

notes are paid by the emperor.¹ The direction of the said public office is entrusted to one of the first *amírs* in China. If a person goes to the market to buy anything with a piece of silver, or even a piece of gold, they won't take it; nor will they pay any attention to him whatever until he has changed his money for *balisht*; and then he can buy whatever he likes.

All the inhabitants of China and Cathay in place of charcoal make use of a kind of earth which has the consistence and colour of clay in our country. It is transported on elephants, and cut into pieces of the ordinary size of lumps of charcoal with us, and these they burn. This earth burns just like charcoal, and gives even a more powerful heat. When it is reduced to cinders they knead these up into lumps with water, and when dry they serve to cook with a second time. And so they go on till the stuff is entirely consumed. It is with this earth that the Chinese make their porcelain vases, combining a certain stone with it, as I have already related.²

The people of China of all mankind have the greatest skill and taste in the arts. This is a fact generally admitted; it has been remarked in books by many authors, and has been much dwelt upon.³ As regards painting, indeed, no nation, whether of Christians or others, can come up to the Chinese; their talent for this art is something quite extraordinary. I may mention among astonishing illustrations of this talent of theirs, what I have witnessed myself, viz., that whenever I have happened to visit one of their cities, and to return to it after awhile, I have always found my own likeness and

¹ See a different account at p. 246 *supra*, and in M. Polo, i, 26.

² The coal of China is noticed by Marco Polo (i, 31), and by Rashid (*supra* p. 261). According to Pauthier, its use was known before the Christian era.

³ Already in the 10th century, it was remarked by an Arab author: "The Chinese may be counted among those of God's creatures to whom He hath granted, in the highest degree, skill of hand in drawing and the arts of manufacture" (*Reinaud, Relation, etc.*, i, 77)