

# MARCO POLO DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED IN THE FELICITATION VOLUMES OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

By

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It has long been my wish to fulfil the intention set-down in my letter to the President of The Siam Society of 24th August 1965, namely, to record an interpretation, in English, of the documents pertaining to Marco Polo given to me by Louis A. Rossi of San Jose, California, on the 10th July 1963.

The documents, figs. 1 to 6, are illustrated in Felicitation Volume II of 7th November 1965, BE 2508.\*

I should like to make it clear at the outset that the documents referred to came from the 'Home Archives' of Marcian F. Rossi of San Jose, California, but the negatives were mailed to me with a letter by his son Louis A. Rossi. Later, an explanation will be given of how Mr. Rossi senior came to be in possession of these and other documents concerning Marco Polo.

The first indication that maps and documents existed in the Rossi archives connected with the name of Marco Polo, came from the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. in 1933. The Library had only received by then photostat copies. Later on, however, the donor presented the Library with two maps, giving them ownership rights. One of the maps was selected by the Library<sup>(1)</sup> as being of undoubted authenticity.

This map is known as the "Map with Ship" and appears in my Marco Polo documents under Fig.1. It shows parts of India, China, Japan and North America. An expert in the Library of Congress considers it to be a 17th century copy of a 14th century map.<sup>(2)</sup> The script on the left of the map and below the drawing of the ship suggests Venetian Italian<sup>(3)</sup> and the translation is "Marco Polo; I. India and the

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\* The Felicitation Volumes of Southeast Asian Studies presented to His Highness Prince Dhani-nivat Kromamun Bidyalabh Bridhyakorn Honorary President The Siam Society on the occasion of His Eightieth Birthday.

1. The selection was made by Col. Lawrence Martin—then Chief of the Maps Division.
2. Beyond question the "Map with Ship" shows Alaska and the possibility has been considered that its maker discovered or had knowledge of Chinese or Saracen discovery of North Western North America.
3. William Jerome Wilson, formerly of The Library of Congress, translated the script on the left of the map and his reason for putting it down to Venetian Italian was the use in some words of the letter 'z' instead of the letters 'gi'.

adjacent islands according to what the Saracens say; II. Cattigara (Canton) of Tartary (China), islands of Japan and adjacent islands; III. Peninsula of the Sea Lions (Kamchatka), IV. Islands connected with the Peninsula of the Deer<sup>(4)</sup> (Aleutian Islands and Alaska) situated 2 to 4 hours of difference (of time; i.e. longitude) from the walled Provinces of Tartary (i.e. walled China)".

Referring to the two lines of Chinese Characters on the right side of the map, oriental scholars in the Library of Congress<sup>(5)</sup> have found these to be unintelligible. This confirms my interpretation and that of Professor F.W. Mote on page 347 of "A Note on Three Polo Maps" – Felicitation volumes, Vol. II.

The leaf design at the border of the drawing of the ship is characteristic of the 13th or 14th century.<sup>(6)</sup>

Up to now, it is said that characters resembling Arabic can be seen on the face of the Map. And, on the frame of the Map, indistinct writing is discernible representing lines remaining from a text which has been scratched away. Concerning the former, a satisfactory translation has not yet been made. In the latter case the faint lettering is in the process of ultraviolet and infrared photographic treatment.

Leo Bagrow's "The Maps from the Home Archives of the descendants of a friend of Marco Polo" in *Imago Mundi* 5 (1948): 3-13 confirms the aforementioned information about the "Map with Ship", and was obtained from the Annual Report of The Library of Congress, fiscal year ending June 30, 1943.

It might be helpful to introduce briefly, Marco Polo's immediate family as they play an important part in this study.

Marco married Donata, daughter of Vittale Bodoer and had three daughters Fantina, Bellela and Moreta. Marco's death is given as 1328. The daughters Fantina and Bellela were married before Marco died. Bellela died in the early 1330s. Fantina died in about 1375-80. Moreta died about 1375.

Marco Polo's daughters were undoubtedly confidants of their father when he narrated incidents from his travels. Whether the stories told by Marco were faithfully retold, in the course of time, is open to question. In this respect it must be said that

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4. It is within the bounds of possibility that Marco Polo, who returned to Venice in 1295, brought to Europe the first knowledge of the existence of North America, other than that acquired by the Norse explorers. This observation is taken from the Report of The Librarian of Congress 1943.
  5. Arthur W. Hummel of The Library of Congress and Chinese colleagues examined the Chinese Characters and concluded as stated in the text.
  6. Leicester B. Holland, Chief of Division of Fine Art of The Library, gave this as his considered opinion.

when it came to put it in writing the authors inclined to embellish the narrative. For instance, on Marco Polo's voyage to the Extreme Orient, which is our particular interest, all three daughters mention an island where a gold masked king was attended by thousands of damsels and again certain islands which were inhabited only by females. Marco Polo's own record, my Fig.6, fails to confirm his daughters' 'flight of fancy', in this respect.

