

**THE TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO, THE VENETIAN**  
**London (J.M.Dent & Sons) and New York (E.P.Dutton Co.),1914**

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**Chapter I**

1. It should be known to the reader that, at the time when Baldwin II. was emperor of Constantinople<sup>1</sup>, where a magistrate representing the doge of Venice then resided<sup>2</sup>, and in the year of our Lord 1250<sup>3</sup>, Nicolo Polo, the father of the said Marco, and Maffeo, the brother of Nicolo, respectable and well informed men, embarked in a ship of their own, with a rich and varied cargo of merchandise, and reached Constantinople in safety. After mature deliberation on the subject of their proceedings, it was determined, as the measure most likely to improve their trading capital, that they should prosecute their voyage into the Euxine or Black Sea<sup>4</sup>. With this view they made purchases of many fine and costly jewels, and taking their departure from Constantinople, navigated

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<sup>1</sup> Baldwin II. count of Flanders, and cousin of Louis IX. king of France, who reigned from 1237 to 1261, was the last of the Latin emperors of Constantinople.

<sup>2</sup>The passage which in Ramusio's text is, "dove all' hora soleva stare un podestà di Venetia, per nome di messer lo Dose," and upon which he has written a particular dissertation, has nothing corresponding to it in the Latin or French versions, or in the Italian text published by Boni. The city of Constantinople and the Greek provinces had been conquered, in 1204, by the joint arms of the French and the Venetians, the latter of whom were commanded by their doge, the illustrious Henry Dandolo, in person. Upon the division of the territory and the immense spoil that fell into their possession, a larger share (including the celebrated bronze horses of Lysippus) was assigned to the republic than to the emperor elected on the occasion, and the aged doge, who had himself declined the imperial title, but accepted that of Prince of Romania, maintained an independent jurisdiction over three parts out of eight of the city, with a separate tribunal of justice, and ended his days at the head of an army that besieged Adrianople. It is doubtful whether any of his successors in the high office of chief of the republic made the imperial city their place of residence. The doge, a slave of state," says Gibbon "was *seldom* permitted to depart from the helm of the republic; but his place was supplied by the bail, or regent, who exercised a supreme jurisdiction over the colony of Venetians." Such was the podestà, sometimes termed bailo, and sometimes despoto, whose cotemporary government is here spoken of, and whose political importance in the then degraded state of the empire was little inferior to that of Baldwin: whilst in the eyes of the Polo family, as Venetian citizens, it was probably much greater. The name of the person who exercised the functions at the time of their arrival, is said, in the Sorenzo manuscript, to have been Misier Ponte de Veniexia, and, in 1261, when the empire, on rather the city, was reconquered from the Latins, the podestà was Marco Gradenigo.

<sup>3</sup> There are strong grounds, Marsden says, the believing that this date of 1250, although found in all the editions, is incorrect. In the manuscript, of which there are copies in the British Museum and Berlin libraries, the commencement of the voyage is placed in 1232, and some of the events related in the sequel render it evident that the departure, at least of our travellers from Constantinople, must have been some years later than the middle of the century, and probably not sooner than 1255. How long they were detained in that city is not stated: but, upon any calculation of the period of their arrival or departure, it is surprising that Grynæus, the editor of the Basle and Paris edition of 1935. and after him the learned Muller and Bergeron, should, notwithstanding the anachronism, introduce into their texts the date of 1260, which was the year in which they returned to Syria from their best Tartarian journey.

<sup>4</sup> The prosperity, riches, and political importance of the state of Venice having arisen entirely from its commerce, the profession of a merchant was there held in the highest degree of estimation, and its nobles were amongst the most enterprising of its adventurers in foreign trade. To this illustrious state might have been applied the proud character drawn by Isaiah of ancient Tyre, which he describes as "the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth."

that sea to a port named Soldaia,<sup>5</sup> from whence they travelled on horseback many days until they reached the court of a powerful chief of the Western Tartars, named Barka,<sup>6</sup> who dwelt in the cities of Bolgara and Assara,<sup>7</sup> and had the reputation of being one of the most liberal and civilized princes hitherto known amongst the tribes of Tartary. He expressed much satisfaction at the arrival of these travellers, and received them with marks of distinction. In return for which courtesy, when they had laid before him the jewels they brought with them, and perceived that their beauty pleased him, they presented them for his acceptance. The liberality of this conduct on the part of the two brothers struck him with admiration; and being unwilling that they should surpass him in generosity, he not only directed double the value of the jewels to be paid to them, but made them in addition several rich presents. The brothers having resided a year in the dominions of this prince, they became desirous of revisiting their native country, but were impeded by the sudden breaking out of a war between him and another chief, named Alaù, who ruled over the Eastern Tartars.<sup>8</sup> In a fierce and very sanguinary battle that ensued between their respective armies, Alaù was victorious, in consequence of which, the roads being rendered unsafe for travellers, the brothers could not attempt to return by the way they came; and it was recommended to them, as the only practicable

<sup>5</sup> Soldaia was the name given in the middle ages to the place (the Tauro-Scythian port of the ancients) now called Sudak, situated near the southern extremity of the Crimea or Tauric Chersonesus. It is described in these words: "About the midst of the said province towards the south, as it were upon a sharp angle or point, standeth a city called Soldaia, directly against Synopolis. And there doe all the Turkie merchants, which traffique into the north countries, in their journey outward, arrive, and as they return homeward also from Russia, and the said northern regions, into Turkie."- Purchas, vol. ii. p. z.

<sup>6</sup> This Tartar prince is usually named Bereké, the successor, and said to be the brother, of Batu, the son of Tushi, eldest son of Jengis-khan; who inherited, as his portion of the dominions of his grandfather (although not in full sovereignty), the western countries of Kapehak or Kipchak, Allân, Russ, and Bulgar, and died in 1256.

<sup>7</sup> The Bolgar, Bulgar, or Bulghar, here spoken of, is the name of a town and an extensive district in Tartary, lying to the eastward of the Wolga, and now inhabited by the Bashkirs, sometimes distinguished from the Bulgaria on the Danube, by the appellation of the Greater Bulgaria. Assara is the city of Sarai (with the definitive article prefixed), situated on the eastern arm of the Wolga, or Achtuba. "The Astrachan mentioned by Balducci Pegoletti was not on the same spot where that town stands now, but the ancient Astrachan was demolished, together with Saray, by the emperor Timur, in the winter of 1395. The old town of Saray was pretty near the ancient "- Forster.

<sup>8</sup> These Eastern Tartars, as they are relatively termed, but whose country extended no further to the east than the provinces of Persia and Khorasan, were so named to distinguish them from the Western (or more properly. North-Western) Tartars mentioned in the preceding note, who occupied the countries in the neighbourhood of the Wolga, and from thence to the confines, or beyond the confines, of Europe. Their chief, her named Ala-ù or Hala-ù, is the celebrated Hulagu, the son of Tuli or Tulwi, and equally with Batu, Mangu, and Kubla (the latter of whom were his brothers, the grandson of Jengiz-khan. Being appointed by his elder brother Mangu, to command in the southern provinces of the empire, he left Kara-korum, a short time before the visit of Rubruquis to that Tartar capital, and in the year 1255 crossed the Jihun of Oxus, with a large army. In the following year, he destroyed the race or sect of the Ismaelians, called also Malahidet, of whom a particular account will be given hereafter, and then turned his arms against the city of Baghdad, which he sacked in 1258; putting to death Mostasem Billah, the last of the Abbassite khalifs. Upon the death of Mangu, in 1259, Hulagu became effectively the sovereign of Persian and Babylonian Irak, together with Khorasan, yet he still continued to profess nominal and respectful allegiance to his brother Kublas, who was acknowledged as the head of the Moghul family, and reigned in China. His death took place in 1265, at Tauris or Tabriz his capital.

mode of reaching Constantinople, to proceed in an easterly direction, by an unfrequented route, so as to skirt the limits of Barka's territories. Accordingly they made their way to a town named Oukaka,<sup>9</sup> situated on the confines of the kingdom of the Western Tartars. Leaving that place, and advancing still further, they crossed the Tigris,<sup>10</sup> one of the four rivers of Paradise, and came to a desert, the extent of which was seventeen days' journey, wherein they found neither town, castle, nor any substantial building, but only Tartars with their herds, dwelling in tents on the plain.<sup>11</sup> Having passed this tract they arrived at length at a well-built city called Bokhara,<sup>12</sup> in a province of that name, belonging to the dominions of Persia, and the noblest city of that kingdom, but governed by a prince whose name was Barak.<sup>13</sup> Here, from inability to proceed further, they remained three years.

It happened while these brothers were in Bokhara, that a person of consequence and gifted with eminent talents made his appearance there. He was proceeding as ambassador from Alaù before mentioned, to the grand khan, supreme chief of all the Tartars, named Kublaï<sup>14</sup> whose residence was at the extremity of the continent, in a direction between north east and east.<sup>15</sup> Not having ever before had an opportunity,

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<sup>9</sup>There can be little doubt of this being the Okak of Abulfeda; from hence the route of travellers may be presumed to have lain towards the town of Jaik, on the river of that name, and afterwards, in a south-easterly direction, to the Sihun.

<sup>10</sup>The great river crossed by our travellers, and which from its magnitude they sought think entitled to rank as one of the rivers of Paradise, was evidently the Sihun, otherwise named the SIRR.

<sup>11</sup> The desert here mentioned is that of Karak, in the vicinity of the Sihun or SIRR, which travellers from the north must unavoidably pass, in order to arrive at Bokhâra.

<sup>12</sup>This celebrated city, the name of which could not be easily mistaken, and has not been disguised by the transcribers, serves materially to establish the general direction of their course; for, having proceeded northwards from the Crimea, they could not have reached Bokhâra otherwise than by crossing the several rivers with discharge themselves into the upper or northern part of the Caspian.

<sup>13</sup> This appears to be the prince whom Pétis de la Croix names Berrac Can, and D'Herbelot Barak-khan, great-grandson of Jagataï, the second son of Jengiz-khan, who inherited Transoxiana, or the region now possessed by the Usbek Tartars. Barak is said, by the latter, to have attempted to wrest the kingdom of Khorasan from the dominion of Abaka the son of Hulagu; but this must be a mistake, as the death of Barak is placed by the generality of historians in 1260 (by D'Herbelot, unaccountably, in 1240), and that of Hulagu in 1265.

