

»The sorcerers who do this are called Tebet and Kesimur, which are the names of two nations of Idolaters . . . They always go in a state of dirt and uncleanness, devoid of respect for themselves, or for those who see them, unwashed, unkempt, and sordidly attired. These people also have a custom which I must tell you. If a man is condemned to death and executed by the lawful authority, they take his body and cook and eat it. But if any one die a natural death then they will not eat the body.»¹

Further Marco Polo tells us that after a five days' march we reach a province called Tebet:

»After those five days' march that I spoke of, you enter a province which has been sorely ravaged; and this was done in the wars of Mongu Kaan. There are indeed towns and villages and hamlets, but all harried and destroyed . . . You ride for 20 days without finding any inhabited spot, so that travellers are obliged to carry all their provisions with them, and are constantly falling in with those wild beasts which are so numerous and so dangerous. After that you come at length to a tract where there are towns and villages in considerable numbers . . . The people are Idolaters and an evil generation, holding it no sin to rob and maltreat: in fact, they are the greatest brigands on earth. They live by the chase, as well as on their cattle and the fruits of the earth. I should tell you also that in this country there are many of the animals that produce musk, which are called in the Tartar language Gudderi. Those rascals have great numbers of large and fine dogs, which are of great service in catching the musk-beasts, and so they procure great abundance of musk. They have none of the Great Kaan's paper money, but use salt instead of money. They are very poorly clad, for their clothes are only of the skins of beasts, and of canvas, and of buckram. They have a language of their own, and they are called Tebet. And this country of Tebet forms a very great province, of which I will give you a brief account.»

The »*Discourse concerning Tebet*» runs as follows:

»This province called Tebet, is of very great extent. The people, as I have told you, have a language of their own, and they are Idolaters, and they border on Manzi and sundry other regions. Moreover, they are very great thieves. The country is, in fact, so great that it embraces eight Kingdoms, and a vast number of cities and villages. It contains in several quarters rivers and lakes, in which gold-dust is found in great abundance. Cinnamon also grows there in great plenty. Coral is in great demand in this country and fetches a high price, for they delight to hang it round the necks of their women and of their idols. They have also in this country plenty of fine woollens and other stuffs, and many kinds of spices are produced there which are never seen in our country. Among this people, too, you find the best enchanters and astrologers that exist in all that quarter of the world; they perform such extraordinary marvels and sorceries by diabolic art, that it astounds one to see or even hear of them . . . These people of Tebet are an ill-conditioned race. They have mastiff dogs as big as donkeys, which are capital at seizing wild beasts and in particular the wild oxen which are called Beyamini, very great and fierce animals. They have also sundry other kinds of sporting dogs, and excellent lanner falcons and sakers, swift in flight and well-trained, which are got in the mountains of the country . . . As regards Tebet, . . . you should understand that it is subject to the Great Kaan.»²

¹ The Book of Ser Marco Polo, I, p. 301. London 1903, where the necessary remarks concerning this passage, by Sir Henry Yule and Henri Cordier will be found.

² Op. cit. Book II, p. 42 et seq.