**A POLO CHRONICLE (WITH MAP)**  
**FIG. 2 OF MY DOCUMENTS.**

“The journey made by Maffeo, Nicolo and Marco Polo in 1271 from Venice to Acra in Persia and as far as Cambaluc in Tartary took them over mountains and through valleys. On the way they visited many cities. In practically all of them a temple was found where the Buddha was seated in a cross-legged position.

“When Marco was able to speak the Tartar language he was summoned by the King who conferred his favour on him, honouring him with the title of ‘Summu Nauticu’ – Highest Navigator. Thereafter he sailed the sea as far as the Extreme Orient, finally reaching a long peninsula surrounded by seals<sup>(7)</sup>. This peninsula is joined to a great land called Serica. Here every woman is ‘arcador’<sup>(8)</sup> and every man is ‘arcador’ of the King Gold-Mask. Because of the cold, people live in round houses. The King of this land invited Marco Polo to his chamber where he was received with great courtesy. From the King, Marco Polo took a Golden Mask to the King in Tartary. After this presentation, the latter made Marco Polo Governor of a Province<sup>(9)</sup>.

“A Syrian navigator<sup>(10)</sup> in the service of Marco said that the peninsula was situated 8 points of hourly difference (i.e. longitude) from Mauritania in the Atlantic and more than two hours from Tartary from where, at one time, the people of the peninsula emigrated when Hia was in power. On their arrival they named the land in the Mongolian language Foxxa or Seal Marine”.

Moreta Polo – Venice 1338

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7. Peninsula of the Sea Lions said to be Kamchatka.
  8. ‘Arcador’ or Archer.
  9. The province of Yanju (Yangchow),—city in Manji in the valley of the Yangtse River about 120 miles from the delta,—Marco Polo governed there for three years.
  10. Biaxo Sirdomap, a Syrian Pilot and merchant, was probably one of a number of Saracens in Marco Polo’s service during his sea voyages.

*Note:* The map itself was first published in *Imago Mundi* 5 (1948) : 3-13 by Leo Bagrow and is divided into sections of 10° each, in a grid lay-out, from the Fortunate Islands<sup>(11)</sup> to the eastern coast of Asia. An indistinct note outside the left frame of the *Imago Mundi* map refers to 10° sections.

The names on the face of the map indicate, in a wide sense, India, the span of the Ganges, China and Cattigara, the latter in all these documents is regarded as being Canton.

The Chinese characters on the right hand side of the map appear to be blind copying by someone unfamiliar with Chinese script. In the "Map with Ship" as in this map, the reason for the writing in Chinese has yet to be explained.

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11. The Fortunate or Canary Islands, the farthest land then reported in the West. Ptolemy (arguing against the opinion of his predecessor Marinus of Tyre) convinced himself that the known world occupied precisely and neatly half the circuit of the globe from west to east, so he numbered off his meridians from 0° to 180°, beginning from the farthest land reported in the west. The Arabs too reckoned they only had to deal with 180°.

**A POLO CHRONICLE (WITH MAP)****FIG. 3 OF MY DOCUMENTS**

"Sailing from the Canaries (Fortunate Islands) off the North African coast in the Atlantic, towards Tartary or Serica and then steering for the Seal Marine Peninsula, the distance is more than 8 hours" i.e. in degrees longitude 18 sections of 10° per section (Ptolemy's oecumene). Referring to the location of the Seal Marine Peninsula in relation to Europe, Fantina's text concluded "When it is evening in Europe it is the following day in the place".

Fantina Polo, Venice 1329

*Note:* On the face of the map, Roman numerals I to VII give the geographical position of countries and places. These numbers are used below the frame of the maps, coupled with place name as follows: I. Canaries; II. India; III. Bactaria (Serica); IV. Cipangu (Japan); V. Varn Scian (Kamchatka Seal Peninsula); VI. DA QUI (Aleutian Islands); connected with the Peninsula of the Deer; VII. Fera (Alaska)<sup>(12)</sup>.

The maps in Figs. 2 and 3 are similar, differing only in nomenclature and the former having inexplicable Chinese characters.

As to the age of these maps<sup>(13)</sup> – it seems quite certain that the north eastern part of Asia was not on the original, but on examination, the map itself was either drawn early in the 14th century or it was copied two or three centuries later from the one then drawn.

