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# TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO,

*The Venetian.*

THE TRANSLATION OF MARSDEN REVISED,  
WITH A SELECTION OF HIS NOTES.



C

EDITED BY

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## INTRODUCTION.

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So much has been written on the subject of the celebrated Venetian traveller of the middle ages, Marco Polo, and the authenticity and credibility of his relation have been so well established, that it is now quite unnecessary to enter into this part of the question; but the reader of the following translation will doubtless be desirous of learning something more about the author than is found in the narration of his adventures. We are informed by the Italian biographers, that the Polos were a patrician family of Venice, but of Dalmatian extraction. Andrea Polo da S. Felice had three sons, named Marco, Maffeo, and Nicolo, the two latter of whom were great merchants in a city where the profession of commerce was anything but incompatible with nobility. They were probably in partnership; and about 1254 or 1255, they proceeded on a voyage to Constantinople, between which city and Venice the commercial relations were at this time very intimate.

Under the stern rule of the Tartar monarchs, the interior of Asia, knit together in one vast empire, was far more accessible to strangers than it has been since that empire was broken up; and many European merchants and artisans proceeded thither to trade, or to find employment at the courts of the different princes of the race of Jengiz. The two brothers, Maffeo and Nicolo, learning at Constantinople that a market for certain costly articles was to be found among the Western Tartars, purchased a valuable stock of jewellery, and with it crossed the Euxine to a port in the Crimea; and travelling thence by land and water, reached at length the court or camp of Barkah, the brother or the son of Batu, grandson of Jengiz-khan; whose places of residence were Sarai and Bolghar, well known to the geographers of the

middle ages. After turning their jewels to good account, they were preparing for their return, at the end of twelve months, when their plans were interrupted by hostilities between Barkah and Hulagu, his cousin, the chief of another horde or army of Tartars, who, in consequence of their approach from the eastern side of the Caspian, were then denominated Eastern Tartars, but were principally Moghuls, as the former were Turki, or natives of Turkistan. They are said to have crossed the Oxus, on their march from the headquarters of Mangu-kaan, in the year 1255. By the defeat of Barkah's army which ensued, and the advance of his opponents, the road to Constantinople was cut off from our travellers, and they were compelled to take a circuitous route, which led them round the head of the Caspian, across the Jaik and Jaxartes rivers, and through the deserts of Transoxiana, till they arrived at the great city of Bokhara.

During their stay there, it happened that a Tartar nobleman, sent by Hulagu to Kublaï his brother, came thither, and in an interview with the two brothers, was so gratified with hearing them converse in his native language, and with the information he derived from them, that he invited them to accompany him to the emperor's court, where he assured them of a favourable reception, and an ample compensation for the labour of their journey. Recommending themselves, therefore, to the Divine protection, they prosecuted their journey towards what they considered to be the extremity of the East, and after travelling twelve months, reached the imperial residence. The manner in which they were received by the grand khan is told in the following narrative. He determined upon sending them back to Italy, accompanied by one of his own officers, as his ambassadors to the see of Rome,—professedly with the view of persuading his Holiness to supply him with a number of preachers of the Gospel, who should communicate religious instruction to the unenlightened people of his dominions, but more probably to encourage a hostile spirit amongst the princes of Christendom against the soldan of Egypt and the Saracens, the enemies of

his family. They accordingly set out on their return; but in the early part of their journey, their Tartar companion fell sick, and was left behind. With the assistance, however, of the imperial tablet or passport with which they were provided, and which commanded respect and insured them accommodation in all the places through which they passed, they made their way homewards, and at the end of three years reached the port of Giazza, or Ayas, in Lesser Armenia. Here they embarked for Acre, then in the possession of the Christians, where they arrived in the month of April 1269; and on landing, received the first intelligence of the death of Pope Clement IV., which happened in November 1268; and it was recommended to them by the legate on the spot, to take no further steps in the business of their embassy until the election of a new Pope. This interval they thought would be most properly employed in a visit to their family, and for that purpose they engaged a passage in a ship bound to Negropont and Venice. Upon their arrival, Nicolo Polo found that his wife, whom he had left with child, was dead, after giving birth to a son, to whom she had given the name of Marco, in respect for the memory of her husband's eldest brother, and who was now advancing towards the age of manhood. In consequence of the long delay in the election of a Pope, our two Venetians became impatient; and, apprehensive of incurring the displeasure of their employer, after having resided two years in Italy, they returned to the legate in Palestine. On this occasion they were accompanied by young Marco, then in his seventeenth or eighteenth year. Taking letters from the legate to the Tartar emperor, they embarked for Ayas; but scarcely had they got under weigh, when advice was received at the former place of the choice of the cardinals having at length fallen upon the legate himself, M. Tebaldo di Vicenza, who assumed the name of Gregory X. He immediately recalled the two brothers, and gave them letters papal in a more ample and dignified form, and sent them, along with two friars of the order of Preachers, who were to be the bearers of his presents. These transactions

