repair and beautify the place. Now having again visited the sepulchres, finding the paintings all renewed, and the side galleries completely restored, he was inexpressibly delighted, and returned after partaking of an entertainment by the Prefect of Le-yang.

"T'een-hwuy, 12th year (A.D. 1134), being the 51st year of the sexagenary cycle, 11th month, 14th day, Hwang Ying-ke, Territorial Secretary to the Supreme Council, and Wang Kwei, Secondary Prefect of Yew-chow, members of the suite, have written this in compliance with the command.

"Translation of the preceding inscription."

The heading to the tablet reads—"Record of the journey of the military director and prince of the blood, the emperor's brother."

The author of the *Shih mih tseuen kwa* adds the following note:—"This prince of the blood is called the brother of the emperor, but no name or surname is mentioned. As the date is 1134, it should be the brother of T'aé tsung. According to the history of the Kin dynasty, She-tsoo had eleven sons, there being eight besides Kang-tsung, T'aé-tsoo, and T'aé-tsung, it is uncertain which is the one referred to. We cannot decipher a single word of this inscription, which is written in the Neu-chih character. This table corroborates what Wang Yuen-mei says—'When enlightened princes are watchful over their virtue, foreigners are attracted from every region.' There is a translation at the end, in the Chinese character, consisting of one hundred and five characters, inscribed on the left side, but it is entirely different. The engraved inscription is at Keen-ling, on the characterless tablet."

One Le Kwang-ying, a native of Kea-hing, published a descriptive catalogue of the impressions from inscriptions in his possession, in 1729, entitled *Kwan meadu tze tsang kin shih wän kadu lëö* "Examination of the metal and stone inscriptions preserved in the Chêfs-d'œuvres Cabinet." On the 4th page of the 15th book we find the following:—

"Record of the journey of the local military director and prince of the blood, the emperor's brother.

"This is written in the national character of the dynasty.

"At the end is the following subscription:—'T'ëen hwny, 12th year, being the 51st year of the cycle, 11th month, 14th day, Hwang Ying-ke, Territorial Secretary to the Supreme Council, and Wang Kwei, Secondary Prefect of Yew-chow, members of the suite, have written this in compliance with the command.'

"There is also the following subscription:—'Signature of Fan Chung-gan of Ching-too, in the year 1633.'

The *Kwan-chung kin shih ke*, "Record of the Metal and Stone Inscriptions of Shen-se," by Peih Yuen, published in 1781, notices this inscription, on the 1st page of the 7th book, as follows:—

"Record of the journey of the military director and prince of the blood, the emperor's brother.

"Erected in the 11th month, A.D. 1134. The first part is written in the Neu-chih character; the latter part is a translation written in the ordinary character; the heading is in the seal character. At Keen-ling, in Keen-chow.

"This is engraved on the characterless tablet at Keen-ling, as

follows :¹ — ‘We find on examination, that in the year 1131 the Kin gave the region of Shen-se to the house of Tse, so that at the date in question this territory belonged to Lew Yu, and while Lew Yu was thus Emperor of Tse he was guarded and protected by Ta-lae as army inspector. Ta-lae was the son of Muh-tsung, and the brother of T’aé-tsung. In the inscription it is said “the emperor’s brother,” but no name is given. Comparing this with history, there is no doubt that Ta-lae is referred to.’ ”

The *Tsëen yen t’ang kin shih wänpa wei suh*, “Supplement to the Tsëen-yen hall Appendices to the Metal and Stone Literature,” also notices this inscription, on the 1st page of the 6th book, as follows:—

“Record of the journey of the military director and prince of the blood, the emperor’s brother.

“A.D. 1134, 11th month.”

“In the preceding record, the former part is written in the Neu-chih character and the latter part is a version in the Chinese character. The inscription speaks of the military director and prince of the blood, the emperor’s brother, but it does not give any name. Some students of inscriptions consider this to be Tsung-foo; but Tsung-foo was the son of T’aé-tsoo and nephew of T’aé-tsung, and as the inscription was engraved in the time of T’aé-tsung, he could not be called the emperor’s brother. Some consider it to be Ta-lae; but on examining the imperial records and the biographies in the History of the Kin, we find that Ta-lae was not in Shen-se at that time. I conceive this prince of the blood to have been Sa-le-hö. Sa-le-hö belonged originally to the royal house of the Kin, and being the foster son of She-tsoo, he was brought up as a brother of T’aé-tsung, and ought to be designated the emperor’s brother. In Le Sin’s Narrative of Important Events for the year 1130, it is said—‘In the 10th month of the year 1131, Tsung Peih being defeated by Woo Keae, he returned from the east of the river to Yen-shan, when the Assistant Commander-in-Chief, Tsung Wei, detained Tsung Peih in the camp, and appointed the Assistant Military Director, Sa-le-hö, to be Commissioner for Military Affairs in Shen-se.’ Thus the expression on the tablet, Local Military Director, exactly corresponds with the Narrative of Events; for he was promoted, from being Assistant Military Director, to be Principal Military Director. The Narrative of Events further says, ‘When Loo Peih led on the troops to an assault, and was defeated by Woo Keae, Sa-le-hö was seized with alarm and shed tears, in consequence of which the Kin people called him