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12. Even ordinary words underwent the most strange corruptions in copying and much more so, names of persons and places unfamiliar to the scribe.
  13. The opinion given on the age of these maps is that of Col. Lawrence Martin, former Chief of Maps Division, Library of Congress.

## A POLO CHRONICLE

### FIG. 4 OF MY DOCUMENTS

"I shall tell you of Marco Polo's journey to the realm of females in China and to the Far East, and all that he saw there with his own eyes". This was written by his daughter Bellela based on what her father told her.

"During this time, Marco Polo was known in all China for his services to Fasur, the Emperor. The wife of Fasur, Queen of women in Manji territory, entrusted him with a message to Fusin, Queen of females in the Extreme East. To accomplish this, he set sail in a big ship with twenty Chinese and Saracen sailors from the Gulf of Manji. After passing a chain of islands within the gulf he reached the open sea from which point he set sail eastward. Suddenly there arose such a terrible storm that the compass needle swung from side to side compelling him to sail to the north of a chain of islands enclosed by the sea and stretching east as far as a peninsula. Here Marco Polo disembarked twenty eight days after leaving China. At this place he met a Syrian, a merchant named Sirdomap, a trader in skins, who expressed great joy on his arrival. The merchant had been buying skins there for 30 years at least and on many occasions, as far as another peninsula towards the north-east called Marine Seal which is twice as far as China. There the people speak the Tartar language, clothe themselves in seal skins, feed on fish and live underground. A muddy valley was encountered on landing and there was such an enormous glacier that it would be disastrous for anyone approaching it. Sirdomap gave Marco Polo his navigation chart and in this way they spent five happy days together.

"One day while they were eating a meal, 200 wives of the Caliph came to them singing and dancing. This provoked a reprisal from the 'arcadori' when three Chinese and one Syrian were shot with arrows. At this instance Marco Polo resolved to try out his four arquebuses<sup>(14)</sup> which he had manufactured in China. The noise of the explosion made the 'arcadori' run away frightened. But the Caliph who was amazed by such a terrible weapon, fell at the feet of Marco Polo and paid him a tribute of jewels. He then entrusted him with a Gold Mask for the King of the Tartars.

"On account of the danger there, Marco Polo decided to leave that land and go to the Kingdom of Fusint. Sirdomap, with whom he consulted for advice, decided to go with him to that realm. So with both ships, they sailed north west and in less than 12 days reached a long narrow island where the only entry appeared to be a gulf and no town, only a palace covered with solid gold.

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14. Arquebuses, — forerunners of the rifle, fired by a spark from a fork-rest at chest-height.

"In this building Fusint<sup>(15)</sup> was seated on a golden chair at the head of a band of two thousand damsels called Bikerne. The damsels were armed with lances, clothed in ermine and adorned with pearls and jewels. So beautiful were they that they appeared to be nymphs. When the Queen knew the object of Marco Polo's visit, she received him with great courtesy and gave him a Golden Lance adorned with jewels for the Queen of the Women in China. He then left that island and went by sea towards the south west.

"In the city of Kin-Sai<sup>(16)</sup> he found a thousand damsels with their Queen. When this great lady saw Marco Polo again she was delighted and rewarded him with many jewels. The King and his Tartar barons also made great rejoicing and festivities for him".

*Note:* The foregoing translation compares almost word for word with that given by Leo Bagrow in *Imago Mundi* 5 (1948) : 3-13, with two exceptions.

First, Bellela is portrayed as addressing a distinguished company of women with the words "My Ladies, Princesses, Duchesses, Countesses and all ladies who would like to hear about the female realm in China and the Far East". Whereas in my translation, Bellela writes in quite simple language. 'This is written on a basis of what was told me by my father'. Secondly, the conclusion within brackets ("may it be your pleasure lady readers—Ita Pat"). I have not found it possible to attribute any meaning in English to the words in parenthesis here.

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15. According to Marco Polo's daughter, Bellela, Fusint was the Queen on an Island of Women, guarded by 'Bikerne', damsels of some beauty who were the armed guard of Fusint. As the traveller himself makes no mention of this, it must be regarded as a 'flight of fancy' on the part of Bellela.

16. Kin-sai : present day Hangchow, then the capital of Manji, called by Marco Polo "City of Heaven".



## A POLO CHRONICLE

### FIG. 5 OF MY DOCUMENTS<sup>(17)</sup>

"In previous notes I have omitted a happening of singular importance to which I must now refer. One of the Polo family, Andrea by name, who fought in the sea battle of Sardinia against the Saracens, returned with war honours to our Kingdom. His courage also brought back good fortune, not only for himself but for his wife, Clemendia. She was the daughter of a subject of Charles II of France whose custom it was to reward his compatriots with feudal investitures in the many countries of his Kingdom. He also invested Giovanni of Villadubai with the title of Baron in the county of Agnone. Here Andrea Polo lived happy and contented, adding fortune to his virtue.