<sup>14</sup> Mangu appointed Kublaï his viceroy in China, and gave to Hulagu the government of such of the southern provinces of Asia as he could reduce to obedience. Returning himself to China in 1258, he died at the siege of Ho-cheu, in the province of Se-chuen, in the following year. Kublaï was at this time in the province of Hu-kuang, and persevered in his efforts to render himself master of Vu-chang-fu, its capital, until he was called away to suppress a revolt excited by his younger brother Artigbuga, whom Mangu had left as his lieutenant at Kara-korum. Contenting himself with exacting from the emperor of the Song, who ruled over Manji, or southern China, the payment of an annual tribute, he retreated to the northward, and in 1260 was proclaimed grand khan, at Shang-tu, which from that time became his summer residence. We are told, however, that he had hesitated for some time to assume the title, and did not declare his acquiescence until the arrival of an envoy sent by his brother Hulagu (by some supposed to have been the elder), who urged him to accept the empire. This envoy we may reasonably presume to have been the person who arrived at Bokhâra, in his way from Persia to Khataï, during the time that Nicolo and Maffeo Polo were detained in that city; and the period is thereby ascertained to have been about the year 1258.

<sup>15</sup> This vague designation of the place of residence of the grand khan must be understood as applying to Khataï, or northern China, from which, or the adjoining district of Karchin, where Shang-tu was situated, he was rarely absent.

although he wished it, of seeing any natives of Italy, he was gratified in a high degree at meeting and conversing with these brothers, who had now become proficient in the Tartar language; and after associating with them for several days, and finding their manners agreeable to him, he proposed to them that they should accompany him to the presence of the great khan, who would be pleased by their appearance at his court, which had not hitherto been visited by any person from their country; adding assurances that they would be honourably received, and recompensed with many gifts. Convinced as they were that their endeavours to return homeward would expose them to the most imminent risks, they agreed to this proposal, and recommending themselves to the protection of the Almighty, they set out on their journey in the suite of the ambassador, attended by several Christian servants whom they had brought with them from Venice. The course they took at first was between the north-east and north, and an entire year was consumed before they were enabled to reach the imperial residence, in consequence of the extraordinary delays occasioned by the snows and the swelling of the rivers, which obliged them to halt until the former had melted and the floods had subsided. Many things worthy of admiration were observed by them in the progress of their journey, but which are here omitted, as they will be described by Marco Polo, in the sequel of the book.

2. Being introduced to the presence of the grand khan, Kublai, the travellers were received by him with the condescension and affability that belonged to his character, and as they were the first Latins who had made their appearance in that country, they were entertained with feasts and honoured with other marks of distinction. Entering graciously into conversation with them, he made earnest inquiries on the subject of the western parts of the world, of the emperor of the Romans,<sup>16</sup> and of other Christian kings and princes. He wished to be informed of their relative consequence, the extent of their possessions, the manner in which justice was administered in their several kingdoms and principalities, how they conducted themselves in warfare, and above all he questioned them particularly respecting the pope, the affairs of the church, and the religious worship and doctrine of the Christians. Being well instructed and discreet men, they gave appropriate answers upon all these points, and as they were perfectly acquainted with the Tartar (Moghul) language, they expressed themselves always in becoming terms; insomuch that the grand khan, holding them in high estimation, frequently commanded their attendance.

When he had obtained all the information that the two brothers communicated with so much good sense, he expressed himself well satisfied, and having formed in his mind the design of employing them as his ambassadors to the pope, after consulting with his ministers on the subject, he proposed to them, with many kind entreaties, that they should accompany one of his officers, named Khogatal, on a mission to the see of

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<sup>16</sup>By the emperor of the Romans is meant the emperor, whether Greek or Roman, who reigned at Constantinople. Those countries which now form the dominion of the Turks in Europe and Asia Minor, are vaguely designated, amongst the more Eastern people, by the name of Rûm, and their inhabitants by that of Rûmi.

Rome. His object, he told the was to make a request to his holiness that he would send to him a hundred men of learning, thoroughly acquainted with the principles of the Christian religion, as well as with the seven arts, and qualified to prove to the learned of his dominions by just and fair argument, that the faith professed by Christians is superior to, and founded upon more evident truth than, any other; that the gods of the Tartars and the idols worshipped in their houses were only evil spirits, and that they and the people of the East in general were under an error in reverencing them as divinities. He moreover signified his pleasure that upon their return they should bring with them, from Jerusalem, some of the holy oil from the lamp which is kept burning over the sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he professed to hold in veneration and to consider as the true God.<sup>17</sup> Having heard these commands addressed to them by the grand khan they humbly prostrated themselves before him, declaring their willingness and instant readiness to perform, to the utmost of their ability, whatever might be the royal will. Upon which he caused letters, in the Tartarian language, to be written in his name to the pope of Rome, and these he delivered into their hands. He likewise gave orders that they should be furnished with a golden tablet displaying the imperial cipher,<sup>18</sup> according to the usage established by his majesty; in virtue of which the person bearing it, together with his whole suite, are safely conveyed and escorted from station to station by the governors of all places within the imperial dominions, and are entitled, during the time of their residing in any city, castle, town, or village, to a supply of provisions and everything necessary for their accommodation.

Being thus honourably commissioned they took their leave of the grand khan, and set out on their journey, but had not proceeded more than twenty days when the officer, named Khogatal, their companion, fell dangerously ill, in the city named Alau.<sup>19</sup> In this dilemma it was determined, upon consulting all who were present, and with the

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<sup>17</sup> We may reasonably suspect (without entertaining any doubt of the embassy itself) that the expressions here put into the mouth of the emperor, both as they regard the worship of the Tartars and the divinity of Christ, have been heightened by the zeal of Christian transcribers. The circumstance of Kublaï, who is known to have been of an active and inquisitive mind, requesting to be furnished with a number of missionaries from Europe, to instruct his ignorant Tartar subjects in religion, and more especially in the practice of useful arts, is no more than what has been frequently done since, by the princes of half-barbarous nations, amongst whom the doctrine of the Koran had not already taken root. With regard to the holy oil, we find its importance thus stated by Chardin: "Ce qu'il (le clergé Arménien) vend le plus cher, ce sont les saintes huiles, que les Grecs appellent myrone. La plupart des chrétiens orientaux s'imaginent que c'est un baume physiquement salutaire contre toutes les maladies de l'ame. Le patriarche a seul le droit de la consacrer. Il la vend aux évêques et aux prêtres. Il y a quelques douze ans que celui de Perse se mit en tête d'empêcher les ecclésiastiques Arméniens de tout l'orient, de se pourvoir des saintes huiles ailleurs que chez lui. Ceux de Turquie s'en fournissent depuis long-tems à Jeru salem, auprès du patriarche Arménien qui y réside, et qui est le chef de tous les Chrétiens Arméniens de l'empire Ottoman."-Voy. en Perse, tom. i. p. 170, 4to.

<sup>18</sup>Frequent mention is made in the Chinese writings of the tchikouei, or tablet of honour, delivered to great officers on their appointment; upon which their titles are set forth in gold letters, and which entitles them to considerable privileges in travelling. That which is here spoken of may be supposed to have been of nearly the same kind. In the vulgar European dialect of Canton, it is termed the emperor's grand chop, a word used to express "seal, mark, warrant, licence, or passport."

<sup>19</sup>The name of the place where Khogatal was left is omitted in Marsden, and in the French and some of the Italian texts.

approbation of the man himself, that they should leave him behind. In the prosecution of their journey they derived essential benefit from being provided with the royal tablet, which procured them attention in every place through which they passed. Their expenses were defrayed, and escorts were furnished. But notwithstanding these advantages, so great were the natural difficulties they had to encounter, from the extreme cold, the snow, the ice, and the flooding of the rivers, that their progress was unavoidably tedious, and three years elapsed before they were enabled to reach a sea-port town in the lesser Armenia, named Laiassus.<sup>20</sup> Departing from thence by sea, they arrived at Acre<sup>21</sup> in the month of April, 1269, and there earned, with extreme concern, that pope Clement the Fourth was recently dead.<sup>22</sup> A legate whom he had appointed, named M. Tebaldo de' Vesconti di Piacenza, was at this time resident in Acre,<sup>23</sup> and to him they gave an account of what they had in command from the grand khan of Tartary. He advised them by all means to wait the election of another pope, and when that should take place, to proceed with the object of their embassy. Approving of this counsel, they determined upon employing the interval in a visit to their families in Venice. They accordingly embarked at Acre in a ship bound to Negropont, and from thence went on to Venice, where Nicolo Polo found that his wife, whom he had left with child at his departure, was dead, after having been delivered of a son, who received the name of Marco, and was now of the age of nineteen years.<sup>24</sup> This is the Marco by whom the present work is composed, and who will give therein a relation of all those matters of which he has been an eye-witness.

<sup>20</sup> We have given the name Laiassus from the Latin text, instead of Giazza, given in Marsden's text, which is an evident corruption. The place meant is a port on the northern side of the gulf of Scandaroon, or Issus, which in our modern maps and books of geography has the various appellations of Lajazzo, Aiazza, Aiasso, L'Aias, and Layassa.

<sup>21</sup>Acre, properly Akkâ, the ancient Ptolemais, a maritime city of Palestine, was taken from the Saracens, in 1110, by the Crusaders. In 1187 it fell into the hands of Saladin or Salah-eddin; and in 1191 it was wrested from him by the Christian forces, under Philippe Auguste, king of France, and Richard Coeur de Lion, king of England. In 1265, and again in 1269 (about the period at which our travellers arrived there), it was unsuccessfully attacked by Bibars, sultan of Egypt. In 1291 it was finally conquered from the Christians, and in great part demolished, by Khalil, another Egyptian sultan, of the dynasty of Mameluk Baharites. In modern days, it suddenly arose from the obscurity in which it had lain for five centuries, and once more became celebrated for the determined and triumphant resistance there made, in 1798 and 1799, by Jezzar Pasha, assisted by a small British squadron and the gallantry of its distinguished commander, against the furious and sanguinary efforts of the invader of Egypt.

<sup>22</sup>Clement IV. died on the 29th of November, of the year 1268. The event was consequently a recent one when our travellers arrived at Acre, in April, 1269. It may be observed that the date of their arrival stated in the MSS., some reading 1260, the Latin text having 1270, and others 1272. Some MSS. specify the 30th of April as the day of their arrival.