took place about the end of the year 1271, at which period the northern parts of Syria were invaded by the soldan of Egypt; and such was the alarm caused by his approach to the borders of Armenia Minor, that the two friars were deterred from proceeding, and returned for safety to the coast. The Polo family, in the meantime, prosecuted their journey to the interior of Asia, in a north-easterly direction, undismayed by the prospect of dangers they might have to encounter. Of their particular course few indications are given, but it must evidently have been through the Greater Armenia, Persian Irak, Khorasan, and by the city of Balkh into the country of Badakhshan, amongst the sources of the Oxus, where they remained twelve months. This long detention might have been occasioned by the necessity of waiting for a large assemblage of travelling merchants, under an adequate escort, preparatory to crossing the great ranges of mountains called in maps the Belut-tag and Muz-tag; but it may also be accounted for by the circumstance of Marco's illness at this place. Their road now lay through the valley named Vokhan, from whence they ascended to the elevated and wild regions of Pamer and Belór, on their way to the city of Kashghar, which belonged to the extensive dominions of the grand khan, and is known to have been a principal place of resort for caravans. They next proceeded to Khoten, a town of much celebrity, and afterwards through places little known to geographers, till they reached the desert of Lop or Kobi, which is circumstantially described. This being traversed in a tedious journey of thirty days, they entered the comprehensive district of Tangut, and passed through the country of those whom the Chinese call Si-fan or Tu-fan, as well as the strong place named Sha-cheu, or the town of the sands. From thence the direct road is to So-cheu, at the western extremity of the province of Shen-si. This place is within the boundary of what is now China proper, but was then, as well as the city of Kan-cheu, considered as belonging to Tangut. At Kan-cheu they experienced another long delay, which our author briefly says was occasioned by the state of

their concerns. From Kan-cheu, it would seem that they took the road of Si-ning (just within the nominal line of the Great Wall, which on that side was built of sandy earth, and had mostly fallen to decay), leading through the heart of the province of Shen-si, and directly into that of Shan-si. In the capital city of this latter, named Tai-yuen-fu, it was that the grand khan, who in the early part of his reign is known to have made it his winter residence, received notice of their arrival in his dominions; and as their account says, that at the distance of forty days' journey from that place, he sent forward directions for preparing everything necessary for their accommodation, we may understand this to mean, that upon his coming to the western part of China, and hearing of the detention of his Italian messengers at Kan-cheu, he commanded that they should be immediately forwarded to his presence, at his expense, and with the attentions usually shown to foreign ambassadors.

The reception given to them by the emperor was as favourable as they were justified in expecting. After the customary prostrations and delivery of the letters, they were desired to relate all the circumstances that had taken place in the business of their mission, to which he condescendingly listened. He commended their zeal, and accepted with complacency the presents from the Pope, and with reverence a vessel of the holy oil from the sepulchre of our Lord, that had been brought from Jerusalem at his desire, and which he concluded, from the value set upon it by Christians, might possess extraordinary properties. Observing young Marco, he made inquiries respecting him; and being informed that he was the son of Nicolo, he took him under his protection, and gave him an appointment in his household. In this situation he adopted the manners of the country, and acquired a knowledge of the four languages most in use. He thus became a favourite with the grand khan, who employed him on services of importance in various parts of the empire, even to the distance of six months' journey. On these missions he availed himself of every opportunity of examining

into the circumstances of the countries he visited and the customs of their inhabitants, and made notes of what he observed, for the information of the grand khan, whose curiosity on such subjects appears to have been insatiable; and to this habit of taking notes it is that we are indebted for the substance of that account of his travels which, after his return, he was induced to give to the world. On the occasion of the inability of a member of one of the great tribunals, who was nominated Fu-yuen, or governor, of the city of Yang-cheu-fu, in the province of Kiang-nan, to proceed to his charge, Marco Polo was appointed to act as his deputy, and held this high office during the usual period of three years. Marco's father and uncle were also partakers of the monarch's regards; and in one instance, immediately after their arrival at his court, they were eminently useful to him, in suggesting to his officers the employment of certain projectile machines, or catapultæ, and superintending their construction, thereby contributing in an essential manner to the fall of the strong and important Chinese city of Siang-yang-fu, which had resisted the efforts of his besieging army for upwards of three years.

When about seventeen years had elapsed from the arrival of our travellers within the territories of the grand khan, the natural desire of revisiting their native land, notwithstanding the splendid advantages of their situation, began to work forcibly upon their minds, and the great age and precarious life of the grand khan determined them to effect their purpose with as little delay as possible. The grand khan refused absolutely to part with them, until an accidental circumstance gave them the opportunity of gratifying their desires. An embassy happened about that time to arrive at the court of Kublai; from a Moghul-Tartar prince named Arghun, the grandson of Hulagu (and consequently the grand-nephew of the emperor), who ruled in Persia. Having lost his principal wife, who was a princess of the imperial stock, he sent this deputation to his sovereign and the head of his family, to solicit from him a wife of their own lineage. A princess was

accordingly selected from amongst his grandchildren, and the ambassadors being satisfied as to her beauty and accomplishments, set out with her on a journey to Persia, with a numerous suite to do honour to the betrothed queen; but after several months' travelling, found themselves obstructed by the disturbed state of the country through which their route lay, and were obliged to return to the capital. In this dilemma, Marco Polo arrived from a voyage to some of the East Indian islands, and laid before his master the observations he had made respecting the safe navigation of those seas. The ambassadors, when they heard this, put themselves in communication with the Venetian family; and upon its being understood that they had all a common interest, each party being anxiously desirous of effecting their return to their own country, it was arranged between them that the Persians should urgently represent to the grand khan the expediency of their availing themselves of the experience of the Christians in maritime affairs, to convey their precious charge by sea to the gulf of Persia. His reluctant consent for their departure was thus obtained, and preparations were made on a grand scale for the expedition. When the period of their departure was at hand, the monarch addressed the Polo family in terms of kind regard, and required from them a promise that after having visited their own country and kindred, they would return to his service. He at the same time gave them authority to act as his ambassadors to the principal courts of Europe, furnished them with the passports necessary for their protection and accommodation in the countries acknowledging his sovereignty, and made them presents of many valuable jewels.