"On the day of San Giacomo, 25th July 1282, I was piloting a ship near the island of Pelagusa, when I saw a large Saracen ship in the vicinity sailing in our direction. At the same time another Venetian ship piloted by Andrea Polo and his brother Giovanni was near-by. We attacked the Saracen ship which was taken unawares, so much so, the Saracens were terrified and threw themselves into the sea only to be drowned.

"On the day of San Bartolomeo, 24th August, at the invitation of Admiral Rugiero Sanseverinus, we gathered at Salerno and were received with great courtesy by the Barons and authorities of the town.

"It was then that Andrea Polo married Clemendia the beautiful daughter of Baron Agnone. Thereafter the Baron, Giovanni of Villadubai and Andrea's brother Giovanni set sail for Constantinople. Needless to say we were all happy at the former event".

Carlo Sperano

Altamura (High Navigator, Pilot) 1284.

This recollection was given me through the pen of Moreta Polo and one of her sisters, Fantina, who in the 'Chronicle' of their house wrote as follows: "In the map of all Asia, made by my father Marco, these islands were according to the Saracens, VIII hours, CXV meridian degrees <sup>(18)</sup> In our tongue it can be said that every man

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17. The first section of Fig. 5 does no more than give an account, from the Polo annals of the time, affecting the sea-loving State of Venice signed by a High Navigator in 1284. Later however, it brings into the picture the 'key' figure of Admiral Rugiero Sanseverinus who was to be entrusted by Marco Polo himself with the care of his records.
  18. Under the heading of 'Salient Features' in the Appendix, time-difference or hour-angle receives detailed consideration.

on these islands hunt all strangers and foreigners with bows and arrows so it is said the inhabitants were so savage it was no place for Marco Polo.

"As a result of Marco Polo's drawing of India, Tartary and the many islands he explored, the Great Khan honoured him. This honour took the form of making Marco, Governor of a Province.

"No one but Marco Polo had ever crossed a desert of sand 3000 miles from the Tartar Kingdom. Then with ten ships went by sea so far, until he reached a chain of islands and a great peninsula, where he found many caves and the inhabitants wore trousers of sea-lion (seals) and deer skin".<sup>(19)</sup>

Fantina Polo  
Venice 1329

To complete this very interesting narrative of Fantina, I will write it exactly as recorded on another page.

On the reverse side of Marco Polo's parchment map, Moreta has written: "Voyage from Venice to Acra in Persia and from Acra to Cambaluc was made overland by the Polos Maffeo, Nicholo and his son Marco. The Venetians were merchants and sailors. It was only Marco, however, who had access to many places in the Extreme Orient and had wide knowledge of the vastness of that remote Empire which is 5000 miles and 8 hours distant from Antilla. The drawing was found in my father's house".

Moreta Polo  
Venice 1337

"After the writings mentioned above, there follows one by Marco Polo in which he names in the Asian tongue other places explored by him. First, the peninsula of Uan-Scien,<sup>(20)</sup> the chain of islands Ta-Qui, the adjoining peninsula of Ta Gran linked to the Foca-M, as Polo wrote, in the margin, Foca marina. These huge territories appeared to be chambers of love. The kings and warriors wore masks of gold and carried weapons of ivory and their women were adorned with furs ornamented with pearls so that they look like Venuses". (This is attributed to Marco Polo himself but it is more likely to be a post-script by Moreta or Fantina).

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19. This sentence sums up the voyage of 28 days from The Bay of Manji to the Extreme Orient.

20. It is extraordinary how the simple exercise of copying words could result in such corruptions as recorded here by Marco Polo in his sea voyage to the Extreme Orient. For a possible interpretation, see explanation of my Fig. 1.

*Note:* I am pleased to acknowledge that Leo Bagrow in *Imago Mundi* 5 (1948) : 3-13, under the Moreta Polo Maps, published in Italian, a statement made by Moreta. A similar text appears in my document, Fig. 5 as translated above. One notable exception, however, between the two statements is the date. Whereas in *Imago Mundi* it is not clear, in my Fig. 5, Moreta Polo, Venice MCCCXXXVII (1337) stands out. One may conclude from this that the map referred to under Fig. 2 in *Imago Mundi* must have been made before 1337. It has been suggested that it may have been copied two or three centuries later and then with certain additions, possibly Kamchatka, the Aleutians and Alaska. This raises the question of discovery to which I refer later.