<sup>23</sup>That Acre was the residence of a legate from the papal see about this period is proved by other records.

<sup>24</sup>The Basle, as well as the earlier Latin version, and the Italian epitomes, state the age of Marco, who was to become the historian of the family, to have been then only fifteen years. If this reading be correct, as probably it is, the father, who arrived at Acre in 1269, and may be presumed to have reached Venice in 1270, must have left home about the year 1255. (See Note 3, on p. 10.) The age of nineteen seems to have been assigned in order to make it consistent with the supposed departure in 1250.

3. In the meantime the election of a pope was retarded by so many obstacles, that they remained two years in Venice, continually expecting its accomplishment;<sup>25</sup> when at length, becoming apprehensive that the grand khan might be displeased at their delay, or might suppose it was not their intention to revisit his country, they judged it expedient to return to Acre; and on this occasion they took with them young Marco Polo. Under the sanction of the legate they made a visit to Jerusalem, and there provided themselves with some of the oil belonging to the lamp of the holy sepulchre, conformably to the directions of the grand khan. As soon as they were furnished with his letters addressed to that prince bearing testimony to the fidelity with which they had endeavoured to execute his commission, and explaining to him that the pope of the Christian church had not as yet been chosen, they proceeded to the before-mentioned port of Laiassus. Scarcely however had they taken their departure, when the legate received messengers from Italy, despatched by the college of cardinals, announcing his own elevation to the papal chair; and he thereupon assumed the name of Gregory the Tenth.<sup>26</sup> Considering that he was now in a situation that enabled him fully to satisfy the wishes of the Tartar sovereign, he hastened to transmit letters to the king of Armenia,<sup>27</sup> communicating to him the event of his election, and requesting, in case the two ambassadors who were on their way to the court of the grand khan should not have already quitted his dominions, that he would give directions for their immediate return. These letters found them still in Armenia, and with great alacrity they obeyed the summons to repair once more to Acre; for which purpose the king furnished them with an armed galley; sending at the same time an ambassador from himself, to offer his congratulations to the sovereign pontiff.

Upon their arrival, his holiness received them in a distinguished manner, and immediately despatched them with letters papal, accompanied by two friars of the order

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<sup>25</sup>A vacancy in the papal see, for a period of nearly three years, occurred on this occasion, in consequence of the cabals existing in the Sacred College; when, at length, it was determined to refer the choice of a pope to six of the cardinals, who elected Tebaldo of Piacenza, on the first day of September, 1271. In order to prevent the inconvenience and scandal of such delays for the future, the institution of the Conclave (upon a principle that resembles the impanelling of our English juries) was established.

<sup>26</sup>In the list of sovereign pontiffs we find him styled "B. Gregorius X. Placentinus." His election, as has been mentioned, took place on the 1st of September, 1271. He was then acting as legate in Syria; but, having early notice of the event, he was enabled to take his departure from thence so soon as the 18th November following, and landed at Brindisi, near Otranto, in January, 1272.

<sup>27</sup>At this time Leon, or Livon II., reigned in the lesser Armenia, the capital of which was Sis, and Aïas, or Aïazzo, its chief port. His father, whom we call Haiton, and the Arabian writers Hatem, had acted a conspicuous part in the late transactions, having accompanied Hulagu from the court of Mangu-khan to Persia, and assisted in his wars with the Mussulmans. In 1270 he had obtained the consent of Abaka the son of Hulagu, then his liege sovereign, transferring the crown of Armenia, on account of his age and infirmities, to his son Leon. The principal actions of his life are recorded by his namesake, relation and cotemporary, who, having long distinguished himself as a soldier, became an ecclesiastic. His work was edited by Grynæus, at Basle and Paris, in 1532, under the title of "Haithonis Armeni de Tartaris liber," and again, by Andreas Müller, in 1671, under that of "Haithoni Armeni Historia Orientalis: quæ eadem et de Tartaris inscribitur." See also Abul Pharajii Hist. pp. 328-357; and De Guignes, Hist. Gén. liv. xv. pp. 125- 249.

of Preachers, who happened to be on the spot; men of letters and of science, as well as profound theologians. One of them was named Fra Nicolo da Vicenza, and the other, Fra Guielmo da Tripoli. To them he gave licence and authority to ordain priests, to consecrate bishops, and to grant absolution as fully as he could do in his own person. He also charged them with valuable presents, and among these, several handsome vases of crystal, to be delivered to the grand khan in his name, and along with his benediction. Having taken leave, they again steered their course to the port of Laiassus,<sup>28</sup> where they landed, and from thence proceeded into the country of Armenia. Here they received intelligence that the soldan of Babylonia, named Bundokdari, had invaded the Armenian territory with a numerous army, and had overrun and laid waste the country to a great extent.<sup>29</sup> Terrified at these accounts, and apprehensive for their lives, the two friars determined not to proceed further, and delivering over to the Venetians the letters and presents entrusted to them by the pope, they placed themselves under the protection of the master of the knights templars,<sup>30</sup> and with him returned directly to the coast. Nicolo, Maffeo, and Marco, however, undismayed by perils or difficulties (to which they had long been inured), passed the borders of Armenia, and prosecuted their journey. After crossing deserts of several days' march, and passing many dangerous defiles, they advanced so far, in a direction between north-east and north, that at length they gained information of the grand khan, who then had his residence in a large and magnificent city named Cle-men-fu.<sup>31</sup> Their whole

<sup>28</sup>As it may be presumed that our travellers commenced their journey about the time of the sailing of Pope Gregory from Acre, the period is fixed by authority that will scarcely admit dispute, to the end of the year 1271, or beginning of 1272.

<sup>29</sup>This soldan was Bibars, surnamed Bundokdari, Mameluk sultan of Egypt (which is meant by Babylonia), who had conquered the greater part of Syria, and had already (in or about 1266) invaded Armenia, and plundered the towns of Sis and Aïs. In 1270 he made himself master of Antioch, slew or made captives of all the Christian inhabitants, and demolished its churches, the most magnificent and celebrated in the East. It must have been about the beginning of the year 1272 that our travellers entered Armenia; and, although it is not stated specifically that any irruption by the soldan took place at that time, it is evident that he had not ceased to harass the neighbouring country of Syria; and, notwithstanding the formidable combination just mentioned, we find him again, in 1276, invading the province of Rûm, immediately bordering on the lesser Armenia to the northward. The alarms must have been perpetual, and these alone may have been sufficient to deter the two theologians from proceeding with their more adventurous companions; who did not, however, meet with the enemy.

<sup>30</sup> It is well known that the knights of the hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, and the knights of the Temple, were two great monastic military orders that arose from the fanaticism of the crusades, and became the most regular and effective support of the Christian cause in Asia. It is not unlikely that a body of the latter may have been stationed in this part of Armenia (which we should term the pashalic of Marash), for its defence, and the ecclesiastics would naturally seek the protection of its commander, who may have been the master, but was more probably only a knight of the order.

<sup>31</sup> The ordinary residence of Kublaï at this period must have been Yenking (near the spot where Peking now stands), whilst he was employed in laying the foundations of his new capital of Ta-tu, of which particular mention will be made in the sequel. The operations of war, or the regulations of newly-conquered provinces, might, however, occasion his visiting other cities; and our travellers may have found him in the western part of his dominions. "Il etablit sa cour d'abord," says Du Halde, "à Tai-yuen-fou, capitale de la province de Chan-si, et ensuite il la transporta à Peking." - Description, de la Chine, tom. i. p. 496.



journey to this place occupied no less than three years and a half; but, during the winter months, their progress had been inconsiderable.<sup>32</sup> The grand khan having notice of their approach whilst still remote, and being aware how much they must have suffered from fatigue, sent forward to meet them at the distance of forty days journey, and gave orders to prepare in every place through which they were to pass, whatever might be requisite to their comfort. By these means, and through the blessing of God, they were conveyed in safety to the royal court.

4. Upon their arrival they were honourably and graciously received by the grand khan, in a full assembly of his principal officers. When they drew nigh to his person, they paid their respects by prostrating themselves on the floor. He immediately commanded them to rise, and to relate to him the circumstances of their travels, with all that had taken place in their negotiation with his holiness the pope. To their narrative, which they gave in the regular order of events, and delivered in perspicuous language, he listened with attentive silence. The letters and the presents from pope Gregory were then laid before him, and, upon hearing the former read, he bestowed much commendation on the fidelity, the zeal, and the diligence of his ambassadors; and receiving with due reverence the oil from the holy sepulchre, he gave directions that it should be preserved with religious care. Upon his observing Marco Polo, and inquiring who he was, Nicolo made answer, This is your servant, and my son; upon which the grand khan replied, "He is welcome, and it pleases me much" and he caused him to be enrolled amongst his attendants of honour. And on account of their return he made a great feast and rejoicing; and as long as the said brothers and Marco remained in the court of the grand khan, they were honoured even above his own courtiers. Marco was held in high estimation and respect by all belonging to the court. He learnt in a short time and adopted the manners of the Tartars, and acquired a proficiency in four different languages, which he became qualified to read and write.<sup>33</sup> Finding him thus accomplished, his master was desirous of putting his talents for business to the proof, and sent him on an important concern of state to a city named Karazan,<sup>34</sup> situated at the distance of sixmonths journey from the imperial residence; on which occasion he

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<sup>32</sup> When the Teshu Lama of Tibet visited (in 1779-80) the late emperor of China, at Peking, his journey (although from what we consider a neighbouring country, and which has since been garrisoned by Chinese troops) occupied ten months, during four of which he was detained at one place by the snow.

<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the Moghul or Mungal, Ighor, Manchu, and Chinese. The last will be thought the least probable; but no inference should be drawn from his orthography of Chinese names in European characters, and particularly in the corrupted state of the text. The Latin text says that Marco learnt "the Tartar and four other languages;" the French text says, "their language and four different characters" of writing.