¹ The inscription in Chinese, down to the date, is given here.

the Weeping Prince of the Blood.' So that Sa-le-hö originally had the title of Prince of the Blood. This event is not narrated in the History of the Kin ; but, besides this matter of the Local Military Director, there are very great omissions in the History, which must be supplied by the Narrative of Events and the lapidary inscriptions. Sa-le-hö's name is now written Sa-le-kan."

Such are the few particulars I have been able to gather regarding this stone, and an examination of the character permits me to add very little more, for I confess it has resisted all the efforts which I have been enabled to apply towards its resolution. I have little hesitation, however, in saying that it is an actual version in another language, and not a mere transcription of the Chinese sounds. One reason for this conclusion is that, while the Chinese characters are 105 in number, the words of the Kin are only 94 ; besides which I see no conceivable collocation of the strokes which can make these words correspond to the sounds of the Chinese, or anything near it. I conceive, further, that the translation cannot be a very literal one, in consequence of the shortness of the Kin version. This opinion is founded on the fact that the present Manchu, which is a direct descendant of the Kin, is much more diffuse than the Chinese, and in all bilingual inscriptions the Manchu words greatly exceed the Chinese. It would be necessary, however, to know something of their principles of literary composition, before deciding too positively ; for, under the circumstances in which their literature took its rise, we are not authorized to look for a high degree of perfection ; and the thought has occurred, as a possibility, that the particles and inflexions may be omitted. The few specimens which I have found of the language in Chinese books, are not calculated to throw much light on this point.

One of these authorities is a short vocabulary of the Kin language, called *Kwö yu keae*, at the end of the *Kin she*, "History of the Kin dynasty." The greater part of this was translated into German by Klaproth, in his *Asia Polyglotta*, pp. 292, 294. I have also given an English translation of it, in the Introduction to the Translation of the *Tsing wän ké mung*, pp. lxxv, lxxx.

In the *Tszé hëö t'en* there is also a glossary of the Neu-chih language, which was published by Visdelou, in the *Supplément à la Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 257.¹ The same was republished by Langlès, in his *Alphabet Mantchou*, third edition, pp. 38, 39, which also gives the corresponding Manchu words.

A much more extensive work, in a number of volumes, was pub-

¹ *Mélanges Asiatiques*, Tome 2, p. 256.

lished at Peking, in 1824, entitled *Kin ting Kin she yu keae*, "Explanation of words in the Kin History, published by Imperial authority." The greater part of the words in this work belong to the Neu-chih, though a large portion of them is also from the Mongolian, Tibetan, Sulu, and other Tartar tongues. The words, which in the Kin history are given in the Chinese character, are here written in the Manchu character also, the explanations being all in Chinese.

The transcription of a few proper names in the Neu-chih character might afford a clue to the alphabet ; but it is possible the names on the tablet are not transfers of the sound, but translations of the sense, as we find most of the proper names are translated in the two works above mentioned. Thus, *Kin*, the name of the dynasty in Chinese, signifying Gold, is given, in the Kin history, as *Gáu-chüh-hoò*, and *Gáu-ch'ün*, and also *Gaesin*, each of these words signifying Gold or Metal in the Neu-chih language, the latter being also the word used

in the modern Manchu language, , *Aisin*. Again, the Chinese

surname, *Wang*, which we find at the end of this inscription, is translated in the above vocabularies in the Neu-chih, by *Wán-yen*, or, rather, this latter is given as the equivalent in Neu-chih. The Chinese surname, *Shang*, has *Woo-kòò-lún*, for the Neu-chih equivalent, and so on ; the author of the Kin history remarking, at the end, that it would be a difficult task to give all the surnames, as the Chinese equivalents were arbitrarily adopted by the respective families. Such being the case with regard to proper names, it is possible that the examples on this tablet are not transfers of the sound, but the Neu-chih equivalents, and thus we are deprived of a key which has proved the most important auxiliary in recovering the lost written languages of Egypt and Persepolis.

Again, the fact that there were two systems of characters in use, while we are not informed as to the particular application of these respectively, involves the question in still greater perplexity.