Before concluding with the translation of Fig. 6 of my documents, it is relevant to relate how Marcian F. Rossi of San Jose, California, came to be in possession of certain Polian documents, some with maps, including those referred to in this article.

"Marco Polo entrusted the maps to Admiral Rujerius Sanseverinus who had graduated at the Nautical School at Amalfi. A number of centuries later his descendant, Ruberth Sanseverinus, married Elisabeth Feltro Della Rovere,<sup>Φ</sup> Duchess of Urbino. In the year 1539, Julius Cesare de Rossi, Count of Bergeto married Maddalena Feltro Della Rovere Sanseverinus to whom the Tenure of Cajiata was assigned; his grandson Joseph de Rossi became Duke of Serre; this tenure was held till 1744 when it was transferred to the Duchy of Casate to Joseph de Rossi; his younger brother Antonio de Rossi was the father of Marciano de Rossi, my great grandfather".

This quotation is taken from "The Maps from the Home Archives of the Descendants of a friend of Marco Polo" by Leo Bagrow which appeared in *Imago Mundi* 5 (1948) : 3-13.

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<sup>Φ</sup> The document associated with my Fig. 6 shows Elisabeth Feltro Della Rovere as the daughter of the Duke of Urbino.

## A POLO CHRONICLE

### FIG. 6 OF MY DOCUMENT

"Many examples have already been recorded and many more left aside. I can say, however, from the documents in my care, that Roberto Sanseverinus, Count of Cazatia, who married Elisabeth Montefeltro, della Rovere, daughter of the Duke of Urbino, was unable to write in detail from the Polo manuscripts and maps left in his care by 'ancestor' Rugerio Sanseverinus because they are not clear, due to age.

"At any rate, it is of more than passing interest to reflect that if Roberto's kinsman, Antonio Sanseverinus, Great Admiral of the Realm, who married Costanza Montefeltro had had Marco Polo's nautical charts in his possession when he visited the Amalfi Nautical School he would have been in an advantageous position. Not only would he have received praise but he was the bearer of information of some of the much sought after nautical skills of the Arabs.

"These parchments were passed from Roberto to his daughter Maddelena who married Giulio de Rossi. It was from this connection that I had the opportunity to register them and to satisfy my curiosity, took notes. The documents included some Sanseverinus chronicles written in the ancient writing of that age. One in particular had an annotation by Rugiero Sanseverinus<sup>(21)</sup> referring to the Order of the Military Tribune originally written on a 'Tablet' of Gold which the Great Khan gave to Marco Polo in acknowledgement of his explorations made to the farthest East.

The interpretation of the text on the 'Tablet' is as follows :

"Among the prefects taking orders from Kubliai Khan, Marco Polo, a Legate of Venice, is elected as Ambassador to the Province of Anju, which by the Grace of God, this and other lands were added after friendship with the Tartars. You merit this honour because you were the first to take possession of the many islands scattered in the most distant Orient and previously never heard of. Through your will, merchants and travellers must obey your judgement and recognise your authority".

"I shall not forget to mention here that Marco Polo, during his sea voyages, used the famous nautical skills of the Arabs. From the time of the Empress Semiramide, ruler of a large part of Asia, all the islands of the Indian Ocean, according

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21. Tablets presented by Kublai were granted to the Khan's emissaries for distinguished service. It is on record the Polos received more than one. In so far as the writer knows, the Gold Tablet referred to here for Marco Polo's explorations to the farthest east has not previously been recorded.

to the Mappamondo, were in Syriac characters.<sup>(22)</sup> And likewise were the Island possessions of India, the Garaxini, Cattigara of Tartary, the island of Zipangu and islands to the peninsula of Lizerol situated IV hours from the provinces of Tartary.

“In conclusion, I will say that I have constructed a genealogical tree of the origin of this family, obtained from authentic writings loyally preserved and belonging to a branch of the Poli of Venice”.

Lorenzo Polo, Protonotario.

Cazatia. MDLVI 1556.

## A P P E N D I X

It would appear that there is proof enough to show, that few, if any, of the manuscripts, which have come down to us, represent the original form of the Marco Polo narrative but that certain texts are nearer to the original than others. How near the documents, just translated, are to the original must be left to the judgement of Polian scholars.

Arising out of the Rossi documents, Figs. 1-6 aforementioned, there is a need to draw attention to the prominent feature of these documents, namely, Marco Polo's voyage from the Gulf of Manji to the Extreme Orient.

