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Edited by Henry Yule
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Cathay and the Way Thither

The publications of the Hakluyt Society (founded in 1846) made available edited (and sometimes translated) early accounts of exploration. The first series, which ran from 1847 to 1899, consists of 100 books containing published or previously unpublished works by authors from Christopher Columbus to Sir Francis Drake, and covering voyages to the New World, to China and Japan, to Russia and to Africa and India. This volume, first published in 1866, is the first of two compilations edited by Colonel Henry Yule on contacts with China before the discovery of sea routes to the east. Yule's detailed introductory essay surveys the history of European contacts with the east, beginning with the Greek geographers and going up to the thirteenth century. He then presents the narratives of the Franciscan Odoric of Pordenone and other missionary friars in the fourteenth century.

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Cathay and the Way Thither

*Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of
China*

VOLUME 1

EDITED BY HENRY YULE



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Bas-relief of Odoric from the Shrine at Udine. See p. 16.

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CATHAY
AND THE WAY THITHER;

BEING A COLLECTION OF

MEDIEVAL NOTICES OF CHINA,

TRANSLATED AND EDITED

BY

COLONEL HENRY YULE, C.B.,

LATE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS (BENGAL).

WITH A

PRELIMINARY ESSAY

ON THE INTERCOURSE BETWEEN CHINA AND THE WESTERN NATIONS
PREVIOUS TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE CAPE ROUTE.

—
VOL. I.
—

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY.

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“Sed si aliqua scribimus propter noticiam legentium quæ in partibus vestris nesciuntur, non debetis propter hoc nos appellare mendaces, qui vobis referimus illa quæ ipsi vidimus vel ab aliis pro certo audivimus quos esse credimus fide dignos. Imo est valde crudele ut homo propter bonum quod facit ab aliis infametur.”—*Joannis de Plano Carpini Prologus*.

—“Such also is the case with Geography. For the experience of ages confesses that many of the outlying tracts of the earth remain excluded from the bounds of accurate knowledge, owing to the difficulty of penetrating regions of such vast extent; whilst some countries are very different from the descriptions that have been given of them on the faith of travellers' tales too uncritically accepted, and others, through the partial operation of revolutions and catastrophes, are no longer what they used to be. Hence it is needful, as a general rule, to abide by the most recent accounts that we possess, keeping an eye, however, all the while, upon the statements of older authors, and on what can be critically educed from their narratives, so as to form some judgment as to what is worthy of credit and what is not.”—*The Geography of Claudius Ptolemy*, i, 5.

“Wherefore the task we have undertaken is a double one: first, to preserve the opinions of our author in their integrity, so far as they call for no correction; secondly, where he has failed in making things clear, to set forth the correct view to the best of our ability from the narratives that are accessible to us, and from the data afforded by more accurate maps.”—*Id.*, i, 19.

“VELLERAQUE VT FOLIIS DEPECTVNT TENVIA SERES
In Arrgyl: See from Foliões of olde Travells
He Scrjbe his slender China Barnes unravells
And rudelic webeth them with Notes and Queries.”

ANON.

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DEDICATION AND PREFACE.

TO

SIR RODERICK IMPEY MURCHISON, BART., K.C.B.,

ETC. ETC. ETC.

PRESIDENT OF THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY.

DEAR SIR RODERICK,

I am happy to be allowed to inscribe to you, from whom I have experienced no little kindness, this book, which endeavours to throw some light on the medieval geography of Asia. The subject, at least, needs no apology to one who is the honoured President of the Geographical as well as of the Hakluyt Society; for he has the best right of any man to say, "*nihil geographicum a me alienum puto.*"

The work was originally designed to embrace only the story of Friar Odoric, and perhaps of one more traveller; but seeing how much light the various fragments of minor medieval writers concerning China threw upon one another and upon Marco Polo, and how little known several of them were to English readers, it seemed desirable to gather all into one collection, edited as thoroughly as my capacities admitted. I never ventured to think of introducing Marco himself into the group. There is room enough, probably,

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for a new English edition of that prince of medieval travellers; but he claims an orbit for himself, and has no place among these asteroids. What is aimed at in these volumes is a work that shall bear some such relation to Polo as the collections of the lesser Greek geographers bear to Ptolemy.

