

of Karakorum known to western geographers, and he was the first to mention Korea. Before him nobody had described the Lamas, their temples, ritual, living Buddhas, their use of the prayer beads and of the now so famous formula »Om mani padme hum». He found out the true peculiarities of the writing of the Tibetan and other languages. Even the animals did not escape his keen sight, and he is the first to tell us of the wild ass or *kiang* of Tibet, and of the wild sheep which later on became so famous with Marco Polo's name, *Ovis Poli*.¹

Provided with all available information gathered by his predecessors Rubruck set out in 1252 on his 10,000 miles' journey in Asia. In 1255 he returned, but not before 1600 was a part of his narrative published by RICHARD HAKLUYT, and again, in 1625 in a completed form, by PURCHAS in *Purchas His Pilgrims*.

Regarding the country of Tibet, or rather its inhabitants, Rubruck has a fuller account of Friar John's version, as well as some additional information. Having spoken of the Tanguts in the mountains he says:²

»Beyond these are the Tebet, a people in the habit of eating their dead parents, so that for piety's sake they should not give their parents any other sepulchre than their bowels. They have given this practice up, however, as they were held an abomination among all nations. They still, however, make handsome cups out of the heads of their parents, so that when drinking out of them they may have them in mind in the midst of their merry-making. This was told me by one who had seen it. These people have much gold in their country, so that when one lacks gold he digs till he finds it, and he only takes so much as he requires and puts the rest back in the ground; for if he put it in a treasury or a coffer, he believes that God would take away from him that which is in the ground. I saw many misshapen individuals of this people.»

Even nowadays one sometimes sees bowls and cups made out of human skulls. Regarding the curious superstition in connection with the gold, Rockhill made a similar observation on his journey through China, Mongolia and Tibet.³ The other places where Rubruck directly or indirectly makes reference to matters Tibetan may be omitted here. He cannot have had the faintest idea, of the geographical situation of Tibet and his locating it »beyond the Tanguts» is very vague.

We now come to the greatest of all Asiatic travellers, MARCO POLO. He mentions Tibet in three places, from which the following extracts may be of interest. Speaking of the enchanters and astrologers who are able to prevent any cloud or storm from passing over the Emperor's Palace, he continues:

¹ Rockhill has republished Rubruck's narrative in an excellent edition of Hakluyt's Society, as quoted above. This new edition, in which Rockhill points out all the great merits of the French Friar will, as may be hoped, restore him to that high rank amongst travellers, which is due to him.

² Rockhill, *op. cit.* p. 151.

³ He says: »Mining is not allowed in Tibet, as there exists a deep-rooted superstition, carefully fostered by the lamas, that if nuggets of gold are removed from the earth no more gold will be found in the river gravels, the nuggets being the roots or plants whereof the gold dust is the grains or flowers.» — *The Land of the Lamas*. London 1891, p. 209. This is not the case in western Tibet where I have seen gold mines at several places and where the famous Tok-jalung is situated.