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22. As a tribute to the nautical skills of the Arabs which Marco Polo acknowledges here, it is pertinent to draw attention to the "Overall Survey of the Ocean Shores" (Ying-yai Shenglan) which was translated by J.V.G. Mills and published by the Hakluyt Society in 1970. This is a detailed account of the famous Cheng Ho's voyages from China to the Red Sea and East Africa when his Navigator and Chart Interpreter was the Arab Ma Huan. The outstanding Maritime Cartogram, "The Mao K'un Map 1433, was the result of these voyages.

### FIG. 1, "MAP WITH SHIP"

It will not have escaped attention that in "Map with Ship" mention is made of Marco Polo being associated with:-

- \* The islands of Japan and adjacent islands.
- \* The peninsula of the Sea Lions.
- \* Islands connected with the peninsula of the Deer.

The 'Map with Ship' now in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. awaits additional study as it may be a seventeenth century copy of a fourteenth century map. And it seems certain, on specialist authority, that the lettering in Italian below the map, can hardly be earlier than the seventeenth century.

Be that as it may, there is ample information in the documents now translated regarding Marco Polo's voyage to the Extreme Orient, to set it down, briefly, as a step towards an overall analysis and a discovery-conclusion.

### FIG. 2, MORETA POLO, VENICE, 1338, - WITH MAP

- \* He sailed the sea as far as the Orient, finally reaching a long peninsula surrounded by seals.
- \* Because of the winter cold, people live in round houses.
- \* The people of the peninsula emigrated from Tartary and they named the land in the Mongolian language.

### FIG. 3, FANTINA POLO, VENICE, 1329 - WITH MAP

- \* From the Canaries (Fortunate Is.) in the Atlantic towards Tartary and then steering for the Seal Marine Peninsula, the distance is more than 8 hours,—refer map with Fig. 3, 18 sections of 10° per section from Europe.<sup>(23)</sup>

### FIG. 4, UNSIGNED AND NOT DATED BUT ATTRIBUTED TO BELLELA POLO

(If received from the hand of her father must have been prior to 1328)

This account of the voyage is much embroidered and introduces Sirdomap the Arab navigator and merchant. Marco Polo makes no reference to this man.

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23. Refer to detailed consideration of time-difference or hour-angle under Salient Features—see Appendix.

\* There are, however, important elements in the composition worthy of note, for example: weapons used, language spoken, clothing and description of the terrain and dwellings.

**FIG. 5, HAS INFORMATION ATTRIBUTED TO A HIGH NAVIGATOR,  
1284. FANTINA, 1329 AND MORETA, 1337**

\* The High Navigator introduces the 'key' figure of Admiral Rugiero Sanseverinus, later keeper of Marco Polo documents and maps.

\* Fantina refers to a chain of islands and a great peninsula where her father found many caves.

\* Moreta maintains it was only Marco of the three—Maffeo, Nicholo and Marco—who had access to many places in the Extreme Orient and then concludes with a romantic account, not confirmed by Marco, of what happens among the inhabitants in these huge territories.

**FIG. 6, LORENZO POLO PROTONOTARIO, CAZATIA 1556**

The most concrete evidence of Marco Polo's voyage to the farthest Orient comes from the pen of Lorenzo Polo—so far as is known, no relation to the Poli of Venice.

\* Before he died about 1328, Marco Polo entrusted all his documents and maps to Admiral Rugiero Sanseverinus, referred to by his descendants as the 'ancestor'. This is confirmed by the Marcian Rossi letter of 14 January, 1948, to Leo Bagrow, wherein he describes how the Marco Polo documents came into his possession. These records remained in Sanseverinus hands for some 230 years until one, Roberto, Count of Cazatia, failing in his effort to interpret them, gave the documents to his daughter Maddelena who married Giulio de Rossi in 1539. In turn, she registered them for safe-keeping with the aforementioned Lorenzo Polo in 1556.

\* The curiosity of this notary was sufficiently aroused by the obvious importance of the documents, to take notes from their contents. These notes form part of the writer's discovery-conclusion.

\* Much of the information revealed, so far, from the records examined regarding Marco Polo's voyage to the Extreme Orient refers to a chain of islands and a great peninsula—in Fig. 6, a second peninsula comes into the picture. In this connection, Korea has been presented as a possible answer, but in the writer's opinion, who has

visited Korea several times, there is little or no relationship between the climatic conditions, wild-life described and indeed the inhabitants and their housing that would involve the consideration of Korea.

One must turn now to the Kuril Islands and Kamchatka to investigate their possible connection, either by hearsay or actual visitation with Marco Polo.