When this task was entered on, I was more within reach of necessary aids than circumstances known to you have of late permitted, or it would scarcely have been attempted. All the reading accessible to me has, indeed, been directed to the illustration of my authors; but Palermo is not London or Paris; and the absence of some capital authority has often stopped me short in the investigation of a difficulty, just as a traveller, in projecting a complex journey, is stopped short by a black bar in the columns of his railway-guide.

I am painfully sensible also, that, in regard to many subjects dealt with in the following pages, nothing can make up for the want of genuine oriental learning. A fair familiarity with Hindustani for many years, and some reminiscences of elementary Persian, have been useful in their degree; but it is probable that they may sometimes also have led me astray, as such slender lights are apt to do.

Of the authors dealt with, Odoric, Ibn Batuta, and Goës, are already more or less accessible to English readers; the first from old Hakluyt's version, the second from Lee's translation of an Arabic abridgment, and the third from the narrative in Astley's collection.

Since the last work was published, however, a hun-

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dred and twenty years have past, and our knowledge of the regions traversed by the gallant Jesuit, though still exhibiting considerable gaps, has been greatly extended; whilst the other two travellers have never, so far as I know, been systematically edited; *i.e.*, with some endeavour to accompany their narratives with a commentary which should aim at identifying the places visited by them, and at the elucidation or condemnation of their statements.

In regard to Ibn Batuta, "mine Arabike," as John Bunyan says of his Latin, "I borrow"; not, however, from Lee, but from the unabridged travels as rendered into French by MM. Defrémery and Sanguinetti. Though the version is thus borrowed, the commentary is not; and it is certainly my belief that by it some new light is thrown on this curious traveller.

Of the other authors here laid under contribution the vain and garrulous but truthful John de' Marignolli is the most conspicuous. He has been incidentally cited by Sir Emerson Tennent, whom little escapes; but otherwise he is, I believe, almost unknown in England.

Each of the authors, however, will present his credentials in the proper place, before telling his story; and it is not needful to say more here regarding them individually.

For repetitions occurring in the text, I need not apologise; they are inevitable in what is a collection, not a selection. But it is to be feared that repetitions occur also sometimes in the notes, and for these I beg

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indulgence. In addition to my great distance from the printer, circumstances rendered it necessary to send the first sheets to the press many months before the later sections were ready; and thus it has been impossible to give the whole work a consistent revision.

Several kind friends have taken trouble in making references for me, or in answering questions bearing on the work. I beg all to accept my warm thanks; but I will only name here Mr. Major and Mr. Markham, who have also in turn been good enough to see the revised proofs through the press.

I trust that my own labour, which has been considerable, may not have been in vain. I have tried to present pretty fully one special aspect of a great subject which in all ages has had a peculiar fascination. We can see that the ancients felt something of this charm attaching to the dim legends which reached them across the length of Asia about the SERES dwelling in secluded peace and plenty on the shores of the Eastern Ocean. The vast multiplication of manuscripts and translations of Polo and Odoric, and of Odoric's plunderer Mandeville, shows how medieval Christendom experienced the same attraction in the tales which those travellers related of the vast population, riches, arts, and orderly civilisation of CATHAY. The charm rekindled when the Portuguese discoveries revealed CHINA, and many marvelled with an eccentric Jesuit why God had bestowed such bounties on a hive of pagans;¹ a charm which nearly three centuries of

¹ "Cur Deus tot bonis infidelem sibi Chinam beaverit?"
Kircher, China Illustrata, p. 165.

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partial knowledge scarcely quenched. Familiarity of late years has had something of its proverbial result ; and closer examination of a civilisation in decay has discerned how much rottenness now exists at the core of the vast and fantastic structure.