<sup>34</sup> Having here the name merely, without any circumstance but that of its remoteness from the capital of China, we must presume it to be intended for a city of Khorasan; to which there is no objection but the probability of his having passed through that province when he first visited Tartary, and that it is not here spoken of as a place with which he had been previously acquainted. It was then (together with Persia) under the dominion of the second son of Hulagu, who succeeded his brother Abaka, and took the name of Ahmed Khan, upon his embracing the Mahometan religion. It would, perhaps, be taking a liberty with the orthography to suppose that the name might be intended for Khorasmia, the Kharism of modern geographers.

conducted himself with so much wisdom and prudence in the management of the affairs entrusted to him, that his services became highly acceptable. On his part, perceiving that the grand khan took a pleasure in hearing accounts of whatever was new to him respecting the customs and manners of people, and the peculiar circumstances of distant countries, he endeavoured, wherever he went, to obtain correct information on these subjects, and made notes of all he saw and heard, in order to gratify the curiosity of his master. In short, during seventeen years<sup>35</sup> that he continued in his service, he rendered himself so useful, that he was employed on confidential missions to every part of the empire and its dependencies; and sometimes also he travelled on his own private account, but always with the consent, and sanctioned by the authority, of the grand khan. Under such circumstances it was that Marco Polo had the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge, either by his own observation, or what he collected from others, of so many things, until his time unknown, respecting the eastern parts of the world, and which he diligently and regularly committed to writing, as in the sequel will appear. And by this means he obtained so much honour, that he provoked the jealousy of the other officers of the court.

5. Our Venetians having now resided many years at the imperial court, and in that time having realized considerable wealth, in jewels of value and in gold, felt a strong desire to revisit their native country, and, however honoured and caressed by the sovereign, this sentiment was ever predominant in their minds. It became the more decidedly their object, when they reflected on the very advanced age of the grand khan, whose death, if it should happen previously to their departure, might deprive them of that public assistance by which alone they could expect to surmount the innumerable difficulties of so long a journey, and reach their homes in safety; which on the contrary, in his lifetime, and through his favour, they might reasonably hope to accomplish. Nicolo Polo accordingly took an opportunity one day, when he observed him to be more than usually cheerful, of throwing himself at his feet, and soliciting on behalf of himself and his family to be indulged with his majesty's gracious permission for their departure. But far from showing himself disposed to comply with the request, he appeared hurt at the application, and asked what motive they could have for wishing to expose themselves to all the inconveniences and hazards of a journey in which they might probably lose their lives. If gain, he said, was their object, he was ready to give them the double of whatever they possessed, and to gratify them with honours to the extent of their desires; but that, from the regard he bore to them, he must positively refuse their petition.

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<sup>35</sup>In Ramusio's text the period is said to be *venlisei anni*, "twenty-six years," and Purchas endeavours to explain in what sense this number should be understood; but I prefer, in this instance, the reading of the Latin version, which has "xvii annos," as more consistent with the fact. It is certain that the family did not leave Acre, on their return to China, before the end of 1271; and as there is reason to believe that they did not reach the emperor's court before 1273 or 1274, nor remain there beyond 1291, it follows that the period of Marco's service could not have exceeded seventeen years by more than a few months. Twenty-six years include the whole of the period elapsed since the first visit of his father and uncle in 1264 or 1265.

It happened, about this period, that a queen named Bolgana,<sup>36</sup> the wife of Arghun,<sup>37</sup> sovereign of India, died, and as her last request (which she likewise left in a testamentary writing) conjured her husband that no one might succeed to her place on his throne and in his affections, who was not a descendant of her own family, now settled under the dominion of the grand khan,<sup>38</sup> in the country of Kathay.<sup>39</sup> Desirous of complying with this solemn entreaty, Arghun deputed three of his nobles, discreet men, whose names were Ulatai, Apusca, and Goza,<sup>40</sup> attended by a numerous retinue, as his ambassadors to the grand khan, with a request that he might receive at his hands a maiden to wife, from among the relatives of his deceased queen. The application was taken in good part, and

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<sup>36</sup>Although we do not find in the histories of this period that have come to our hands, any mention of the consort of Arghun–khan, yet the name that is here written Bolgana, and in the Latin of the Basle edition, as well as that of the British Museum manuscript, Balgana, occurs, with little difference of orthography, amongst the females of the family. The daughter of Jagataï, son of Jengiz–khan and uncle of Hulagu, was named Bolghân–khâtûn, as appears from the “Rouzat alsafâ” of Mirkhond. The Latin and French texts, and the Italian text in Boni’s edition, call the queen Bolgara.

<sup>37</sup>Arghun–khan, the son of Abaka–khan, and grandson of Hulagu–ilkhan, succeeded his uncle Ahmed–khan Nikodar on the throne of Persia, Khorasan, and other neighbouring countries, in 1284; and his first act, as we are informed by De Guignes (Liv. xvii. p. 265) was to send to the emperor Kublaï, as the head of the family and his liege sovereign, to demand the investiture of his estates. The death of his queen, here spoken of, must, from the circumstances mentioned in the sequel, have taken place about the year 1287, and he himself died in 1291. The name in all the versions of the work is uniformly written Argon, which approaches extremely near to the Persian orthography.

<sup>38</sup> The grand khan, at whose court the family of this queen is said to have resided in Kataia, was the grand–uncle of Arghun, her husband, and the queen herself was probably of the same royal Moghul family, The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian from the common stock of Jengiz–khan. Her anxiety therefore was, that her husband should not degrade himself and her memory, by contracting a marriage with any person of less noble lineage than their own. Viewing the circumstances therefore in their proper light, it will be found that what might at first be thought a romantic story, of a king of India sending an embassy to an emperor of China, for the purpose of obtaining a wife, resolves itself into the simple and natural transaction, of one of the younger members of a great family applying to the head of the house to be allowed to strengthen the connexion, by marrying from amongst those who were probably his cousins in the second degree; for we may presume that if this female had not been one of Kublaï’s own immediate race (a granddaughter, perhaps, as he was then advanced in years), there would not have existed a necessity for making so formal a demand. In regard to the distance between Persia and China, which might be considered an objection to the probability of the fact, it is well known that amongst all the branches of this Moghul family, however remote from each other, a continual intercourse had, up to that period, been maintained, and Arghun himself had applied for and received his investiture from the same monarch. In the event, however, it proved that the difficulties attending the returning journey, over land, had become insuperable.

<sup>39</sup>The situation of Khataï, or Kataia (or as it was usually called by the medieval writers, Cathay), has been a subject of much discussion amongst the learned; but it cannot, I think, be doubted by those who consult the eastern geographers and historians rather than the Greek, that they apply the name to the northern provinces of what we call China, which were conquered by Jengiz–khan, and his son, Oктаï, not from a Chinese government, but from a race of eastern Tartars, called Niu–che and Kin, by whom they had been subdued about one hundred and twenty years before. Whether they confine it strictly to these provinces, or include some of the adjoining parts of Tartary, without–side the wall, it is not easy to determine, as their accounts of these regions are far from being precise; but the former I should judge to be the case.

<sup>40</sup> These names vary considerably in the different versions and editions, where they appear in the forms of Ulatai and Gulatay, Apusca, Apusta, and Ribusca, Goza, and Coyla; all of them, probably, much disfigured by transcribing from indistinct manuscripts. The Latin text calls them Oulata, Alpusca, and Cor. They are not, however, of any historical importance.

under the directions of his majesty, choice was made of a damsel aged seventeen, extremely handsome and accomplished, whose name was Kogatın,<sup>41</sup> and of whom the ambassadors, upon her being shown to them, highly approved. When everything was arranged for their departure, and a numerous suite of attendants appointed, to do honour to the future consort of king Arghun, they received from the grand khan a gracious dismissal, and set out on their return by the way they came.

Having travelled for eight months, their further progress was obstructed and the roads shut up against them, by fresh wars that had broken out amongst the Tartar princes.<sup>42</sup> Much against their inclinations, therefore, they were constrained to adopt the measure of returning to the court of the grand khan, to whom they stated the interruption they had met with.

About the time of their reappearance, Marco Polo happened to arrive from a voyage he had made, with a few vessels under his orders, to some parts of the East Indies,<sup>43</sup> and reported to the grand khan the intelligence he brought respecting the countries he had visited, with the circumstances of his own navigation, which, he said, was performed in those seas with the utmost safety. This latter observation having reached the ears of the three ambassadors, who were extremely anxious to return to their own country, from whence they had now been absent three years, they presently sought a conference with our Venetians, whom they found equally desirous of revisiting their home; and it was settled between them that the former, accompanied by their young queen, should obtain an audience of the grand khan, and represent to him with what convenience and security they might effect their return by sea, to the dominions of their master; whilst the voyage would be attended with less expense than the journey by land,<sup>44</sup> and be performed in a shorter time; according to the experience of Marco Polo, who had lately sailed in those parts. Should his majesty incline to give his consent to their adopting that mode of conveyance, they were then to urge him to suffer the three Europeans, as being persons well skilled in the practice of navigation, to accompany

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<sup>41</sup> One of the wives of Hulagu, and mother of Ahmed-khan Nikodar (the uncle of Arghun), was named Kutai-khatun, of which Kogatın, (otherwise written Gogatim and Koganyın) may perhaps be a corruption. The word khatun, which signifies "lady," is very frequently annexed to, or forms parts of proper names, borne by Persian and Tartar women of rank.

<sup>42</sup> These wars must have taken place about the year 1289, and probably in the country of Mawara'nahr, or Transoxiana, amongst the descendants of Jagataï or Zagataï, whose history is particularly obscure; but there is reason to believe that they (or any of the Moghul princes) were seldom in a state of tranquillity. Troubles were also excited, nearer to China, by a younger brother of Kublaï, who attempted to dispute with him the right to the empire.

<sup>43</sup> What are here termed the East Indies must not be understood of the continent of India, but of some of the islands in the eastern archipelago, perhaps the Philippines, or possibly the coast of Tsiampa, or Champa, which, in another part of the work, our author speaks of having visited. The voyage here mentioned was subsequent to the grand and disastrous expedition which the active genius of Kublaï led him to fit out against the kingdom of Japan. It should be observed that the Latin and French texts, and the Italian published by Boni, say nothing of the ships, but merely state that he was returning from an embassy to India.