\* Kamchatka was only discovered by the Russians in 1697. After all, the lonely Cape of the North Pacific was 6000 miles east of their turbulent Baltic States. It was not, however, until 1735 that they sent Stepan Krasheninnikov, a scientist, to carry out a complete exploration and scientific description of a peninsula the size of England. His acknowledged brilliant achievement in this unknown country is worthy of examination in the light of what is known of Marco Polo's voyage to the Extreme Orient. It should be borne in mind that shortly before Krasheninnikov's time, Kamchatka had no place on any world map.

## **FROM KRASHENINNIKOV'S DESCRIPTION OF THE LAND OF KAMCHATKA 1735-1741**

### **PEOPLES:**

Three different peoples live in Kamchatka, the Koriaks in the north from Eastern Siberia, the Kamchadals in the middle and south of the peninsula and the Kuriles in the south and islands of the Kuril chain. All three have a separate language but since the Kamchadals predominate, their language influences the others. In origin, appearance and language, they are Mongolian and it is alleged they were driven out of their homeland, beyond the river Amur, due to cruelty and tyranny of Eastern conquerors. The Kuriles are mild by comparison with the others, who are described as wild.

### **CLIMATE:**

In contrast with the mainland, the climate is mild, profiting from a warm sea current which results in conditions of fog. The worst hazards of the country are violent wind storms.

### **TERRAIN:**

There is a 'backbone' of mountains and volcanic eruptions are frequent.

Louis Bourguet, French Naturalist and Archaeologist, 1678-1724, contributes to Krasheninnikov's Description of the Land of Kamchatka by giving his opinion of the mountain range and valleys of the Peninsula. In a comparison he says they are



somewhat similar to the Alps. This likeness recalls Bellela's observation about the terrain in Fig. 4 when she mentions 'an enormous glacier that would be disastrous for anyone approaching it'.

The coastal plain was not developed for crops in Krasheninnikov's time but the soil is suitable. There are many hot springs. Rivers flow from the mountain range on both sides but few are navigable.

### **ANIMALS & FISH:**

Land and sea animals are plentiful and include fox, ermine, sable, bear, wolf, marmot, wild and domestic reindeer. In the fresh and sea-water group, otters, seals and sea-lions abound. Fish is abundant and fishermen from as far away as Japan frequent the off-shore banks. Many tales are told in Japan of shipwrecked fishing boats on the coasts of Kamchatka.

### **FOOD & CLOTHING:**

Animal and fish flesh, with greens which grow along the littoral, make up the peoples' diet. There must be few countries where forage is more suitable to pasturing herds. The humid climate and Spring rains produce a quality of grass that makes for a prodigious size in live-stock having an abundance of milk.

In clothing, boots, trousers and skirts are made of seal and tanned deer-skins. The wealth of the country lies in the variety of fur-bearing animals and fish.

### **HOUSING:**

In Spring, Summer and Autumn, dwellings are above ground on stilts. In Winter all are housed below ground in cave-like structures.

### **WEAPONS:**

When Krasheninnikov arrived in Kamchatka, the only weapon of destruction in use was the bow and arrow, the latter being about 120 cms. long with a poisoned tip of flint or bone.

## **SALIENT FEATURES THAT HAVE A BEARING ON THE CHAIN OF ISLANDS AND PENINSULA ENCOUNTERED BY MARCO POLO ON HIS VOYAGE TO THE EXTREME ORIENT**

\* Marco Polo placed Cipan-gu (Japan) 1500 miles beyond China. The statement was obviously made on hearsay, as were others he was wont to make. In this respect he was not alone as a seafarer in making hearsay statements. At about this time, on the other side of the then known world, the Azores and Madeiras mysteriously appeared on charts, although there was no record they were officially 'discovered'.

\* Lorenzo Polo, the notary, in his interpretation of Marco Polo's records in Fig. 6, refers to the Peninsula of Lizerol. The spelling of Lizerol is the same as used in the Rossi Italian Document and is possibly a transliteration from a chart in Arabic and could refer to Kamchatka.

\* In reference to Cipan-gu (Japan), Marco Polo gives a description of wealth and prosperity. Indeed he was well aware of conditions and happenings in Cipan-gu as it was a favourite topic among the Tartars in China. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for anyone having a connection with Cipan-gu in the 13th century, like the adventurous Marco Polo, not to hear of the Kuril Islands just north and at the continuation of this chain of islands, the great peninsula of Kamchatka. The Japanese are a nation whose main diet is fish and many were the tales of Japanese fishermen shipwrecked on the coast of Kamchatka. Indeed it is known from Japanese records that the major Kurile Island, north-east of Hokkaido, then known as Mat-ma, and largely peopled by Japanese, had a continuous connection with Kamchatka.