In the details that are given of the voyage, there is but little that personally regards our author. The first place at which they appear to have touched (if the expedition did not in fact proceed from thence in the first instance) was the port of Zaitun, in the province of Fo-kien, supposed to be either Tsuen-cheu, or the neighbouring port of Hia-muen, by us called Amoy. Passing by the island of Hai-nan, they kept



along the coast of Anau, or Cochin-China, to the adjoining country of Tsiampa, which Marco Polo informs us he had previously visited in the year 1280. Mention is next made of the island of Java, although it is evident from the circumstances that they did not touch there, and also of two uninhabited islands near the coast of Kamboja. From the latter they steered for the island of Bintan, near the eastern entrance of the straits of Malacca. From this place they made a short run to the north-eastern coast of Sumatra, in one of the ports of which they were detained five months, waiting for a favourable season to pursue their voyage across the bay of Bengal.

After passing some of the smaller islands, they visited Ceylon, and from thence they crossed the narrow strait, to the southern part of the coast of the peninsula, called by our author, in imitation of the Arabian and Persian writers, the country of Maabar, which must not be confounded with Malabar. In his subsequent route, it is difficult to determine which of the places mentioned in his narrative he visited, and which he describes from information gained from others.

At Ormuz, in the Persian gulf, the course of his description may be considered as brought to a close; and there is every reason to infer that the Chinese expedition, after a navigation of eighteen months in the Indian seas, terminated at that place.

Upon the arrival of the expedition in Persia, information was received by our travellers that the Moghul king Arghun, for whose consort the princess had been intended, had died some time before (1291); that the country was then governed by a regent or protector, who was supposed to have views to the sovereignty; and that the son of the late king, named Ghazan, who afterwards became much celebrated, was encamped, with a large army under his command, on the north-eastern frontier of the kingdom, towards Khorasan, waiting, as it appeared, for a favourable opportunity of asserting his rights to the throne, for which his extremely diminutive

figure was thought to have rendered him unfit. To this prince they were directed to deliver their royal charge; and, after having done this, they repaired to the court of Arghun, at Tauris, where for nine months they reposed themselves from the fatigue of their long travels. Having received from him the customary passports, which they found the more necessary, as the unpopularity of his government occasioned tumults in the country, and rendered strong escorts indispensable, they proceeded on their journey homewards, taking the road of Arjis on the lake of Van, Arzerrâm, and the castle of Baiburt, and reached the city of Trebizond on the coast of the Euxine; from whence, by the way of Constantinople, and of Negropont or Eubœa, they finally arrived in their native city of Venice in 1295, after an absence of twenty four years.

Up to this period our narrative of the adventures of the Polo family has been framed from the materials, however scanty, which Marco himself had directly or indirectly furnished. For what is to follow, we must principally rely upon the traditionary stories prevalent amongst his fellow-citizens, and collected by his industrious editor Ramusio, who wrote nearly two centuries and a half after his time. Upon their first arrival, he says, they were not recognised even by their nearest relations, the more so as rumours of their death had been current, and were confidently believed. By the length of time they had been absent, the fatigues they had undergone in journeys of such extent, and the anxieties of mind they had suffered, their appearance was quite changed, and they seemed to have acquired something of the Tartar both in countenance and speech, their native language being mixed with foreign idioms and barbarous terms. In their garments also, which were mean and of coarse texture, there was nothing that resembled those of Italians. The situation of their family dwelling-house, a handsome and lofty palace, was in the street of S. Giovanni Chrisostomo, and still existed in the days of Ramusio, when, for a reason that will hereafter appear, it went by the appellation of "la corte del Millioni." Of this

house possession had been taken by some persons of their kindred, and when our travellers demanded admittance, it was with much difficulty that they could obtain it by making the occupiers comprehend who they were, or persuading them that persons so changed and disfigured by their dress, could really be those members of the house of Polo who for so many years had been numbered with the dead. In order, therefore, to render themselves generally known to their connexions, and at the same time to impress the whole city of Venice with an adequate idea of their importance, they devised a singular expedient, the circumstances of which, Ramusio says, had been repeatedly told to him when a youth by his friend M. Gasparo Malipiero, an elderly senator of unimpeachable veracity, whose house stood near that of the Polo family, and who had himself heard them from his father and his grandfather, as well as from other ancient persons of that neighbourhood.

