

HENRY YULE & HENRI CORDIER

THE BOOK
OF SER MARCO POLO

THE VENETIAN,
CONCERNING THE KINGDOMS AND
MARVELS OF THE EAST

TRANSLATED AND EDITED, WITH
EXTENSIVE CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES, REFERENCES,
APPENDICES AND FULL INDEXES,
PRECEDED BY AN ANALYTICAL AND HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

THIRD EDITION,
REVISED THROUGHOUT IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT DISCOVERIES,
ACCOMPANIED BY A
SUPPLEMENT, CONTAINING ADDITIONAL NOTES AND ADDENDA

WITH
A MEMOIR OF HENRY YULE BY HIS DAUGHTER AMY FRANCES YULE
AND A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HIS WRITINGS

VOLUME II & SUPPLEMENT

pp. 1-xvii, 1-662, 1-x, 1-161



Munshiram Manoharlal
Publishers Pvt Ltd

original 1871 revised by Henry Cordier, 1903

"The trees 'hard by the plain,' to which the Tartars tied their horses, and in which the elephants were entangled, were in all probability in the corner below the 'rolling hills' marked in the chart. Very few trees remain, but in any case the grove would long ago have been cut down by the Chinese, as everywhere on inhabited plains. A short distance up the hill, however, groves of exceptionally fine trees are passed. The army, as it seems to us, must have entered the plain from its southernmost point. The route by which we departed on our way to Burmah would be very embarrassing, though perhaps not utterly impossible, for so great a number of elephants."—H. C.]

Between 1277 and the end of the century the Chinese Annals record three campaigns or expeditions against MIEN; viz. (1) that which Marco has related in this chapter; (2) that which he relates in ch. liv.; and (3) one undertaken in 1300 at the request of the son of the legitimate Burmese King, who had been put to death by an usurper. The Burmese Annals mention only the two latest, but, concerning both the date and the main circumstances of these two, Chinese and Burmese Annals are in almost entire agreement. Surely then it can scarcely be doubted that the Chinese authority is amply trustworthy for the *first* campaign also, respecting which the Burmese book is silent; even were the former not corroborated by the independent authority of Marco.

Indeed the mutual correspondence of these Annals, especially as to chronology, is very remarkable, and is an argument for greater respect to the chronological value of the Burmese Chronicle and other Indo-Chinese records of like character than we should otherwise be apt to entertain. Compare the story of the expedition of 1300 as told after the Chinese Annals by De Mailla, and after the Burmese Chronicle by Burney and Phayre. (See *De Mailla*, IX. 476 *seqq.*; and *J. A. S. B.* vol. vi. pp. 121-122, and vol. xxxvii. Pt. I. pp. 102 and 110.)

CHAPTER LIII.

OF THE GREAT DESCENT THAT LEADS TOWARDS THE KINGDOM OF MIEN.

AFTER leaving the Province of which I have been speaking you come to a great Descent. In fact you ride for two days and a half continually down hill. On all this descent there is nothing worthy of mention except only that there is a large place there where occasionally a great market is held; for all the people of the country round come thither on fixed days, three times a week, and hold a market there. They exchange gold for silver; for they have gold in abundance; and they give one weight of fine gold for five weights of fine silver; so this induces merchants to come from various quarters

bringing silver which they exchange for gold with these people; and in this way the merchants make great gain. As regards those people of the country who dispose of gold so cheaply, you must understand that nobody is acquainted with their places of abode, for they dwell in inaccessible positions, in sites so wild and strong that no one can get at them to meddle with them. Nor will they allow anybody to accompany them so as to gain a knowledge of their abodes.¹

After you have ridden those two days and a half down hill, you find yourself in a province towards the south which is pretty near to India, and this province is called AMIEN. You travel therein for fifteen days through a very unfrequented country, and through great woods abounding in elephants and unicorns and numbers of other wild beasts. There are no dwellings and no people, so we need say no more of this wild country, for in sooth there is nothing to tell. But I have a story to relate which you shall now hear.²

NOTE 1.—In all the Shan towns visited by Major Sladen on this frontier he found markets held *every fifth day*. This custom, he says, is borrowed from China, and is general throughout Western Yun-nan. There seem to be traces of this five-day week over Indo-China, and it is found in Java; as it is in Mexico. The Kakhyens attend in great crowds. They do *not* now bring gold for sale to Momein, though it is found to some extent in their hills, more especially in the direction of Mogaung, whence it is exported towards Assam.