<sup>44</sup> The suggestion of this economical motive may seem extraordinary, but attachment to money was one of the weak parts of Kublaï's character, and the practices he adopted, or connived at, for raising it, have been the subject of much reprehension.

them until they should reach the territory of king Arghun. The grand khan upon receiving this application showed by his countenance that it was exceedingly displeasing to him, averse as he was to parting with the Venetians. Feeling nevertheless that he could not with propriety do otherwise than consent, he yielded to their entreaty. Had it not been that he found himself constrained by the importance and urgency of this peculiar case, they would never otherwise have obtained permission to withdraw themselves from his service. He sent for them, however, and addressed them with much kindness and condescension, assuring them of his regard, and requiring from them a promise that when they should have resided some time in Europe and with their own family, they would return to him once more. With this object in view he caused them to be furnished with the golden tablet (or royal chop), which contained his order for their having free and safe conduct through every part of his dominions, with the needful supplies for themselves and their attendants. He likewise gave them authority to act in the capacity of his ambassadors to the pope, the kings of France and Spain, and the other Christian princes.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time preparations were made for the equipment of fourteen ships, each having four masts, and capable of being navigated with nine sails,<sup>46</sup> the construction and rigging of which would admit of ample description; but, to avoid prolixity, it is for the present omitted. Among these vessels there were at least four or five that had crews of two hundred and fifty or two hundred and sixty men. On them were embarked the ambassadors, having the queen under their protection, together with Nicolo, Maffeo, and Marco Polo, when they had first taken their leave of the grand khan, who presented them with many rubies and other handsome jewels of great value. He also gave directions that the ships should be furnished with stores and provisions for two years.<sup>47</sup>

6. After a navigation of about three months, they arrived at an island which lay in a southerly direction, named Java,<sup>48</sup> where they saw various objects worthy of attention, of which notice shall be taken in the sequel of the work. Taking their departure from

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<sup>45</sup> In the Latin version it is said that he appointed ambassadors of his own to these monarchs to accompany the expedition; but as no allusion is afterwards made to such personages, although an obvious occasion (that of the mortality) presents itself, the Italian reading is considered as preferable.

<sup>46</sup>For the modern practice, in the northern part of China, and particularly on the Pe–ho, of rigging vessels intended to be employed in foreign voyages, with four masts, we have the authority of Barrow, who says: “It is impossible not to consider the notices given by this early traveller (Marco Polo) as curious, interesting, and valuable; and as far as they regard the empire of China, they bear internal evidence of their being generally correct. He sailed from China in a fleet consisting of fourteen ships, each carrying *four* masts, and having their holds partitioned into separate chambers ... We observed many hundreds of a larger description, that are employed in foreign voyages, all carrying *four* masts.”—*Travels in China*, p. 45. In the Latin version the words are, “quarum quaelibet habebat quatuor malos, et multæ ex illis ibant cum duodecim velis,”—“of which each had four masts, and many of them went with twelve sails.” It is well known that now Chinese vessels do not carry any kind of topsail.

<sup>47</sup> The sailing of this remarkable expedition from the Pe–ho, or river of Peking, we may infer, from circumstances mentioned in different parts of the work, to have taken place about the beginning of 1291, three years before the death of the emperor Kublaï, and four years previous to the arrival of the Polo family at Venice, in 1295.

<sup>48</sup> Some details of this part of the voyage are given in book iii. chap x., where the island here called Java, is termed Java minor, and is evidently intended for Sumatra. It will appear that they waited the change of the monsoon in a northern port of that island, near the western entrance of the straits of Malacca.

thence, they employed eighteen months in the Indian seas before they were enabled to reach the place of their destination in the territory of king Arghun;<sup>49</sup> and during this part of their voyage also they had an opportunity of observing many things, which shall, in like manner, be related hereafter. But here it may be proper to mention, that between the day of their sailing and that of their arrival, they lost by deaths, of the crews of the vessels and others who were embarked, about six hundred persons; and of the three ambassadors, only one, whose name was Goza, survived the voyage; whilst of all the ladies and female attendants one only died.<sup>50</sup>

Upon landing they were informed that king Arghun had died some time before,<sup>51</sup> and that the government of the country was then administered, on behalf of his son, who was still a youth, by a person of the name of Ki-akato.<sup>52</sup> From him they desired to receive instructions as to the manner in which they were to dispose of the princess, whom, by the orders of the late king, they had conducted thither. His answer was, that they ought to present the lady to Kasan,<sup>53</sup> the son of Arghun, who was then at a place on the borders of Persia, which has its denomination from the Arbor secco,<sup>54</sup> where an army of sixty thousand men was assembled for the purpose of guarding certain passes against the irruption of the enemy.<sup>55</sup> This they proceeded to carry into execution, and

<sup>49</sup> The place where the expedition ultimately arrived is not directly mentioned in any part of the work; but there are strong grounds for inferring it to have been the celebrated port of Ormuz. With respect to the prince named Arghun-khan, see note 2, on p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> This mortality is no greater than might be expected in vessels crowded with men unaccustomed to voyages of such duration, and who had passed several months at an anchorage in the straits of Malacca; and although it should have amounted to one-third of their whole number, the proportion would not have exceeded what was suffered by Lord Anson and other navigators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

<sup>51</sup> Arghun-khan, according to the authorities followed by De Guignes, died in the third month of the year 690 of the hejrah, answering to March in the year of our Lord 1291.

<sup>52</sup> The person here named Ki-akato, or Chiacato in the Italian orthography, and described as the ruler of the country in the name of the late king's son, was Kai-khatu, the second son of Abaka-khan, and consequently the brother of Arghun, upon whose death he is said to have seized the throne (although perhaps only as regent or protector), to the prejudice of his nephew, then a minor.

<sup>53</sup> The prince whose name is here written Kasan, or Casan, and by De Guignes Cazan, was Ghazan-khan, the eldest son of Arghun. He did not succeed to the throne of Persia until the end of the year 1295, nearly five years after the death of his father, who had sent him to reside in Khorasan, under the tutelage of an atabeg, or governor, named Nu-roz, by whose persuasion he afterwards embraced the Mussulman faith, and took the name of Mahmûd. It does not appear that he was molested in that province by his uncle Kai-khatu, and this recommendation, that the princess should be conveyed to him as the representative of his father, serves to show that they were not upon terms of actual hostility. It is further proved by the circumstance, that when, upon the murder of Kai-khatu, the government fell into the hands of Baidu (a grandson of Hulagu in a different line), and Ghazan marched with an army to Rey (Rages) to assert his hereditary claims, the first demand he made was, that the assassins of his uncle should be delivered up to him. After a doubtful struggle maintained during a period of eight months, the defection of his principal officers led to the destruction of the usurper, and Ghazan ascended the throne of Persia, about two years subsequently to the arrival of the princess, of whom nothing further is recorded.

<sup>54</sup> More circumstantial mention is made of this district, and of the tree from whence it is said to derive its appellation, in chap. xx. of this book.

<sup>55</sup> This is the important pass known to the ancients by the appellation of Portæ Caspiæ or Caspian Straits (to be distinguished from those of Derbend, as well as of Rudbar), and termed by Eastern geographers the Straits of Khovar,

having effected it, they returned to the residence of Ki-akato, because the road they were afterwards to take lay in that direction.<sup>56</sup> Here, however, they reposed themselves for the space of nine months.<sup>57</sup> When they took their leave he furnished them with four golden tablets, each of them a cubit in length, five inches wide, and weighing three or four marks of gold.<sup>58</sup> Their inscription began with invoking the blessing of the Almighty upon the grand khan,<sup>59</sup> that his name might be held in reverence for many years, and denouncing the punishment of death and confiscation of goods to all who should refuse obedience to the mandate. It then proceeded to direct that the three ambassadors, as his representatives, should be treated throughout his dominions with due honour, that their expenses should be defrayed, and that they should be provided with the necessary escorts. All this was fully complied with, and from many places they were protected by bodies of two hundred horse; nor could this have been dispensed with, as the government of Ki-akato was unpopular, and the people were disposed to commit insults and proceed to outrages, which they would not have dared to attempt under the rule of their proper sovereign.<sup>60</sup> In the course of their journey our travellers received

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or Khawr, from a Persian word, signifying a valley between two mountains, or from a small town near the eastern entrance which bears the same name. "This remarkable chasm," says Rennell, "is now called the strait or passage of Khowar (Chora of the ancients), from a town or district in the neighbourhood. It is situated at the termination of the great Salt Desert, almost due north from Ispahan, and about fifty miles to the eastward of the ruins of Rey (or Rages). Alexander passed through it in his way from Rages towards Aria and Bactria. Della Valle and Herbert amongst the moderns, and Pliny amongst the ancients, have described it particularly. It is eight miles through, and generally forty yards in breadth."—Geographical System of Herodotus examined and explained, p. 174, note.

<sup>56</sup>From the preceding part of the narrative we might be led to suppose the residence of Kai-khatu to have been in one of the southern provinces of Persia; but here, on the contrary, we find, that, conformably with the histories of the times, it lay in the route between the place where Ghazan was encamped, on the eastern side of the Caspian straits, and the country of Armenia, towards which our travellers were advancing. By D'Herbelot, De Guignes, and others, we are accordingly told that the capital of the princes of this dynasty was the city of Tauris or Tabriz, in Aderbijan, but that they frequently resided (especially in summer) at Hamadan, in Aljebal, in order to be nearer to the Syrian frontier.

<sup>57</sup> From what has been said in the preceding note, we may presume this place to have been Tabriz.

<sup>58</sup> The mark being eight ounces, the tablets must have been unnecessarily expensive and inconveniently ponderous. The other versions do not specify either weight or size, and some state them to be only two additional tablets.

<sup>59</sup> This shows that the sovereignty of the head of the family was still acknowledged by these branches, and Kai-khatu might have particular motives for courting its sanction. Ghazan is said to have been the first who renounced this slight species of vassalage, and probably did not send an ambassador to China to demand the investiture.