With these objects in view, they caused a magnificent entertainment to be prepared in their own house, to which their numerous relatives were invited. When the hour for assembling at table was arrived, the three travellers came forth from an inner apartment, clothed in long robes of crimson satin reaching to the floor, such as it was customary to wear upon occasions of ceremony in those days. When water had been carried round for washing hands, and the guests desired to take their places, they stripped themselves of these vestments, and putting on similar dresses of crimson damask, the former were taken to pieces, and divided amongst the attendants. Again, when the first course of victuals had been removed, they put on robes of crimson velvet, and seated themselves at table, when the preceding dresses were in like manner distributed; and at the conclusion of the feast, those of velvet were disposed of in the same way, and the hosts then appeared in plain suits, resembling such as were worn by the rest of the company. All were astonished at what they saw, and curious to know what was to follow this scene. As soon, however, as the cloth was removed, and the

domestics had been ordered to withdraw, Marco Polo, as being the youngest, rose from table, went into an adjoining room, and presently returned with the three coarse, threadbare garments in which they had first made their appearance at the house. With the assistance of knives, they proceeded to rip the seams, and to strip off the linings and patches with which these rags were doubled, and by this operation brought to view a large quantity of most costly jewels, such as rubies, sapphires, carbuncles, diamonds, and emeralds, which had been sewn into them, and with so much art and contrivance, as not to be at all liable to the suspicion of containing such treasures. At the time of their taking their departure from the court of the grand khan, all the riches that his bounty had bestowed upon them were by them converted into the most valuable precious stones, for the facility of conveyance. The display of wealth, so incalculable in its amount, which then lay exposed on the table before them, appeared something miraculous, and filled the minds of all who were spectators of it with such wonder, that for a time they remained motionless; but upon recovering from their ecstasy, they felt entirely convinced that these were in truth the honourable and valiant gentlemen of the house of Polo, of which at first they had entertained doubts, and they accordingly exhibited every mark of profound respect for their hosts.

Of the degree of credit due to this anecdote, vouched as it is, the reader will form his own judgment; but, be this as it may, Ramusio proceeds to acquaint us, that as soon as an account of the scene just described was spread about the city of Venice, great numbers of the inhabitants of all ranks, from the nobles down to the mechanics, hastened to their dwelling, in order to have an opportunity of embracing them, and of testifying their good-will. Maffeo, the elder brother, was honoured with an office of much importance in the magistracy. To Marco the young men resorted, to enjoy the pleasure of his conversation. Finding him polite and communicative, they paid him daily visits, making inquiries

respecting Cathay and the grand khan; and to all of them his answers were so courteous, that each considered himself as personally obliged. In consequence, however, of their persevering curiosity, which occasioned frequent repetitions of the amount of the imperial revenues, estimated at ten or fifteen millions of gold ducats, as well as of other computations regarding the wealth and population of the empire, which were necessarily expressed in millions also, he at length acquired amongst them the surname of Messer Marco Millionni, or, in the modern orthography, Milione. "By this appellation," Ramusio (who was himself high in office) adds, "I have seen him mentioned in the public records of this republic, and the house in which he lived has, from that time to the present, been commonly termed, 'la corte del Millionni.'" It must at the same time be remarked, that Sansovino, in his "Venetia Descritta," attributes the popular application of this surname to the immense riches possessed by the Polo family at the period of their return to their own country. In this sense the French apply the term "millionnaire" to a great capitalist.

Not many months after their arrival in Venice, intelligence was received that a Genoese fleet, commanded by Lampa Doria, had made its appearance off the island of Curzola, on the coast of Dalmatia; in consequence of which a Venetian fleet, consisting of a superior number of galleys, immediately put to sea under the orders of Andrea Dandolo. To the command of one of these, Marco Polo, as an experienced sea-officer, was appointed. The fleets soon came in sight of each other, and an engagement ensued, in which the latter were defeated with great loss. This event is said by some writers to have happened on the 8th of September, 1296. Amongst the prisoners taken by the Genoese, besides Dandolo himself, was our traveller, who belonged to the advanced division, and bravely pushing forward to attack the enemy, but not being properly supported, was compelled to surrender, after receiving a wound. From the scene of action he was conveyed to a prison in Genoa, where his personal

qualities and his surprising history becoming soon known, he was visited by all the principal inhabitants, who did everything in their power to soften the rigours of his captivity; treating him with kindness as a friend, and liberally supplying him with everything necessary for his subsistence and accommodation. His rare adventures were, as in his own country, the subject of general curiosity, and the frequent necessity he was under of repeating the same story unavoidably became irksome to him. He was, in consequence, at length induced to follow the advice of those who recommended his committing it to writing. With this view he procured from Venice the original notes he had made in the course of his travels, and had left in the hands of his father. Assisted by these documents (of which he speaks on more than one occasion), and from his verbal communications, the narrative is said to have been drawn up, in the prison, by a person named Rustighello or Rustigiolo, who, according to Ramusio, was a Genoese gentleman with whom he had formed an intimacy, but, according to the manuscripts, a native of Pisa, and his fellow-prisoner; and we finally learn from the French text, which is now known to be the original, that this Rustigiolo was Rusticien de Pise, a well-known mediæval writer, who made a compilation in French of the romances of the cycle of king Arthur. The Travels of Marco Polo are said to have been written, and the manuscript circulated, in 1298.

The imprisonment of Marco was the occasion of much affliction to his father and his uncle, and the more particularly as it had long been their intention that he should form a suitable matrimonial alliance upon their return to Venice. Their plans were now frustrated, and it became daily more uncertain what the duration of his captivity might prove, as all attempts to procure his liberation by the offer of money had failed, and it was even doubtful whether it might not terminate only with his life. Under these circumstances, finding themselves out of the prospect of having heirs to their vast wealth, they deliberated upon what was most proper to be done for the establishment of the family, and it

was agreed that Nicolo, although an old man, but of a hale constitution, should take to himself a second wife.