Major Sladen saw a small quantity of nuggets in the possession of a Kakhyen who had brought them from a hill two days north of Bhamó. (*MS. Notes by Major Sladen.*)

NOTE 2.—I confess that the indications in this and the beginning of the following chapter are, to me, full of difficulty. According to the general style of Polo's itinerary, the 2½ days should be reckoned from Yung-ch'ang; the distance therefore to the capital city of Mien would be 17½ days. The real capital of Mien or Burma at this time was, however, Pagán, in lat. 21° 13', and that city could hardly have been reached by a land traveller in any such time. We shall see that something may be said in behalf of the supposition that the point reached was *Tagaung* or *Old Pagán*, on the upper Irawadi, in lat. 23° 28'; and there was perhaps some confusion in the traveller's mind between this and the great city. The descent might then be from Yung-ch'ang to the valley of the Shwéli, and that valley then followed to the Irawadi. Taking as a scale Polo's 5 marches from Tali to Yung-ch'ang, I find we should by this route make just about 17 marches from Yung-ch'ang to Tagaung. We have no detailed knowledge of the route, but there is a road that way, and by

CHAPTER IX.

CONCERNING THE ISLAND OF JAVA THE LESS. THE KINGDOMS OF
FERLEC AND BASMA.

WHEN you leave the Island of Pentam and sail about 100 miles, you reach the Island of JAVA THE LESS. For all its name 'tis none so small but that it has a compass of two thousand miles or more. Now I will tell you all about this Island.¹

You see there are upon it eight kingdoms and eight crowned kings. The people are all Idolaters, and every kingdom has a language of its own. The Island hath great abundance of treasure, with costly spices, lign-aloes and spikenard and many others that never come into our parts.²

Now I am going to tell you all about these eight kingdoms, or at least the greater part of them. But let me premise one marvellous thing, and that is the fact that this Island lies so far to the south that the North Star, little or much, is never to be seen!

Now let us resume our subject, and first I will tell you of the kingdom of FERLEC.

This kingdom, you must know, is so much frequented by the Saracen merchants that they have converted the natives to the Law of Mahommet—I mean the towns-people only, for the hill-people live for all the world like beasts, and eat human flesh, as well as all other kinds of flesh, clean or unclean. And they worship this, that, and the other thing; for in fact the first thing that they see on rising in the morning, that they do worship for the rest of the day.³

Having told you of the kingdom of Ferlec, I will now tell of another which is called BASMA.

When you quit the kingdom of Ferlec you enter upon that of Basma. This also is an independent kingdom, and the people have a language of their own; but they are just like beasts without laws or religion. They call themselves subjects of the Great Kaan, but they pay him no tribute; indeed they are so far away that his men could not go thither. Still all these Islanders declare themselves to be his subjects, and sometimes they send him curiosities as presents.⁴ There are wild elephants in the country, and numerous unicorns, which are very nearly as big. They have hair like that of a buffalo, feet like those of an elephant, and a horn in the middle of the forehead, which is black and very thick. They do no mischief, however, with the horn, but with the tongue alone; for this is covered all over with long and strong prickles [and when savage with any one they crush him under their knees and then rasp him with their tongue]. The head resembles that of a wild boar, and they carry it ever bent towards the ground. They delight much to abide in mire and mud. 'Tis a passing ugly beast to look upon, and is not in the least like that which our stories tell of as being caught in the lap of a virgin; in fact, 'tis altogether different from what we fancied.⁵ There are also monkeys here in great numbers and of sundry kinds; and goshawks as black as crows. These are very large birds and capital for fowling.⁶

I may tell you moreover that when people bring home pygmies which they allege to come from India, 'tis all a lie and a cheat. For those little men, as they call them, are manufactured on this Island, and I will tell you how. You see there is on the Island a kind of monkey which is very small, and has a face just like a man's. They take these, and pluck out all the hair except the hair of the beard and on the breast, and then they dry

d'Empoli also mentions them at Pedir in the beginning of the 16th century; and see *Pasei Chronicle* quoted in *J. As. sér. IV. tom. ix. pp. 258-259*. This speaks of elephants as used in war by the people of Pasei, and of elephant-hunts as a royal diversion. The *locus* of that best of elephant stories, the elephant's revenge on the tailor, was at Achin.

As Polo's account of the rhinoceros is evidently from nature, it is notable that he should not only call it unicorn, but speak so precisely of its one horn, for the characteristic, if not the only, species on the island, is a two-horned one (*Rh. Sumatranus*),* and his mention of the buffalo-like hair applies only to this one. This species exists also on the Indo-Chinese continent and, it is believed, in Borneo. I have seen it in the Arakan forests as high as 19° 20'; one was taken not long since near Chittagong; and Mr. Blyth tells me a stray one has been seen in Assam or its borders.

[Ibn Khordádhbeh says (*De Goeje's Transl. p. 47*) that rhinoceros is to be found in Kâmeroun (Assam), which borders on China. It has a horn, a cubit long, and two palms thick; when the horn is split, inside is found on the black ground the white figure of a man, a quadruped, a fish, a peacock or some other bird.—H. C.]

[John Evelyn mentions among the curiosities kept in the Treasury at St. Denis: "A faire unicorn's horn, sent by a K. of Persia, about 7 foote long." *Diary*, 1643, 12th Nov.—H. C.]

