

## **Animals and Transport in Koryŏ Korea**

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This preliminary study examines the relationship between animals and overland transport in Koryŏ Korea and situates it in the context of Mongol Eurasia from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. While textual and archeological evidence remains fragmentary, this presentation juxtaposes selected primary sources from Eurasia, China, and Korea and surveys the conditions under which existing transport methods, including river and sea transport, were evaluated, compared, and employed. The report of the mission of the Franciscan William of Rubruck, for example, provides a rich and detailed account of how the Mongols were transporting loads—and even tented dwellings—using ox carts, camels, and pack horses in the mid-thirteenth century. Contrasted with the description by William of Rubruck are the early twelve-century description of Korean society by the Northern Song scholar Xu Jing, officially compiled records of Koryŏ history, and collected works of Koryŏ scholar-officials. Together, these records demonstrate the important role that oxen, horses, mules, and donkeys played in overland transport in Korea from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. Also illuminated in these records is the intricate and inseparable link between terrain conditions and human choices regarding overland transport. Mountain paths in Korea were often deemed unsuitable for carts, and such an observation and perception placed an increased emphasis on the role of animals in overland transport. Through examination of primary sources, this presentation suggests an approach integrating the history of animals more fully into studies of technology and nature from a cross-regional perspective.