It happened at length, after a lapse of four years, that Marco, in consequence of the interest taken in his favour amongst the leading people in Genoa, and indeed by the whole city, was released from his captivity. Upon returning home, he found that his father had by that time added three sons to the family, whose names were Stefano, Maffeo, and Giovanni. Being a man of good sense and discretion, he did not take umbrage at this change of circumstances, but resolved upon marrying also, and effected it as soon as he found a suitable match. By his marriage, however, he had not any male descendant, but only two daughters, one of whom is said to have been called Moretta, and the other Fantina, which, from their signification, may be thought to have been rather familiar terms of endearment, than baptismal names. Upon the death of his father, as became an affectionate and pious son, he erected a monument to his memory, of hewn stone, which, Ramusio says, was still to be seen in his days under the portico in front of the church of St. Lorenzo, upon the right hand side as you enter, with an inscription denoting it to be the tomb of Nicolo Polo, who resided in the street before mentioned. Respecting the age to which our author himself attained, or the year in which his death took place, his countrymen have not given us any information, nor, as it would seem, was any endeavour made at an early period to ascertain the facts. Sansovino, the most elaborate historian of their city, observes only, that "under the passage to the church of St. Lorenzo, which stands on one of the islets named Gemelle, lies buried Marco Polo, surnamed Milione, who wrote the account of 'Travels in the New World,' and was the first, before Columbus, who discovered new countries;" on which expressions we may remark, that independently of the geographical ignorance displayed, there is room to conjecture (if Ramusio be correct) that he has confounded the tomb of the father with that of the son. In the chronicle of Jacopo de Aqui it is reported, that when upon

his death-bed he was exhorted by his friends, as matter of conscience, to retract what he had published, or at least to disavow those parts which the world regarded as fictitious, he scorned their advice, declaring at the same time, that so far from having exaggerated, he had not told one half of the extraordinary things of which he had been an eye-witness. His will is said to have been dated in the year 1323; in which case his life may be supposed (without pretending to accuracy, but also without the chance of material error) to have embraced the period between 1254 and 1324, or about seventy years.

With regard to the other members of the family, Marco, the eldest of the three brothers, appears to have died before the departure of Nicolo and Maffeo for Constantinople; and it was with the intention of doing honour to his memory, that the wife of the former, in the absence of her husband, gave to her son, our author, the name of his deceased uncle. Of the three children of Nicolo by the second marriage, one only, Maffeo, lived to have a family. This consisted of five sons, and one daughter named Maria; and, as all the sons died without leaving issue, she, upon the death of her last surviving brother, who likewise bore the name of Marco, inherited all the possessions of their father. With this event, which took place in 1417, the family became extinct in the male line, and the illustrious name of Polo was lost. The heiress married into the noble house of Trivisino, eminently distinguished in the *fasti* of the Venetian republic.<sup>1</sup>

The book of the Travels of Marco Polo, containing so much that must be attractive to all classes of readers, became extremely popular during the three centuries which followed his death, and was reproduced in almost every European language which could boast of a literature; manuscripts are very numerous, independent of printed editions, and they differ very much from each other. From this latter circumstance,

<sup>1</sup> The arms borne by the Polo family, as Ramusio found them blazoned in ancient books of heraldry, were, azure, on a bend, argent, three poles (*graculi* or jackdaws), sable.



the choice of a text for translation is not a question of easy solution. Marsden, assuming that the book was originally written in Italian, translated from the text printed by Ramusio, who seems to have taken some liberties with his original. Since Marsden's time, several more critical editions of Marco Polo, in different languages, have appeared. In 1827, an Italian text, from an early manuscript, superior in authority to that of Ramusio, was published by Count Baldelli Boni.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript appears to have been of the fourteenth century. Previous to this publication, in 1824, the Society of Geography of Paris, in the first volume of its *Recueil de Voyages et de Mémoires*,<sup>2</sup> had printed from manuscripts of the fourteenth century two texts of Marco Polo, of a class which had not before been examined very critically, one being in Latin, and the other in French. Neither of these texts is very well edited, but they are of considerable importance, especially the latter, in relation to the literary history of the Travels of Marco Polo.

It has been, I think, most satisfactorily demonstrated by M. D'Avezac, that the original text of Marco Polo, which came from the traveller's own dictation, was written in the French language. I will give the reasons on which this judgment is established in the words of M. D'Avezac himself, as he has stated the question in a postscript to some remarks on the Relation of Plan du Carpin, in the Bulletin of the Society of Geography for August 1841. "The observations we have just made," says this able geographer, "having led us to recur to certain passages of Marco Polo, we have had occasion to remark again, in the Italian and Latin texts, some of those gross blunders arising from verbal equivocations, of which the only possible explanation is found in recognising them as the work of unskilful translators from a French text;

<sup>1</sup> Il Milione di Marco Polo, testo di lingua del secolo decimoterzo, ora per la prima volta pubblicato ed illustrato dal Conte Gio. Batt. Baldelli Boni. Firenze, da' Torchi di Giuseppe Pagani, m.dccc.xxvii. 4 vols. 4to.

