

# MEDIÆVAL RESEARCHES

From Eastern Asiatic Sources.

FRAGMENTS TOWARDS THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GEOGRAPHY  
AND HISTORY OF CENTRAL AND WESTERN ASIA  
FROM THE 13th TO THE 17th CENTURY.

BY

E. BRETSCHNEIDER, M.D.

LATE PHYSICIAN TO THE RUSSIAN LEGATION AT PEKING;  
MEMBRE CORRESP. DE L'INSTITUT DE FRANCE  
(ACADÉMIE DES INSCRIPTIONS ET BELLES LETTRES).

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WITH A MAP OF MIDDLE ASIA.

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the west, and subdued *Ha-li-fa Ba-ha-da* (Bagdad of the Calif) and other countries.

Under the year 1257, the Yüan shi mentions the taking of the fortress of *Ghi-rh-du-kie* by *K'ie-di-bu-hua*. In 1258 it is recorded that *Hü-lie-wu* subdued the empire of the *Ha-li-fa* in the *Si yü* (Western Asia), and dispatched a courier to the emperor to report the victories. Besides these, we find no more accounts in the Chinese annals regarding Hulagu's expedition. But many interesting statements regarding it appear in some of the biographies in the Yüan shi, as I shall show farther on.

#### TRANSLATION OF THE SI SHI KI.

In the year 1252 *Hü-lie-wu* (Hulagu), the younger brother of the emperor (Mangu), had taken the supreme command of the troops, and received orders to attack the *Si yü* (Western Asia). In the space of six years he succeeded in extending the frontier of the empire by nearly ten thousand *li*.

On the 20th of the first month (February 13) of 1259, *Ch'ang Te* set out as a courier dispatched to the west (to the prince Hulagu). After leaving *Ho-lin*,<sup>304</sup> he travelled

<sup>304</sup> *Ho-lin* is the Chinese name for *Karakorum*, the celebrated residence of Chinghiz' first successors. The full name, as it appears in the Yüan shi, chap. lviii., is *Ha-la ho-lin*. It is said there that this name is derived from the name of a river west of the city. Rashid states (d'Ohsson, i. 430) that *Karakorum* was the name of a mountain, from which the city received the name. According to the Yüan shi, annals, Ogotai Khan, in 1235, in spring, ordered to raise the walls of *Ha-la ho-lin* and to build the palace *Wan an kung* within it. His successors Kuyuk and Mangu resided there; but Kubilai Khan transferred, in 1260, the residence to *Ta tu* or the present Peking. Pl. Carpini, in 1246, was the first Western mediæval traveller to mention *Karakorum* (l. c., 608). He was near the city, but did not see it. Eight years later (in 1254) Rubruk visited this place, and left an account of *Karakorum* (l. c., 345). M. Polo (i. 227) gives also a short description of the city from hearsay.

In 1825 A. Rómusat published, under the title "Recherches sur la Ville de *Karakorum*," an interesting paper on the ancient Mongol capital, and tried to determine its site from ancient Chinese itineraries. After Rubruk, for four centuries and a half no European traveller had passed through the country where the ruins of that celebrated city had to be looked

through the country of *Wu-sun*<sup>305</sup> in a north-western direction more than 200 *li*, the ground rising gradually. After a halt, the traveller then crossed the *Han Hai*. The country was very high and cold, and notwithstanding the great heat in summer, the snow never melts there. The rocky mountains were covered all over with fine pine trees.<sup>306</sup> After seven days travelling in a south-western direction, *Ch'ang Te* had crossed the *Han hai*,<sup>307</sup> and de-