<sup>60</sup>In the conduct here described we have a proof of the general doubt entertained respecting his right to the throne, although the Moghul chiefs affected to consider it as dependent upon their election. The historians all agree in reprobating his habits as debauched and infamous, and these chiefs, indignant at being governed by a prince so corrupt, "equally hated by his subjects and despised by foreigners," resolved to remove him, and made an offer of the crown, not to Ghazan, whom they might think still too young, or too feeble in bodily frame, for their purpose, but to Baidu, a grandson of Hulagu, and cousin of the late king, who was then governor of Baghdad. A battle was fought, in which Kai-khatu, personally brave, found himself deserted by a principal officer who commanded a wing of his army, was defeated, and subsequently strangled. For a circumstantial detail of these transactions on the authority of Khondemir, see the *Bibliothèque Orientale*, under the article Baidu. See also the article Gangiatu, "que l'on trouve aussi nommé Caictu, et Caicatu." "Khondemir remarque que le véritable nom de ce prince étoit Aicatu, ou Gaicatu." We should learn from hence to hesitate before we condemn the orthography of our author, whose mode of writing this uncouth name differs so little, if at all, from some of these high authorities. It is a circumstance extremely remarkable, that one of the principal motives assigned for the revolt of the Moghul chiefs against this prince, was his having

intelligence of the grand khan (Kublāi) having departed this life;<sup>61</sup> which entirely put an end to all prospect of their revisiting those regions. Pursuing, therefore, their intended route, they at length reached the city of Trebizond, from whence they proceeded to Constantinople, then to Negropont,<sup>62</sup> and finally to Venice, at which place, in the enjoyment of health and abundant riches, they safely arrived in the year 1295. On this occasion they offered up their thanks to God, who had now been pleased to relieve them from such great fatigues, after having preserved them from innumerable perils. The foregoing narrative may be considered as a preliminary chapter, the object of which is to make the reader acquainted with the opportunities Marco Polo had of acquiring a knowledge of the things he describes, during a residence of so many years in the eastern parts of the world.

## CHAPTER II. OF ARMENIA MINOR—OF THE PORT OF LAIASSUS —AND OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PROVINCE.

In commencing the description of the countries which Marco Polo visited in Asia, and of things worthy of notice which he observed therein, it is proper to mention that we are to distinguish two Armenias, the Lesser and the Greater.<sup>63</sup> The king of the Lesser Armenia dwells in a city called Sebastoz,<sup>64</sup> and rules his dominions with strict regard to

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attempted to establish in his dominions a system of *paper-money*, like that of China.—De Guignes, *Hist. des Huns*, Liv. xvii. p. 267.

<sup>61</sup>Kublāi, whose name the Chinese pronounce Hupili or Hupilé, whilst in their annals they bestow on him that of Chi-tsu, was proclaimed grand khan in the year 1260, became emperor of China upon the destruction of the dynasty of the Song, who reigned in Manji or the provinces south of the great river Kiang, in 1280, and died in the beginning of 1294, at the age of eighty years. It is not surprising that the news of an event so important to all the tribes of Moghuls or Tartars should have found its way to the court of Persia, and consequently to our travellers, with extraordinary expedition.

<sup>62</sup>Their most direct route from Tabriz would have lain through Bedlis in Kurdistan to Aleppo, but at this time the sultans of Egypt, with whom the kings of Persia were continually at war, had possession of all the seaports of Syria, and would pay little respect to their passports. By the way of Georgia to Trebizond, on the Euxine, their land-journey was shorter and more secure, and when at that place they were under the protection of the Christian prince, whose family reigned in the small independent kingdom of Trebizond, from 1204 to 1462.

<sup>63</sup>This distinction of the Armenias into the Greater and the Lesser, is conformable to what we find in Ptolemy and the geographers of the middle ages; although other divisions have taken place since that part of Asia has been subject to the Ottoman empire. The Lesser Armenia is defined by Büsching as comprehending that part of Cappadocia and Cilicia which lies along the western side of the Greater Armenia, and also on the western side of the Euphrates. That in the days of Haiton it extended south of Taurus, and included Cilicia (*campestris*), which was not the case in more ancient times, we have the unexceptionable authority of that historian.

<sup>64</sup>As it appears from the passage quoted in the preceding note, as well as from other authorities, that Sis was the capital of the Lesser Armenia during the reigns of the Leons and Haitons, we are led to suppose the Sebastoz here mentioned to have been the ancient name of that city, or of one that stood on the same site. It is obvious, indeed, from the geography of Ptolemy, that there were many places in Asia Minor that bore the names of Sebastia, Sebaste, and Sebastopolis (besides one in Syria), and in his enumeration of the towns of Cilicia, we find a Sebaste, to which, in the



justice. The towns, fortified places, and castles are numerous. There is abundance of all necessaries of life, as well as of those things which contribute to its comfort. Game, both of beasts and birds, is in plenty. It must be said, however, that the air of the country is not remarkably healthy. In former times its gentry were esteemed expert and brave soldiers; but at the present day they are great drinkers, pusillanimous, and worthless. On the sea-coast there is a city named Laiassus,<sup>65</sup> a place of considerable traffic. Its port is frequented by merchants from Venice, Genoa, and many other places, who trade in spiceries and drugs of different sorts, manufactures of silk and of wool, and other rich commodities. Those persons who design to travel into the interior of the Levant,<sup>66</sup> usually proceed in the first instance to this port of Laiassus. The boundaries of the Lesser Armenia are, on the south, the Land of Promise, now occupied by the Saracens;<sup>67</sup> on the north, Karamania, inhabited by Turkomans; towards the north-east lie the cities of Kaisariah, Sevasta,<sup>68</sup> and many others subject to the Tartars; and on the western side it is bounded by the sea, which extends to the shores of Christendom.

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Latin translation, published at Venice in 1562, the epithet of “augusta” is annexed. Upon the foundations of this, Leon I. (from whom the country is called by the Arabians, Belad Leon, as well as Belad Sis), may have built the modern city, and the Greek name may have been still prevalent. We are told, however, that the city which preceded Sis, as the capital of Armenia Minor, was named Mesis, Massis, or Massissa, the ancient Mopsuestia, and it must be confessed that if authority was not in opposition to conjecture, the sound of these names might lead us to suppose that the modern name was only an abbreviation of Mes-sis, and Sebastoz a substitution for Mopsueste. In a subsequent part of the chapter the city of Sevasta or Sevaste, the modern Siwas or Sivas, is spoken of under circumstances that appear to distinguish it entirely from the Armenian capital; having been recently conquered by the Moghuls from the Seljuk princes.

<sup>65</sup> Lajazzo, or Añas, is situated in a low, morassy country, formed by the alluvion of the two rivers Sihon and Jihon (of Cilicia), and (as observed to me by Major Rennell) at the present mouth of the latter. Its trade has been transferred to Alexandretta or Scanderoon, on the opposite or Syrian side of the gulf.

<sup>66</sup> Levant is a translation of the word Anatolia or Anadoli, from the Greek *anatole* “ortus, oriens,” signifying the country that lies *eastward* from Greece. As the name of a region therefore it should be equivalent to Natolia, in its more extensive acceptation; and it is evident that our author employs it to denote Asia Minor. Smyrna is at present esteemed the principal port in the Levant, and the term seems to be now confined to the sea-coast and to mercantile usage.

<sup>67</sup> For the Land of Promise, or Palestine, which extends no further to the north than Tyre, is here to be understood Syria, or that part of it called Cælo-Syria, which borders on Cilicia or the southern part of Armenia Minor. As the more general denomination of Syria includes Palestine, and the latter name was, in the time of the Crusades, more familiar to Europeans than the former, it is not surprising that they should sometimes be confounded. The Saracens here spoken of were the subjects of the Mameluk sultans or soldans of Egypt, who recovered from the Christian powers in Syria, what the princes of the family of Saladin, or of the Ayubite dynasty, had lost. In other parts of the work the term is employed indiscriminately with that of Mahometan.

<sup>68</sup> The Turkomans of Karamania were a race of Tartars settled in Asia Minor, under the government of the Seljuk princes, of whom an account will be found in the following note. Kaisariah or Cæsarea, and Sevasta or Sebaste, the Sebastopolis Cappadociæ of Ptolemy and Siwas or Sivas of the present day, were cities belonging to the same dynasty, that had been conquered by the Moghuls in the year 1242.

**CHAPTER III.**  
**OF THE PROVINCE CALLED TURKOMANIA, WHERE ARE THE CITIES OF KOGNI,  
 K AISARIAH, AND SEVASTA, AND OF ITS COMMERCE.**

The inhabitants of Turkomania<sup>69</sup> may be distinguished into three classes. The Turkomans, who reverence Mahomet and follow his law, are a rude people, and dull of intellect. They dwell amongst the mountains and in places difficult of access, where their object is to find good pasture for their cattle, as they live entirely upon animal food. There is here an excellent breed of horses which has the appellation of Turki, and fine mules which are sold at high prices.<sup>70</sup> The other classes are Greeks and Armenians, who reside in the cities and fortified places, and gain their living by commerce and manufacture. The best and handsomest carpets in the world are wrought here, and also silks of crimson and other rich colours.<sup>71</sup> Amongst its cities are those of Kogni, Kaisariah, and Sevasta, in which last Saint Blaise obtained the glorious crown of martyrdom.<sup>72</sup> They are all subject to the great khan, emperor of the Oriental Tartars, who appoints governors to them.<sup>73</sup> We shall now speak of the Greater Armenia.

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<sup>69</sup>By Turkomania we are to understand, generally, the possessions of the great Seljuk dynasty in Asia Minor, extending from Cilicia and Pamphylia, in the south, to the shores of the Euxine sea, and from Pisidia and Mysia, in the west, to the borders of Armenia Minor; including the greater part of Phrygia and Cappadocia, together with Pontus, and particularly the modern provinces of Karamania and Rumiyah, or the country of Rûm. Of the former of these, the capital was Iconium, corrupted by the oriental writers to Kuniyah, and by those of the Crusades to Kogni; of the latter, Sebaste or Sebastopolis, corrupted to Siwas or Sivas. The chief from whom the dynasty of Seljuks derived its appellation, was by birth a Turkoman, of Turkistan, on the north-eastern side of the river Sihon or Jaxartes, but in the service of a prince of Khozar, on the Wolga, from which he fled and pursued his fortune in Transoxiana; as did some of his family in Khorasan. Having acquired great celebrity, they were at length enabled, by the means of numerous tribes of Turkomans who joined their standard, to establish a sovereignty, or, in point of extent, an empire, the principal seat of which was in Persia. Another branch, about the year 1080, wrested the fine provinces of Asia Minor from the Greek emperors, and formed the kingdom of which we are now speaking. Through its territory the Christian princes repeatedly forced their way in their progress to the Holy Land, and it is computed by historians that not fewer than six hundred thousand men perished in this preliminary warfare. At length the power of the Seljuks yielded to the overwhelming influence of the house of Jengiz-khan, and in our author's time they were reduced to insignificance; but from their ruins sprang the empire of the Ottomans, the founder of which had been in the service of one of the last sultans of Iconium.