<sup>2</sup> Recueil de Voyages et de Mémoires, publié par la Société de Géographie. Tome premier. Paris, de l'Imprimerie d'Everat, Rue du Cadran, No. 16. m.dccc.xxiv. 4to.

an argument already invoked by Baldelli, and which must have struck any man who made a comparative examination of the different editions of this famous relation. After the chapter devoted to Tangut in general, and before that which contains the description of its capital, are three chapters treating successively of the provinces of Camul, Ginchintalas, and Juctang, in the latter of which we find this passage: 'Et la grant provence jeneraus où ceste provence (Juctang) est, et ceste deux (Camul et Ginchintalas) que je vos ai contés en arrieres, est appellés Tangut.' In the version of Ramusio this is rightly translated: 'E la gran provincia generale nella qual se contiene questa provincia et altre due provincie subsequenti, si chiama Tanguth.' But Ramusio professes himself to give a corrected text, whereas the celebrated manuscript of La Crusca, published by Baldelli, and the manuscript of Pucci, of which he gives the various readings, have: 'Ella e grande provincia, ha nome *Jeneraus*,' etc.; thus proving that the Italian translator of 1309 [took the French adjective *jeneraus* (*generalis*) for a proper name of a province, as he had on another occasion taken the adverb *jadis* for a proper name of a king! A mistake equally curious, and into which, as far as we know, all the translators, old or modern, of Marco Polo have fallen, occurs, and is repeated many times, in the recital of the war of Prester John against 'un rois qe fu appellés le roi d'or.' Marsden has justly observed that this denomination must have been the translation of the Chinese name of the dynasty of Kin, or Altoun of the Moguls, since these words mean *or* (gold) in French. But it is evident that if a French translator could write that the monarch Kin was 'appelé le roi d'Or,' it would be absurd to translate in Italian, 'un re chiamato Dor,' or in Latin, 'unus rex qui fuit vocatus rex Dor.' Evidently the translators took the French appellation in the genitive, *d'or*, for a proper name. Moreover, to all the motives given before by Baldelli, by M. Paulin Paris, and by ourselves, to demonstrate that the original text of the relation of Marco Polo was written in French, we can add the authority of a formal testimony, which we have already communicated to the Society of Geography, and which we

are astonished not to have found cited by our predecessors. But, which is still more surprising, this testimony was known to the learned Abbé Lebeuf, and cited by him in his 'Dissertations sur l'Histoire ecclésiastique et civile de Paris,' without his being aware of its importance, or apparently suspecting that it related to the illustrious Venetian; he says simply—'Un nommé Marc, qui avait été envoyé en Tartarie et aux Indes, fit en français un livre des Merveilles de ce pays là, que Jean d'Ypres, en sa chronique, dit qu'il possédait.' Now, this 'nommé Marc' was Marco Polo himself; and Jean d'Ypres said so, not in an obscure mention, lost in the midst of matters foreign to those which might awaken the attention of the reader to so remarkable a declaration: far from that, the chronicler expressly devotes a chapter to treat 'De Legatis Tartarorum ad Papam missis;' and there he says in full: 'Nuntii qui venerunt erant duo cives Venetiarum, nomine dominus Nicolaus Pauli et frater ejus dominus Maffeus Pauli,' etc. Then, he relates their return from the East, and adds: 'Dominusque Nicolaus Pauli filium suum, viginti vel circiter annorum, juvenem aptum valde, nomine Marcum Pauli, secum adduxit ad Tartaros.' After this comes the history of their embassy, and this recital terminates with the following passage: 'Marcus Pauli cum imperatore retentus, ab eo miles effectus, sed et cum eo mansit spatium viginti-septem annorum; quem Chaam, propter suam habilitatem in suis negotiis, ad diversas Indiæ et Tartariæ partes et insulas misit, ubi illarum partium multa mirabilia vidit, de quibus postea librum *in vulgari gallico* composuit, quem librum mirabilium cum pluribus similibus penes nos habemus.' And the man who wrote this is the same Jean Lelong, of Ypres, abbot of St. Bertin at St. Omer, who translated from Latin into French the relations of Hayton of Armenia, of Ricold de Montecroce, of Oderic of Friulia, of William of Boldensel, and of John de Cor, archbishop of Solthányeh; he was the man of his time the most profoundly acquainted with the various travels into the East, and whose testimony ought to carry the greatest authority in this matter."

With the new importance which is thus given to the

French text of Marco Polo, I hope that my learned friend will not let us wait long for a new and perfect edition of it, one which will be worthy of himself, and of the language in which it forms so interesting a monument.

Since the appearance of the editions already mentioned, two others have appeared which are worthy of notice. An edition of the old German version, edited by August Bürck, in 1845,<sup>1</sup> and an Italian edition by Vincenzo Lazari, in 1847.<sup>2</sup> Singularly enough, neither of these editors appears to have been aware of the direct evidence of John d'Ypres to the fact of the original text having been written in French, although it had been so publicly stated by M. D'Avezac several years before.

Most of the editions I have mentioned contain long and learned dissertations on Marco Polo's travels.<sup>3</sup> It was the original intention, in the present edition, merely to reprint the text of Marsden's translation,<sup>4</sup> with a selection from the notes. Marsden's notes are rather lengthy, and a good part of them consists only of repetitions of statements and authorities in support of the credibility of Marco Polo's narration;

<sup>1</sup> Die Reisen des venezianers Marco Polo im xiii<sup>ten</sup>. Jahrhundert, zum ersten male vollständig nach den besten Ausgaben Deutsch, mit einem Kommentar von August Bürck; nebst Zusätzen und Verbesserungen von Karl Friedrich Neumann. Leipzig, Druck und Verlag von B. G. Teubner. 1845. 8vo.