for, when in about 1713 the Jesuit missionaries visited the valley of the Orkhon; and 160 years later, Paderin, Russian Consul at Urga, tried to decide the question of the position of ancient *Karakorum* by local investigation. Guided by the itinerary of the Chinese mediæval traveller *Ch'ang Te hui* (see notes 104, 127), he succeeded in discovering, at a distance of thirty or forty English miles south-east of lake *Ughei nor*, and from four to six miles west of the Orkhon river, the ruins of an ancient city, which the Mongols called *Khara kherem* (Black rampart), also *Khara balyasun* (Black city). This he believes was ancient *Karakorum*. The account given by Paderin of his journey and his discovery was published in the "Proceedings of the Russian Geographical Society," 1873. An English translation of this paper by Mad. Fedchenko, annotated by Colonel Yule, appeared in the "Geographical Magazine," 1874, p. 137 seqq. It seems, however, that Paderin is mistaken in his supposition. At least it does not agree with the position assigned to the ancient Mongol residence in the Mongol annals *Erdenin erikhe*, translated into Russian in 1883 by Professor Pozdneyeff. It is there positively stated (p. 110, note 2) that the monastery of *Erdenidsu*, founded in 1585, was erected on the ruins of that city, which once had been built by order of Ogotai Khan, and where he had established his residence; and where, after the expulsion of the Mongols from China, *Togontemur* again had fixed the Mongol court. This vast monastery still exists, one English mile, or more, east of the Orkhon. It has even been astronomically determined by the Jesuit missionaries, and is marked on our maps of Mongolia. Pozdneyeff, who visited the place in 1877, obligingly informs me that the square earthen wall surrounding the monastery of *Erdenidsu*, and measuring about an English mile in circumference, may well be the very wall of ancient *Karakorum*.

<sup>305</sup> There was before our era, and in the early period after it, a people called *Wu-sun*, who dwelt at first north of the present province of Kan su, and emigrated subsequently to Dsungaria. In the time of the Mongols it had disappeared centuries ago. The Chinese, however, like to use ancient names of countries in their books. Compare note 319.

<sup>306</sup> My translation of the above somewhat obscure passage is perhaps not correct; for the literal meaning of it would be: The stones (rocks) of the mountains all bear figures of pine trees.

<sup>307</sup> About the *Han hai* see note 9. *Ch'ang Te*, as appears from his account, comprises in this appellation the Khangai and the Altai mountains, and the elevated plateau between these ranges.

dustan). The people take flesh and throw it into the great valleys (of the mountains). Then birds come and eat this flesh, after which diamonds are found in their excrements.<sup>408</sup>

The *sa-ba-rh*<sup>409</sup> is a product of the western sea. It is the essence of the tortoise-shell. The *kiao yü* (crocodiles)<sup>410</sup> eat the tortoises and then vomit. In a year the

our jasper, which is of various colours—yellow, red, green, black, brown. According to Emanuel ("Hist. of Prec. Stones," pp. 173, 174), it was most highly prized by the ancients. I have not seen jasper in China, but lapis lazuli is well known there. The Chinese call it *ts'ing kin* (azure gold). See also Appendix, article on "Precious Stones."

<sup>408</sup> This legend is very ancient. It is related by Sinbad the Sailor in the ninth century. He had heard of a valley of diamonds (in India), and of the stratagems adopted by the merchants to procure them. At the season when eagles breed in the surrounding mountains, they throw vast joints of meat in this inaccessible valley strewn with diamonds. The diamonds, on whose points the meat fell, would adhere to it. The eagles descend from their lofty station to convey the prey to their nests. The merchants appear at the proper time, and by extreme vociferation compel the eagles to drop these precious morsels, which commonly afford these adventurers an ample compensation for their labour (Major's "India in the Fifteenth Century," xxxvi.). M. Polo (ii. 348) relates the same story. His version is the same as that given by the Chinese author.