It remains to notice the hypothesis of Rémusat, which is deserving of attention for its ingenuity, and, it may be, is not entirely devoid of foundation. He considered there was ground to believe that the writings of the Leaou and Kin dynasties were essentially the same, and that this was nothing more nor less than the present Korean written language, it having been transmitted to the present day by that nation, formerly the immediate neighbours of the Leaou and Kin Tartars. The inscription now before us furnishes the answer, in part, to this theory, inasmuch as we see by it that the Kin alphabet is cer-

tainly not identical with the Corean ; still I think there is reason in the suggestion that the Corean may be the written language of the Leaou Tartars. The appearance of the character, compared with the account of that of the Tsitan, given in the Chinese history, seems to favour this supposition. That account tells us the characters were formed by a modification of the Chinese *le-shoo*, or what has been termed the official hand ; and it does not require a great stretch of fancy to trace a resemblance between the elements of the Corean writing and the Chinese characters of the Han dynasty. The form of the grouping of the Corean characters also corresponds with those on the Kin tablet ; and this may form an important hint, in any attempt to unravel the contents of the latter. The order of sequence observed in the elements of the Corean words is, first, top left hand, then right, and lastly below ; and the presumption is that the same rule applies to the Neu-chih writing.

The annexed specimen of Corean writing, from the *Lung wei pei shoo*,¹ will show the analogy between it and the Kin writing. The interlinear column on the right is the original document in Chinese, of which the other is merely a transcript of the sounds in the Corean character.

The following lines contain a transliteration of the Corean alphabetic characters :—

Song ts'am koon O Tsă ngoo tai hyong t'yon työ.

Hook yoo toong oi in moo i ha pyoor rak t'i k'i tyoi hyong ha p'ir
poon Tsou Wor

Kan tam mai syang tsyo ping ho ngong han woir wi wok kak nga
wey t'a tsyoo pookoon tsyor

Pang kwi koo toong lyoong ko ts'a syong li kyoi kwan ha lo hom
he ts'yoo kyo pang k'hai tsir

Ts'o ko sin hang ts'yoo moo lyong ts'oo hoi t'yor toong ngyoo
syang ngyong pyong hae kyö ir syoo hyor

Syong pang so ngyon ts'a kak sin to tsaoon syor moor hyam koo
ngi soo myan syoon tsang moo ts'yor.

TRANSLATION.

*Presented to my esteemed Brother, the Military Adviser, Woo-Tse-yu,
on his return to China.*

Although there are the central and outside nations,
Yet it is vain to distinguish men as natives and foreigners :

¹ Part IX, Division 3, Book 4, p. 1.

*Souvenir presented to a Chinese Envoy to Lima
on occasion of his return*

送將軍吳子魚大兄還天朝
去姑立至不計別站站立

國有中外殊人無彛夏別落地皆第兄何必分楚越
号弁号幻 公早公补班比比引中站云聖是乾

肝膽每相照冰壺映寒月倚王覺我穢唾珠復君絕
止站引皆立以至以祉引至方外引以弁号亡君

方期久登龍遠此成離訣關河路險巖秋郊方觸熱
壯引子云兵初似公引以公站刻奪且堪引公

此去慎行休毋令阻回轍東陲尚用兵海嶠日流血
初州化公弁早以不刻跪云弁公站引且地弁站

須馮魯連子却秦掉寸舌勿嫌九羣陋勉狗壯夫節
公引公引不朽化云云何是站子公引且云公引

All mankind enter the world as brethren,
 Then why draw a line between Tsoo and Yue.
 Our intimacy is that of the inmost heart,
 Reflected like the winter moon on the icy pool.
 Under the influence of your virtues I become conscious of my imperfections,
 While your pearly productions reiterate your rare attainments.
 Henceforward I had hoped long to enjoy your company,
 But now, of a sudden, I am called to bid you farewell.
 Through passes and rivers dangers beset your way,
 And the mild air of autumn no longer pervades the fields ;
 Now, on your departure, be careful when you travel and when you halt,
 That no obstacle may impede you in your homeward journey.
 On the eastern border the military are still up in arms,
 And the seaboard is deluged with the blood of the slain.
 The country wants another Ping Loo-leen
 Who could divert the soldiers of Tsin by the power of his tongue.
 Do not harbour suspicions regarding the rudeness of barbarians,
 For they can apply themselves to fulfil the duties of life with credit.