<sup>2</sup> I Viaggi di Marco Polo veneziano, tradotti per la prima volta dall' originale francese di Rusticiano di Pisa, e corredati d'illustrazioni e di documenti da Vincenzo Lazari, pubblicati per cura di Lodovico Pasini membro eff. e segretario dell' T. R. Istituto veneto. Venezia, coi tipi di Pietro Naratovich. 1847. 8vo.

<sup>3</sup> Another learned work on Marco Polo deserves to be called attention to; it was published in the same year as Marsden's translation.—“Di Marco Polo, e degli altri viaggiatori Veneziani più illustri, Dissertazioni del P. ab. D. Placido Zurla; con appendice sopra le antiche mappe lavorate in Venezia, e con quattro carte geografiche. In Venezia presso Gio. Giacomo Fuchs co' tipi Piccottiani. M.DCCC.XVIII.” 2 vols. 4to.

<sup>4</sup> The title of Marsden's edition, which was one of the most learned and remarkable books of the day, was: “The Travels of Marco Polo, a Venetian, in the thirteenth century; being a description, by that early traveller, of remarkable places and kings in the eastern parts of the world. Translated from the Italian, with notes, by William Marsden, F.R.S., &c. London, printed for the Author, &c. M.DCCC.XVIII.” 4to.

and as this question is now more generally understood than it was in Marsden's time, these corroborations are no longer necessary. When, however, I came to compare this translation with the new editions of the text, I found that it was desirable to give it a general revision, comparing it with the texts published more recently. All the texts differ so much from one another, that it is not easy to form anything like a perfect text from them; but a comparison enables us to correct some of the dates, names, distances, &c.; which were evidently wrong in the text that Marsden followed; to set right one or two mistakes into which he fell from his want of knowledge of the medieval literature of Western Europe; and to restore passages which had been lost from the texts he used. The supplementary chapters added at the end of the present volume are translated from the early French text. From the historical dates to which some of these refer, they may have been an addition to the original compilation of Marco Polo's Travels, and, from the peculiar phraseology in which they are written, they seem to have been translated into prose from a narration in verse. This phraseology is sometimes so diffuse, that I have found it necessary to compress it in the translation, especially in the descriptions of battles, which are almost copies of one another.

We cannot conclude these remarks without acknowledging the kindness with which Colonel Leake, the present representative of the translator, has given his permission to make use of Mr. Marsden's text and notes.

T. W.

14, SYDNEY STREET, BROMPTON,

*September 1854.*

## A P P E N D I X.

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### I.—NOTE ON BOOK I. CHAPTER LIV. PAGE 147.

WE here find the assertion circumstantially repeated, that not Ung-khan only, but all his descendants, to the days of our author, were Christians; and although it has been common to doubt the fact, no arguments drawn from historical evidence have been employed to disprove it. On the other hand it is supported by the testimony of the travellers Carpini and Rubruquis (with some variations, however, in the circumstances), and sanctioned by the authority of Abu'lfaraj, whose fidelity and discretion as an historian have not been questioned upon other points. By none of these is the existence of such a character in Tartary as that of Prester John spoken of as a new discovery, but as matter of previous notoriety, and especially amongst those who were engaged in the crusades.

It may be asked why there should be so much hesitation to believe, as if it were in itself a thing improbable, that at an early period the Christian faith (according to the ritual of the Greek Church) had spread extensively through Tartary and penetrated to China? The fact does not rest upon the evidence of the Catholic friars alone (who, however, were much more disposed to undervalue than to exaggerate the successes and political consequence of their rivals), but is corroborated by the annals of the Nestorian Church. "Parmy ces peuples, tous compris sous le nom général de Turcs et de Tartares," observes the Abbé Renaudot, "il y avoit un assez grand nombre de Chrestiens, non seulement lorsque Ginghiskhan établit son grand empire, mais longtems avant cette époque. Car on trouve dans l'histoire des Nestoriens, que Timothée leur Catholique, qui succeda à Hananjechia, celuy dont il est fait mention dans l'inscription Chinoise et Syriaque, et qui fut ordonné vers l'an 788 de Jesus-Christ, avoit escrit au Cakhan ou empereur des Tartares, et à quelques autres princes du Turkestan pour les exhorter à embrasser la Foy Chrestienne; ce qu'il fit avec deux cens mille de ses sujets. On ne peut pas douter que ce peuple ne fussent de véritables Tartares ou Turcs, puisque le même Catholique fut consulté par l'évêque qu'il envoya dans le pais, touchant la manière dont il devoit leur faire observer la Caresme, et célébrer la liturgie; parce qu'ils estoient accoustumez à

vivre de lait et de chair, et qu'ils n'avoient ni bled, ni vin . . . Depuis ce temps-là, on trouve dans les notices ecclésiastiques de l'Eglise Nestorienne, un Métropolitain de Turkestan, un de Tengat, un de Cambalik ou Cambalu, et un de Caschgar et de Nouakat."—Anciennes Relat. p. 319. See also *Dissertatio de Syris Nestorianis*, by J. S. Assemauns.