When we see communities that have long passed the zenith of their civilisation and genius going down simultaneously in population and in moral power, there seems little of mystery in their future. But in regarding a country like China, in which moral and intellectual decay and disorganisation have been accompanied by an increase of population so vast as to amount to nearly a third of the world's inhabitants, the field of speculation as to its destiny is dark indeed. Though under forms sometimes doubtless most imperfect, the influences of Christianity, the Divine Regenerator of the nations, have entered China on at least three several occasions. Twice they appear to have been choked and extinguished ; on another occasion we have seen them perverted to the purposes of a vast imposture. The future is with God. Of the clouds that are gathering round the world's horizon China has its share. The empire which has a history coeval with the oldest of Chaldæa seems to be breaking up. It has often broken up before and been reconstituted ; it has often been conquered, and has either thrown off the yoke or absorbed its conquerors. But *they* derived what civilisation they possessed from the land which they invaded. The internal combustions that are now heaving the soil come in contact with

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new and alien elements of Western origin. Who can
guess what shall come of that chemistry?

I am,
Dear Sir Roderick,
Yours with much regard,
H. YULE.

Palermo, July 23rd, 1866.

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E R R A T A

Minor and Typographical. (For more material corrections, see p. ccxl seq.)

- Passim*; for *Remusat*, *Assemanni*, *Masudi*, *Sir H. Elliott*, read *Rémusat*, *Assemani*, *Mas'ūdī*, *Elliot*.
- P. xxxiii, fifth line of motto, for *été*, read *éte*.
- P. xlvi, line 13, after *relate*, insert *as*.
- P. xlix, § 23, line 2, for *Tzintiza*, read *Tzinitza*.
- P. lviii, line 8, for *account*, read *accounts*.
- P. lx, near middle, for *Petzigaudius*, read *Petzigaudias*.
- P. lxxii, § 49, line 8, for *Fathian*, read *Fahian*.
- P. lxxv, last line, for *Jahanghir*, read *Shah Jahan*.
- P. lxxvii, line 2, for (*Dwara*)=*Samundra*, read (*Dwara*) *Samundra*.
- P. cix, line 13-14, for *This work*, read *His work*.
- P. clxxx, Note 1, twice, for *Ephthalites*, read *Ephthalites*.
- P. clxxxiv is paginated as clxxxvi.
- P. cccxxxix, near bottom, *Karmisin*. *Kirmesin* was a city from whose ruins arose Kermanshah (see *Rawlinson* in *J. R. G. S.*, ix, 42).
- P. 14, line 7, for *Beato*, read *Beata*.
- P. 49, near bottom, for *Desguignes*, read *Deguignes*.
- P. 114, last line, and p. 115, note 3, read *Mas'ūdī*-*al-Absār*.
- P. 139, third last line, for *Martin*, read *Martini*.
- P. 206, 4th parag. from below, for *Theophylactes*, read *Theophylactus*.
- P. 217, 8th line from below, for *latter*, read *former*.
- P. 218, in the third Persian word the vowel-mark has been reversed.
- P. 227, note, line 3, dele *five*.
- P. 240, note, for *malestouttes*, read *—toultes*.
- P. 304, second last line, *Burns*, read *Burnes*.
- P. 326, In quotation at bottom, for *bulza*, read *balza*.
- P. 335, last note, for *Benedict XI*, read *X*.
- P. 359, middle of page, for *end of fourth*, read *beginning of fifth*.
- P. 377, 4th line from end of first parag. of note, for *Baldi*, read *Balbi*.
- P. 400, second paragraph, for *Kishm*, read *K'ish*.
- P. 448, paragraph o, fourth line, for *Polonius*, read *Polonus*.
- P. 453, third paragraph from below, in *preceding note A*, dele *A*.
- P. 457, eight lines from bottom of text, for *ul*, read *al*.
- P. 468 and 470, for *Dhahir*, read *Zahir*.
- P. 494 and 495, for *Ul Bushri*, read *Al-Bushri*.
- P. 476, third line from below, for *Vas*, read *Vasa*.
- P. 517, third line of fourth paragraph, put a comma after *Silhet*.
- P. 519, line 22, for *application*, read *appellation*.
- P. 526, note 1, for *Haidar Razi*, read *Mahomet Haidar*.
- P. 549, title, after "*Chapters XI, XII, XIII*," insert *of Book I*.
- P. 564, for *Trigantius*, read *Trigautius*.

Additional Erratum.

The quotation at p. 246, note 1, is misprinted. It should run

“Con più color sommesse e soprapposte
Non fêr mai in drappo Tartari nè Turchi,
Nè fur tai tele per Aracne imposte;”

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