<sup>409</sup> The *sa-ba-rh* of the Chinese author is, it seems, *ambergris*, the *amber* of the Arabs, called also *sahabiri* (Crawford's "Dict. Ind. Islands," 11). It is highly valued in perfumery by the Orientals. I find in Ibn Baithar's "Materia Medica," translated by Sontheimer, ii. 210, the following notice about the origin of amber: "There is at the bottom of the sea some substance which the sea-beasts eat, and then vomit it; which is amber." The *Pen ts'ao*, chap. xliii. fol. 5, mentions *ambergris* under the name *lung sien kiang* (dragon's saliva perfume), and describes it as a sweet-scented product, which is obtained from the south-western sea. It is greasy, and at first yellowish white; when dry, it forms pieces of a yellowish black colour. In spring whole herds of dragons swim in that sea, and vomit it out. Others say that it is found in the belly of a large fish. This description also doubtless points to *ambergris*, which in reality is a pathological secretion of the intestines of the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), a large cetaceous animal. The best *ambergris* is collected on the Arabian coast. In the *Ming shi*, chap. cccxxvi., *lung sien kiang* is mentioned as a product of *Bu-la-va* (*Brava*, on the east coast of Africa), and *an-ba-rh* (evidently also *ambergris*) amongst the products of *Dsu-fa-rh* (*Dahfar*, on the south coast of Arabia).

<sup>410</sup> In the *Pen ts'ao* the *kiao yü* is ranged among the scaly dragons. The character *kiao* is explained there by "crossed eyebrows." Evidently the two prominent bone ridges are meant, which stretch from the margin of

vomited substance hardens. (That is the *sa-ba-rh*.) The price of it equals that of gold. It is adulterated with rhinoceros excrements.

The *gu-du-si* is the horn of a large serpent. It has the property of neutralising poison.<sup>411</sup>

The *lung chung ma* (dragon-horses) are found in the western sea. They are provided with scales and horns. People do not allow mares with colts to graze near (the sea-shore). The colts are drawn into the sea, and do not come back.<sup>412</sup>

There is also a black eagle (*ts'ao tiao*). It lays only

the orbits to the nose of *Crocodylus biporcatus*. The author of the *Pen ts'ao* gives *gung-bi-lo* as the Sanscrit name of the *kiao yü*. Indeed, the crocodile in Sanscrit is *kumbhira*. See also Fauvel's interesting article on "Alligators in China" (*Journ. N. China Br. As. Soc.*, xiii.).

<sup>411</sup> *Gu-du-si* (*gu* = bone, *du* = strong, *si* = rhinoceros). But these characters here are not to be translated, for they represent probably the foreign name of a medicine. For further particulars see *Pen ts'ao*, chap. xliii. fol. 40. The *Cho keng lu*, a work written in the fourteenth century, states also that the *gu-du-si* is the horn of a large serpent. We read in the "Mirabilia" of Friar Jordanus (first half of the fourteenth century) that India Tertia (Africa) is the country of rhinoceroses, civet-cats, *horned adders*, true negroes, *ambergris*, and zebras (Yule's "Cathay," 182). There is in Northern Africa a viper, *Cerastes cornutus*, horned viper, well known to the ancients, and remarkable for its fatal venom and for two little horns formed by the scales above the eyes. In China as well as in India the people from time immemorial attribute also anti-poisonous virtues to the rhinoceros horn. The ancient *materia medica* attributed to Emperor *Shen nung*, B. C. 2700, states that the horn of the rhinoceros "cures the hundred poisons." The rhinoceros and goblets made from the rhinoceros horn are repeatedly mentioned in the Chinese classics, and even at the present day the latter can be purchased everywhere in China, as in the days of Confucius. Compare about rhinoceros horns, Büsching's "Asien," ii. 838.

<sup>412</sup> The Chinese author had probably heard of the large cetaceous animal *dugong*, which is described in zoology under the name of *Halicore cetacea*. This beast is found in the Indian Ocean and also in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and frequents the shallow sea and the coasts, where it feeds on the submarine sea-grass pastures. According to Büsching, "Asien," ii. 836, the *dugong* is called *Kadalkudira* or sea-horse by the Tamulians. The word *dugong* is a corruption from the Malay *duyong*. The *dugong* has given rise, in ancient times, to many miraculous legends circulating among the Arabs and Persians. We ought not to wonder, when the Chinese author attributes to it horns and scales, according to Chinese views, indispensable decorations for a marvellous animal.