What the Traveller says of the animals' love of mire and mud is well illustrated by the manner in which the *Semangs* or Negritos of the Malay Peninsula are said to destroy him: "This animal . . . is found frequently in marshy places, with its whole body immersed in the mud, and part of the head only visible. . . . Upon the dry weather setting in . . . the mud becomes hard and crusted, and the rhinoceros cannot effect his escape without considerable difficulty and exertion. The Semangs prepare themselves with large quantities of combustible materials, with which they quietly approach the animal, who is aroused from his reverie by an immense fire over him, which being kept well supplied by the Semangs with fresh fuel, soon completes his destruction, and renders him in a fit state to make a meal of." (*J. Ind. Arch. IV. 426.*)† There is a great difference in aspect between the one-horned species (*Rh. Sondaicus* and *Rh. Indicus*) and the two-horned. The Malays express what that difference is admirably, in calling the last *Bâdak-Karbû*, "the Buffalo-Rhinoceros," and the *Sondaicus Bâdak-Gajah*, "the Elephant-Rhinoceros."

The belief in the formidable nature of the tongue of the rhinoceros is very old and wide-spread, though I can find no foundation for it but the rough appearance of the organ. ["His tongue also is somewhat of a rarity, for, if he can get any of his antagonists down, he will lick them so clean, that he leaves neither skin nor flesh to cover his bones." (*A. Hamilton, ed. 1727, II. 24. M.S. Note of Yule.*) Compare what is said of the tongue of the Yak, I. p. 277.—H. C.] The Chinese have the belief, and the Jesuit Lecomte attests it from professed observation of the animal in confinement. (*Chin. Repos. VII. 137; Lecomte, II. 406.*) [In a Chinese work quoted by Mr. Groeneveldt (*T'oung Pao, VII. No. 2, abst. p. 19*) we read that "the rhinoceros has thorns on its tongue and always eats the thorns of plants and trees, but never grasses or leaves."—H. C.]

The legend to which Marco alludes, about the Unicorn allowing itself to be ensnared by a maiden (and of which Marsden has made an odd perversion in his translation, whilst indicating the true meaning in his note), is also an old and general one. It will be found, for example, in Brunetto Latini, in the *Image du Monde*, in the *Mirabilia* of Jordanus,‡ and in the verses of Tzetzes. The latter represents Monoceros as attracted not by the maiden's charms but by her perfumery. So he is

inveigled and blindfolded by a stout young knave, disguised as a maiden and drenched with scent:—

"'Tis then the huntsmen hasten up, abandoning their ambush;
Clean from his head they chop his horn, prized antidote to poison;
And let the docked and luckless beast escape into the jungles."

—V. 399, *seqq.*

In the cut which we give of this from a mediæval source the horn of the unicorn is evidently the tusk of a *narwhal*. This confusion arose very early, as may be seen from its occurrence in Aelian, who says that the horn of the unicorn or *Kartawôn* (the Arab *Karkaddan* or Rhinoceros) was not straight but twisted (*ελεγμοὺς ἔχον τινός*, Hist. A. xvi. 20). The mistake may also be traced in the illustrations to Cosmas Indicopleustes from his own drawings, and it long endured, as may be seen in Jerome Cardan's description of a unicorn's horn which he saw suspended in the church of St. Denis; as well as in a circumstance related by P. della Valle (II. 491; and Cardan, *de Varietate*, c. xcvi.). Indeed the supporter of the Royal arms retains the narwhal horn. To this popular error is no doubt due the reading in Pauthier's text, which makes the horn *white* instead of black.



Monoceros and the Maiden.*

We may quote the following quaint version of the fable from the *Bestiary* of Philip de Thauun, published by Mr. Wright (*Popular Treatises on Science, etc. p. 81*):

"Monoceros est Beste, un corne ad en la teste,
Purce ad si a nun, de buc ad façun;
Par Pucele est prise; or vez en quel guise.
Quant hom le volt cacer et prendre et enginner,
Si vent hom al forest ï sis riparis est;
Là met une Pucele hors de sein sa mamele,
Et par odurement Monoceros la sent;
Dunc vent à la Pucele, et si baiset la mamele,
En sein devant se dort, issi vent à sa mort
Li hom suivent atant ki l'ocit en dormant
U trestout vif le prent, si fais puis sun talent.
Grant chose signifie."

And so goes on to moralise the fable.

NOTE 6.—In the *J. Indian Archip. V. 285*, there is mention of the *Falco Malaiensis*, black, with a double white-and-brown spotted tail, said to belong to the ospreys, "but does not disdain to take birds and other game."

* Another mediæval illustration of the subject is given in *Les Arts au Moyen Age*, p. 499, from the binding of a book. It is allegorical, and the Maiden is there the Virgin Mary.

* Marsden, however, does say that a one-horned species (*Rh. sondaicus* ?) is also found on Sumatra (3rd ed. of his *H. of Sumatra*, p. 116).

† An American writer professes to have discovered in Missouri the fossil remains of a bogged mastodon, which had been killed precisely in this way by human contemporaries. (See *Lubbock, Fresh Times*, 2d ed. 279.)

‡ *Trevis*, p. 253; *N. and E.*, V. 263; *Jordanus*, p. 43.