<sup>70</sup> The pastoral habits of the Turkoman Tartars are preserved to this day, even in Asia Minor, and the distinction of their tribes subsists also. The Turki breed of horses is esteemed throughout the East, for spirit and hardiness.

<sup>71</sup> "Et ibi fiunt soriani et tapeti pulchriores de mundo et pulchrioris coloris" are the words of the Latin text.

<sup>72</sup>"Blaise, bishop of Sebasta, in Cappadocia, in the second and third centuries," says the Biographical Dictionary, "suffered death under Diocletian, by decapitation, after being whipped and having his flesh torn with iron combs ... It is difficult to say how the invention (of wool combing) came to be attributed to him; but it had probably no better origin than the circumstance of his being tortured with the instruments used in the combing of wool."

<sup>73</sup>It is the family of Hulagu, and the tribes who followed his standard from the north, whom our author always designates by the name of Oriental Tartars, to distinguish them from the descendants of Batu, who settled near the Wolga, on the north-western side of the Caspian, and extended their conquests towards Europe; whilst the former entered Persia from the Eastern quarter, by the way of Transoxiana and Khorasan.

**CHAPTER IV.  
OF ARMENIA MAJOR, IN WHICH ARE THE CITIES OF ARZINGAN, ARGIRON, AND  
DARZIZ—OF THE CASTLE OF PAIPURTH—OF THE MOUNTAIN WHERE THE ARK  
OF NOAH RESTED—OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PROVINCE—AND OF A  
REMARKABLE FOUNTAIN OF OIL.**

Armenia Major is an extensive province, at the entrance of which is a city named Arzingan,<sup>74</sup> where there is a manufacture of very fine cotton cloth called bombazines,<sup>75</sup> as well as of many other curious fabrics, which it would be tedious to enumerate. It possesses the handsomest and most excellent baths of warm water, issuing from the earth, that are anywhere to be found.<sup>76</sup> Its inhabitants are for the most part native Armenians, but under the dominion of the Tartars. In this province there are many cities, but Arzingan is the principal, and the seat of an archbishop; and the next in consequence are Argiron<sup>77</sup> and Darziz.<sup>78</sup> It is very extensive, and, in the summer season, the station of a part of the army of the Eastern Tartars, on account of the good

<sup>74</sup> Arzengân, or, as written by the Arabians, who have not the Persian g, Arzenjân, is a city near the frontier of Rumiya, but just within the limits of Armenia Major. "Cette ville," says D'Herbelot, "appartient plutôt à l'Arménie, et fut prise par les Mogols ou Tartares l'an 640 de l'Hégire, de J. C. 1242, après la défaite de Kaïkhosrou, fils d'Aladin le Selgiucide, aussi bien que les villes de Sébaste et de Césarée." By an oriental geographer it is said to be, "Oppidum celeberrimum, elegans, amœnum, copiosum bonis rebus, incolique: pertinens ad Armeniam: inter Rumæas provincias et Chalatam situm, haud procul Arzerroumo: esseque incolas ejus maïmam partem Armenios" Alberti Schultens Index Geographicus in Vitam Saladini. Josaphat Barbaro, a Venetian, who travelled into Persia, in the fifteenth century, speaks of Arzengân as a place that had formerly been of consequence, but was then mostly in ruins.

<sup>75</sup> The name of a species of cloth which I have here translated "bombazine," is in the Italian of Ramusio, "bochassini di bambagio," and in the Latin versions "buchiranus, buchyramis, and bucaramus." Its substance or texture is not clearly explained in our dictionaries. That of Cotgrave, printed in 1611, defines "boccasin," to be "a kind of fine buckram, that hath a resemblance of taffata, and is much used for lining; also the stuffe callimanco." But this, it is evident, cannot apply to a manufacture of bombagio or cotton; and the Vocabolario della Crusca, as well as the Glossary of Du Cange, speak of "bucherame bianchissima," and "bucherame bambagino," and both of them quote our author for the use of the word. All the examples convey the idea of fine, white, and soft cotton cloth; the reverse of what is now called buckram. The early Latin text speaks of boccorame and bambace as two distinct things.

<sup>76</sup> Natural warm baths are found in many parts of Asia Minor, and particularly near Ancyra, the modern Angora or Anguri, which are still much frequented. Their situation is denoted by the word Thermæ, in Rennell's map explanatory of the Retreat of the Ten thousand. They are also spoken of at Teflis in Georgia; but of their existence at Arzengân I have not been able to find notice in the works of the Eastern geographers.

<sup>77</sup> Argiron, or, in the Latin versions, Argyron, is a corruption of Arzerûm, Erzerûm, or Arzen er-rûm, a distinctive name given to a city called Arzen, as being the last strong place, in that direction, belonging to the Greek empire. "Arzerûm," says Abulfeda, "est extremus finis regionum Rumæorum ab oriente. In ejus orientali et septentrionali latere est fons Euphratis."

<sup>78</sup> Darziz, which in the Basle edition is Darzirim, in the older Latin, Arziu, and in the Italian epitomes, Arciri and Arziri, is the town now called Arjîs, situated on the border of the Lake Van, anciently named Arsis palus. "Argish," says Macdonald Kinneir, "is a town containing six thousand inhabitants, situated on the north-west side of the lake, three days' journey from Van. There are four islands in the lake, on one of which is an Armenian monastery, and three hundred priests." Memoir of the Persian Empire, pp. 328, 329. These places, it may be observed, lay in our author's returning route, from Tauris to Trebisond.

pasture it affords for their cattle; but on the approach of winter they are obliged to change their quarters, the fall of snow being so very deep that the horses could not find subsistence, and for the sake of warmth and fodder they proceed to the southward. Within a castle named Paipurth,<sup>79</sup> which you meet with in going from Trebisonde to Tauris, there is a rich mine of silver.<sup>80</sup> In the central part of Armenia stands an exceedingly large and high mountain, upon which, it is said, the ark of Noah rested, and for this reason it is termed the mountain of the ark.<sup>81</sup> The circuit of its base cannot be compassed in less than two days. The ascent is impracticable on account of the snow towards the summit, which never melts, but goes on increasing by each successive fall. In the lower region, however, near the plain, the melting of the snow fertilizes the ground, and occasions such an abundant vegetation, that all the cattle which collect there in summer from the neighbouring country, meet with a never-failing supply.<sup>82</sup> Bordering upon Armenia, to the south-west, are the districts of Mosul and Mardin, which shall be described hereafter, and many others too numerous to particularize. To the north lies Zorzania, near the confines of which there is a fountain of oil which discharges so great a quantity as to furnish loading for many camels.<sup>83</sup> The use made of it is not for the purpose of food, but as an unguent for the cure of cutaneous distempers in men and cattle, as well as other complaints; and it is also good for

<sup>79</sup> Paipurth, the Baiburt of D' Anville's and Rennell's maps, is situated among the mountains, in a northerly direction from Arzerûm. As the word *purt* signifies a castle in the Armenian language, and as the Arabian geographers, from not having the letter *p* in their alphabet, are obliged to substitute the *b*, it is probable that the former is the more genuine orthography. This castle is particularly noted by Josaphat Barbaro, who says, "Partendo d' essa (Trabisonde) per andar à Thaurisil primo luogo notabile che si trova, è uno castello in piano in una valle d' ognitorno circondata da monti, nominato Baiburth, castel forte e murato ... Cinque giornate piu in la, si trova Arsengan ... Poi si ritrova un castello nominato Carpurth."—*Viaggio in Persia*, p. 48, ed. 1545, 12mo.

<sup>80</sup> Although this particular mine may have been exhausted, silver mines are known to exist in this part of Armenia.

<sup>81</sup> The mountain of Armenia (the Ararat of Scripture) upon which the ark is believed by the Christians of that country to have rested, stands not far from the city of Erivan or Irwân. The Mahometans, however, assign to it a different situation. "L'opinion commune des Orientaux," says D'Herbelot, "est que l'arche de Noë s'arrêta sur la montagne de Gioudi, qui est une des croupes du mont Taurus ou Gordiæus en Arménie, et cette tradition est autorisée en ce pays—là par plusieurs histoires qui approchent fort de la fable." "Joudi," says Ibn Haukal, "is a mountain near Nisibin. It is said that the ark of Noah (to whom be peace,) rested on the summit of this mountain." Ouseley's translation, p. 60. Major Rennell observes, that Jeudi is the part of the Carduchian mountains opposite to the Jezirat ibn Omar, and that the dervishes keep a light burning there, in honour of Noah and his ark.

<sup>82</sup> This fertility of the country in the vicinity of the mountains, is noticed by Moses Chorenensis, who says, "Habet autem Araratia montes camposque, atque omnem fœcunditatem."—*Geographia*, p. 361.

<sup>83</sup> Springs of petroleum or earth (properly, rock) oil, are found in many parts of the world. The spring or fountain here spoken of is that of Baku in Shirvan, on the border of the Caspian. "Near to this place," says John Cartwright, in what are termed the Preacher's Travels, "is a very strange and wonderful fountain under ground, out of which there springeth and issueth a marvellous quantity of black oyl, which serveth all the parts of Persia to burn in their houses; and they usually carry it all over the country upon kine and asses, whereof you shall oftentimes meet three or four hundred in company."—*Oxford Coll. of Voyages*, vol. i. (vii.) p. 731. Strahlenberg speaks of this as a spring of white naphtha, which he distinguishes from the black sort of bitumen; but the most satisfactory account of both white and black naphtha in this district is given by Kæmpfer, in his *Amœnitates Exoticæ*, p. 274–281.

burning. In the neighbouring country no other is used in their lamps, and people come from distant parts to procure it.