If then it be admitted that at an early period some of the Tartar tribes, with their chiefs, were converted to Christianity, (and why their conversion should be a matter less credible than that of the nations in the North and West of Europe, does not appear,) there can be no special reason for excepting the prince named Ung-khan, whose particular tribe, it may be observed, bore the appellation of Krit, Kera-it or Kerrit, which in the East is a common mode of pronouncing the words Christ and Christian. At his baptism it may be presumed that he received, from his spiritual instructors, a Syrian baptismal name, and none more likely than that of Yuhanna or John the Evangelist. If we further suppose, what is not an unusual circumstance in the history of these people, that their chief was at the same time a lama, he may not have been willing to divest himself of the priestly character, and the Nestorian missionaries in their reports to the Katholikos or metropolitan, at Baghdad or Antioch, might consequently mention him by a title equivalent to that of Johannes Presbuteros.

The belief of an early spreading of the Gospel in these parts derives some additional strength from an opinion entertained by some of the best informed missionaries, that the lama religion itself is no other than a corrupted species of Christianity; and although this may be too hasty an inference from what they had an opportunity of observing in the country, it will not be found upon examination so unlikely as it may at first appear. Our modern acquaintance with the Hindu system of mythology, and particularly with the tenets, rites, and representations of Buddha, whose schism extended itself over the countries lying to the north and east of Hindustan and Bengal, enables us to pronounce with confidence that in its fundamental principles the religion of the country which bears the names of Butan, Tibet, and Tangut, is that of the Bhuddists of India; but at the same time the strong resemblance between many of its ceremonies and those of the Christian churches, both East and West, have been pointed out by every traveller who has visited Tartary, from Carpini and Rubruquis, by whom it was first noticed, to our countrymen and cotemporaries, Bogle and Turner, who resided at the court of one of the grand lamas. We find it avowed even by the Jesuit missionaries, whom we cannot suppose to have been influenced in their observation by any undue bias (with which on some occasions they have been charged), as neither their personal vanity could be gratified, nor the interests of their profession advanced, by establishing the invidious comparison.

Under impressions of this kind of resemblance, it is not surprising that some should have adopted an opinion that the prince who acquired amongst the Christians of the East, the appellation of Prester John, was no other than the supreme lama of the Tartars.

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II.—ADDITIONAL NOTE ON PAGE 248, NOTE 4.

776. "Si-gan," says P. Martini, "qui est la ville capitale, cède à fort peu d'autres, si on regarde à sa situation dans un pays fort beau et récréatif, à sa grandeur, à son antiquité, à la force et fermeté de ses murailles, à la beauté de son aspect, et à son commerce . . . Vous pouvez juger de son antiquité, de ce que les trois familles impériales de Cheu, Cin, et Han y ont régné."—Thevenot, partie iii. p. 58.

It was near this capital that an ancient inscription on stone was discovered, which, in Syriac and Chinese characters, recorded the state of Christianity in that province or kingdom, set forth the protection and indulgence it received from different emperors, and contained a list of its bishops. "Cette province," says P. Martini, "est encore célèbre par une pierre fort antique, sur laquelle la loi de Dieu est écrite en caractères Syriaques et Chinois, apporté à ceux de la Chine par les successeurs des Apôtres: on y list le nom des évêques et des prestres de ce temps-là, et celui des empereurs Chinois qui leur furent favorables et leur accordèrent des privilèges: elle contient aussi une courte explication de la loi Chrestienne, mais tout-à-fait admirable, composée en langage Chinois très-éloquent . . . On l'a trouvé l'an 1625 dans la cité de San-yuen, comme on creusoit les fondemens d'une muraille: le gouverneur de la ville, ayant esté informé aussi-tost de ce monument qu'on avoit trouvé, en considéra l'inscription de plus près, et, comme ils sont grands amateurs de l'antiquité, il la fit imprimer, et ensuite un écrit à la louange du monument, et puis après tailler sur une autre pierre de mesme grandeur une copie de celle qu'on avoit trouvée, en observant les mesmes traits et caractères, avec toute la fidélité requise. Les Pères de nostre Société en ont porté à Rome un exemplaire selon l'original, avec l'interprétation: on la garde à présent avec son interprétation, dans la bibliothèque de la Maison professe de Jésus: elle fut imprimée à Rome l'an 1631." Thevenot, p. 57. Some suspicions were naturally excited in Europe, as to the genuineness of a monument of so peculiar a nature, and it has been the subject of much discussion; but those who have been the most forward to pronounce it a forgery, seem actuated rather by a spirit of animosity against the Order of Jesuits, whose members brought it to notice, than by the pure love of truth or a disposition to candid inquiry; and since that hostile feeling has subsided, its authenticity appears to be no longer disputed by those who are best



enabled to form a correct judgment. "L'établissement des Nestoriens," says De Guignes, f., "date de 635 ans après J. C. qu'un certain Olopuen vint à la Chine sous Taytsong des Tang : ce fait est prouvé par le monument découvert à Sy-ngan-fou en 1625, sous Hy-tsong des Ming." (Tom. ii. p. 334.) For more particular information respecting this celebrated monument, see the following works : Athanasii Kircheri *China illustrata* (1667), where will be found a facsimile of the inscription, with a literal translation of each character : Andræ Mülleri *Opuscula* ; *De monumento Sinico Commentarius*, (1695) : Laurentii Moshemii, *ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam Tartarorum Appendix, monumenta et epistolas exhibens* (1741) : and *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxx. p. 802.

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