It has been objected to the above theory that the Corean alphabet is far too systematic, and presents too striking a resemblance to the Devanagari, to have been the production of the Tsitan, and that it is more probable to have been imported from the west, by the propagators of the Buddhist faith. There is force in this objection, but not such, I think, as to overthrow the hypothesis in question ; I would rather extend the doubt, by supposing the improbability of this Tartar tribe having spontaneously excogitated an alphabet for their language ; and as we are informed by the history that they were indebted for the suggestion to their Chinese captives and refugees, I see nothing forced in the supposition that among the latter were to be found Buddhist priests, having a knowledge of the principles on which were constructed the written languages of India and Tibet. On the contrary, this seems an easy way of accounting for what otherwise stands out as a difficulty in the case ; and, while there is an obvious analogy between the Corean alphabetic system and the Devanagari, I would hesitate before receiving this as an evidence against its identity with the Tsitan. A fact which would favour this view is recorded in the history of Kublai khan, who commissioned the Lama priest, Saadja Bandida, to perform a similar office for his dynasty, the same order

having been also transmitted to his successor in office, the Tibetan priest, Baschpa.

Granting, then, that we are enabled thus to identify the Tsitan character, I am not prepared to believe that the more recent Neu-chih character is really a step in advance. A seed of national independence or, it may be, vanity, seems to have contributed to the desire for a character peculiar to their tribe, as we know that, on a later occasion, the Mongols of the Yuen dynasty were prompted by such a feeling. Their inability fully to appreciate the capabilities of the alphabet of their neighbours may also have exercised an influence in the same direction, for it is probable that the Tsitan and Neu-chih were cognate dialects. In the absence of more direct evidence, therefore, I would infer that the Neu-chih is rather a degradation than an improvement upon the Tsitan. Such as it was it seems to have been known and used for many years after; for we find Kublai khan stating, in his edict, regarding the alphabet of Baschpa, as one of his reasons for the invention of a new character, that the Leaou and Kin had characters peculiar to their respective nations. I find it also stated, in a Chinese book on inscriptions, that there is, at Keu-yung-kwan, on the Great Wall, a stone tablet, erected during the Yuen dynasty, in the year 1345, with a Buddhist sutra inscribed on it in five different kinds of characters, *i. e.*, the Mongolian, Ouigour, Neu-chih, Sanscrit, and Chinese.

Annexed is a table of the elements of the Neu-chih writing, derived from an analysis of the Kin tablet, by which it will be seen they are almost all component parts of the Chinese *keae shoo*, or what has been called the pattern hand; but it is still doubtful if this subdivision is in accordance with the laws of Neu-chih orthoepy; for there is not one of them of which I can find a key to the pronunciation, and it is only some three or four of the words to which I can affix the interpretation with any great probability. There is no indication of a distinction of the characters as initials, medials, and finals, on the principle of the Arabic and Tartar alphabets, for we find the same form of character occupying each of these positions in the various combinations.

To recapitulate the principal facts above alluded to:—We have here an inscription in an unknown character, professing to be a facsimile from a stone tablet of the period of the Kin dynasty, erected at the imperial tombs of the Tang dynasty, at Keen-chow, in Shen-se. A translation, in Chinese, is given by the side; a note in the work in which it is preserved informs us that it is in the Neu-chih character. This work has been twice reprinted, in different collections. The

Supposed elements of the New-chih written Inscription.

卡多災凡火雨令井人左坐圭禾
 变苗花夫予口才卜大七牛考及平乙及内九亦号
 州土反火力高禾已由上弓已曲凡ノ々了乃中少
 丙生災廿爻之し米引米以出各入丹世引又又十
 出又才士兴气九出力水用一火必介丙太工爻乃
 反戈月共木丰乃人斗冠有爻土イ夫廷弓一坐夫
 口又山后安市巫市哭旁而シ勾垂八千凡同水号

authenticity of the inscription is vouched for, by being noticed and commented on in a number of other works on inscriptions. We learn from history that the Neu-chih had a peculiar written character for their language. There is reason to believe that an analogy exists between the method of this written language and that of the Korean. The aids we have for the recovery of the Neu chih language are a vocabulary at the end of the Kin history, and an imperial work lately printed, explaining all the foreign words in the Kin history. The general resemblance between the specimens of the Neu-chih language thus handed down to us, and the modern language of the Manchus, is so close as to afford the prospect of considerable assistance from the latter source, in any attempt to decipher the contents of the tablet.

Such being the data, there still remains a large residuum of difficulty to be overcome, in order to arrive at the true elements of this written language. But, as there is another inscription known to exist in China in the same character, and which is probably a phonetic transcript of Chinese or Sanscrit sounds, could an impression of it be procured there is reason to believe it would afford the key necessary to the complete analysis of the composition.

SHANGHAI, 27th May, 1858.