**CHAPTER V.  
OF THE PROVINCE OF ZORZANIA AND ITS BOUNDARIES—OF THE PASS  
WHERE ALEXANDER THE GREAT CONSTRUCTED THE GATE OF IRON—AND OF  
THE MIRACULOUS CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING  
A FOUNTAIN AT TEFLIS.**

In Zorzania<sup>84</sup> the king is usually styled David Melik, which in our language signifies David the king.<sup>85</sup> One part of the country is subject to the Tartars, and the other part, in consequence of the strength of its fortresses, has remained in the possession of its native princes. It is situated between two seas, of which that on the northern (western) side is called the Greater sea (Euxine), and the other, on the eastern side, is called the sea of Abakù (Caspian).<sup>86</sup> This latter is in circuit two thousand eight hundred miles, and partakes of the nature of a lake, not communicating with any other sea. It has several islands, with handsome towns and castles, some of which are inhabited by people who fled before the grand Tartar, when he laid waste the kingdom or province of Persia,<sup>87</sup> and took shelter in these islands or in the fastnesses of the mountains, where they hoped to find security. Some of the islands are uncultivated. This sea produces abundance of fish, particularly sturgeon and salmon at the mouths of the rivers, as well as others of a large sort.<sup>88</sup> The general wood of the country is the box-tree.<sup>89</sup> I was told

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<sup>84</sup> By Zorzania is meant the kingdom of Georgia, bordering on Armenia, and of which Teflis was the capital. The substitution of the z for the soft g, belonged to the old Venetian dialect, in which the original of our author's work is understood to have been written, and the orthography has been preserved in some of the Latin, as well as in the vulgar Italian versions. The early Latin text reads Georgia.

<sup>85</sup> The name of David or Davit frequently occurs in the list of kings who have reigned in Georgia, and their predilection for it is traced to a very remote source. It is not surprising, therefore, that a traveller should suppose the names of the Georgian kings to have been, invariably, David. The title of Melik shows that our author's information was derived from Arabs or Moghuls, who would naturally substitute it for the native title of Meppe.

<sup>86</sup> The Caspian, which is generally termed by oriental writers the sea of Khozar, was also called by the Persians the sea of Baku, and by this name (Mar di Bachau) it appears in the maps to an edition of Ptolemy, printed at Venice in 1562. It derives the appellation from the celebrated city and port of Baku, on its south western coast.

<sup>87</sup> This refers to the conquest and devastation of Persia by the armies of Jengiz-khan, about the year 1221. The islands, to which it is not improbable a number of the wretched inhabitants fled for security, are at present uninhabited, or frequented only by fishermen.

<sup>88</sup> The fishery of the Caspian, especially about the mouths of the Wolga, has at all periods been important. "Among the great variety of fish with which this river abounds," says P. H. Bruce, "the sturgeon is none of the least considerable, whose eggs afford what the Russians call ikari, and we caviar: the beluga, or white fish, deserves also to be mentioned; they are from five to six yards long, and thick in proportion. Besides these it yields also the osotrin, another very large fish, very fat and delicious: this river also abounds with salmon sterlitz, a most delicious fish, and innumerable other sorts too tedious to mention."—Memoirs, p. 236. Strahlenberg also notices the beluja as "the largest eatable river-fish in the world, having seen one fifty-six feet in length, and eighteen in girth."—P. 337.

that in ancient times the kings of the country were born with the mark of an eagle on the right shoulder.<sup>90</sup> The people are well made, bold sailors, expert archers, and fair combatants in battle. They are Christians, observing the ritual of the Greek Church, and wear their hair short, in the manner of the Western clergy. This is the province into which, when Alexander the Great attempted to advance northwards, he was unable to penetrate, by reason of the narrowness and difficulty of a certain pass, which on one side is washed by the sea, and is confined on the other by high mountains and woods, for the length of four miles; so that a very few men were capable of defending it against the whole world. Disappointed in this attempt, Alexander caused a great wall to be constructed at the entrance of the pass, and fortified it with towers, in order to restrain those who dwelt beyond it from giving him molestation. From its uncommon strength the pass obtained the name of the Gate of Iron,<sup>91</sup> and Alexander is commonly said to have enclosed the Tartars between two mountains. It is not correct, however, to call the people Tartars, which in those days they were not, but of a race named Cumani,<sup>92</sup> with a mixture of other nations. In this province there are many towns and castles; the necessaries of life are in abundance; the country produces a great quantity of silk, and a manufacture is carried on of silk interwoven with gold.<sup>93</sup> Here are found vultures of a large size, of a species named *avigi*.<sup>94</sup> The inhabitants in general gain their livelihood by trade and manual labour. The mountainous nature of the country, with its narrow and

<sup>89</sup> By modern travellers the box-tree is merely enumerated amongst the vegetable productions of the country, without any notice of its prevalence; but by Ambrogio Cantareno, who travelled in the fifteenth century, it is more particularly distinguished. “Era in detta pianura,” he says, in speaking of Mingrelia, “di molti arbore in modo di bussi, ma molto maggiori.”—P. 65, 12mo.

<sup>90</sup> By this pretended tradition it may be understood that they were, or affected to be thought, a branch of the imperial family of Constantinople, who bore the Roman eagle amongst their insignia.

<sup>91</sup>This is the celebrated pass between the foot of Mount Caucasus and the Caspian sea, where stands the small but strong city of Derbend, called by the Arabs, Bab-al-abuab, or the “Gate of gates,” by the Turks, Demir-capi, or the “Gate of iron,” and by the Persians, Derbend, or the “Barrier,” between Georgia and the Persian province of Shirvan. “The natives in general are of opinion,” says P. H. Bruce, “that the city of Derbent was built by Alexander the Great, and that the long wall that reached to the Euxine, was built by his order, to prevent the incursions of the Scythians into Persia.”—Memoirs, p. 284. The wall is said to have been repaired by Yezdegerd II. of the Sassanian dynasty, who reigned about the middle of the fifth century, and again by Nushirvan, of the same family, who died in 579.

<sup>92</sup> The notices we have, respecting the people named Comani or Comanians, are in general obscure and vague. It appears, however, that in the thirteenth century they were the inhabitants of the countries lying on the north-western side of the Caspian, and extending from the Wolga towards the Euxine, who were afterwards subdued and supplanted by the Kapchak Tartars. “The Comans,” says Gibbon, “were a Tartar or Turkman horde which encamped in the XIth and XIIth centuries on the verge of Moldavia. The greater part were pagans, but some were Mahometans, and the whole horde was converted to Christianity (a.d. 1370) by Lewis, king of Hungary.”

<sup>93</sup> Some of the provinces of Georgia, as well as of Armenia and the adjoining parts of Persia, have in all ages been famous for the culture of the silk-worm and commerce in silk.

<sup>94</sup> I know not what species of vulture is here meant, nor can we be certain of the correctness of the orthography of the word *avigi*. That the country is noted for birds of this class, appears from the writings of several travellers. When Chardin arrived in Mingrelia he found it necessary to deceive the Turks by giving out that he was a merchant, whose object in visiting the country was to procure birds of prey for the European market.

strong defiles, have prevented the Tartars from effecting the entire conquest of it. At a convent of monks dedicated to Saint Lunardo, the following miraculous circumstances are said to take place. In a salt-water lake, four days' journey in circuit, upon the border of which the church is situated, the fish never make their appearance until the first day of Lent, and from that time to Easter-eve they are found in vast abundance; but on Easter-day they are no longer to be seen, nor during the remainder of the year. It is called the lake of Geluchalat.<sup>95</sup> Into the before-mentioned sea of Abakù, which is encompassed with mountains, the great rivers Herdil,<sup>96</sup> Geihon, Kur, and Araz, with many others disembogue. The Genoese merchants have recently begun to navigate it, and they bring from thence the kind of silk called *ghellie*.<sup>97</sup> In this province there is a handsome city named Teflis,<sup>98</sup> around which are suburbs and many fortified posts. It is inhabited by Armenian and Georgian Christians, as well as by some Mahometans and Jews;<sup>99</sup> but these last are in no great numbers. Manufactures of silks and of many other articles are carried on there. Its inhabitants are subjects of the great king of the Tartars.<sup>100</sup> Although we speak only of a few of the principal cities in each province, it is to be understood that there are many others, which it is unnecessary to particularise, unless they happen to contain something remarkable; but should the occasion present itself, these will be hereafter described. Having spoken of the countries bordering on Armenia to the north, we shall now mention those which lie to the south and to the east.

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<sup>95</sup> Within the proper boundaries of Georgia I am unable to identify this large salt-water lake of Gelu-chalat. Upon an island in that near Erivan, which D'Anville names Gheuk-sha ou Eau bleu, stands a very ancient monastery, which Chardin tells us was founded six hundred years before his time, or in the eleventh century, and must therefore have existed in our author's days; but on the other hand, its waters are described as being fresh and sweet, and it is separated from Georgia by a ridge of mountains. There is more reason for supposing it to be the lake now called Van or Wan, and formerly Arjish, although this lies still further within the boundary of Armenia. In its neighbourhood was situated a town of some celebrity, named Khalât and Akhlât. Its circumference is described by Abulfeda as being of four days' journey, and he says it is noted for a peculiar species of fish called tharnag, said to resemble the herring.

<sup>96</sup>By the Arabians and Turks the name of Etol is given to the Wolga, and it is here corrupted to Herdil. This river, according to Ibn Haukal, comes from the countries of Rûss and Bulgar, and at the season when its waters are collected, it is said to be greater than the river Jihun, rushing into the sea with such a body that it seems to conquer the waters of the Caspian. See Ouseley's translation, pp. 185—187. The names of Jihon or Oxus, Kur or Cyrus, and Araz or Araxes, do not require any particular remark.

<sup>97</sup> The province of Ghilan (called also al-Ghil), on the Caspian, being famous for its trade in silk, we can scarcely doubt that this word *ghellie* or *ghilli* was a name given to the article on that account; as florentine, a species of silk, has (or may be presumed to have) its appellation from Florence. The red silk of Ghilan is mentioned by Niebuhr; and Elphinstone, speaking of the trade of Caubul with Persia, says, "The imports are raw silk of Gheelaun and Resht, silken stuffs made at Yezd and Kashaun."—P. 295.

<sup>98</sup> For a particular account of the city of Teflis, the capital of Georgia, see Chardin, p. 220, fo. with the Plate. Our author's route from Tabriz to Trebisond did not carry him to this city, and there is reason to conclude that what little he says of it is from the report of others.

<sup>99</sup> In Chardin's time this city contained fourteen churches, of which six belonged to the Georgian, and eight to the Armenian Christians. Being then subject to the Persian government, frequent attempts were made by the Mahometans to erect mosques, but without success; the populace never failing to demolish the work.

<sup>100</sup> By the king of the (Moghul) Tartars must here be understood the descendant of Hulagu, who ruled over Persia and the neighbouring countries; not the grand khan.