\* Marco Polo has much to say in praise of the nautical skills of the Arabs, in fact his well-known Mappamondo had all the place names and feature details in 'Syrian' characters. Although he does not mention the Arab Navigator and merchant Sirdomap, there is no reason to disbelieve they did not meet. Biaxo Sirdomap, according to Bellela, sailed the coasts of Asia for 30 years from his own Syria to the remote north-eastern lands of Asia where he traded merchandise for animal skins. In connection with the people of the great peninsula to the north-east, Sirdomap said they speak the Tartar language, clothe themselves in seal-skins, feed on fish and live underground on account of the winter cold.

Referring to Sirdomap's map, dated 1267, described by Leo Bagrow of Imago Mundi in his "Maps from the Home Archives of the Descendants of a friend of Marco Polo", Marco Polo was only 15 years of age when the map was made. There is no reason to dispute that it was not the self-same map he received from Sirdomap in 1287. This map was part of The Bellela Polo Documents sent to Imago Mundi by Marcian Rossi.

It can be said of Sirdomap's map that it must have been invaluable in guiding Marco Polo to the remote territories of the Extreme Orient.

\* There are a number of references to time-difference having an obvious relationship to distance in the translated Rossi documents. An outstanding example comes from Fig. 6, when Marco Polo places the position of the peninsula of Lizerol as IV hours from the walled provinces of Tartary. One must appreciate that Marco Polo grew up in sea-loving Venice and because of this he was familiar with the art of navigation. Although the magnetic compass, invented by the Chinese, was then in use, Marco Polo would almost certainly determine his position at sea by taking a star-sight. He may have used the compass, but only for checking. His principal concern here, would be the east-west distance of longitude—the corresponding sky-term is right ascension. The fixed stars have a certain declination and right ascension as places on earth have certain latitude and longitude, while differences of both right ascension and longitude can be treated as 'hour-angles' or differences of time (1 hour-15°). This puts Marco Polo's peninsula and near-by islands in the position of Kamchatka and the Kuriles, although it must be said, until the late 17th century, Kamchatka's exact position was unknown. Up to then, it was only vaguely indicated on maps through conjecture.

It would be profitable at this point, in the analysis of Marco Polo's voyage to the farthest East, to examine his observations and see how they compare with those of Krashennnikov, when he visited Kamchatka, some 400 years later. It must be acknowledged that the latter's observations are much more detailed. Nevertheless it would not be incorrect to say that comment on the climate was somewhat similar and that they were, in so far as the coastal area was concerned, on the same terrain. Both have the same to say about the majority of the inhabitants, the Kamchadals, that they were of Mongolian origin and their description of the land and water animals was similar. In the gap of some 400 years between the visits, because of the remoteness and inaccessibility of the peninsula and adjacent islands, the likelihood of change can be ruled out.

\* Another Polo journey, this time to Carajan (Yun-nan) S.W. China is worthy of note here. It was followed in part, 500 years later by "The Mekong River Expedition" with Francis Garnier.<sup>24</sup> Colonel Henry Yule in his book on "Marco

24. The Mekong River Expedition (1866-1873) resulted in the writing of voluminous records. In 1975 a single volume, in English, was published as "The River Road to China" by Milton Osborne which was reviewed by H. Leedom Lefferts of the Research Institute for the Study of Man, New York, in *The Journal of The Siam Society*, January 1976, Volume 64, part 1. The writer was requested to review "The River Road to China" for *The Journal of The Royal Geographical Society*, London,—see Appendix.

Polo, *The Venetian*" Vol. 11, second edition, 1875, has this to say in comparing the two journeys: "Lieut. Garnier's book is the only existing source of illustration for many chapters of Polo. The publication of my lamented friend Lieut. Garnier's great work on the French Exploration of Indo-China has produced a mass of illustration of Yunnan for which, but the other day, Marco Polo was well-nigh the most recent authority."

## CONCLUSION :

On completion of the Marco-Polo-Rossi Documents, Figs. 1-6, it seemed to the writer his immediate task was over. That was the position, until, in response to a query, a letter was received from The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. enclosing a description of the 'Map with Ship'. At the same time, the Head of Reference and Bibliography in the Library kindly enclosed a copy of Leo Bagrow's "The Maps from the Home Archives of the Descendants of a friend of Marco Polo", *Imago Mundi* 5 (1948) : 3-13.

With this information, the writer was prompted to examine in more detail the aforementioned translated documents. It must be said that some of these documents had already been published by the Library of Congress and *Imago Mundi*. There was, however, sufficient unpublished information for the writer to look again at the overall picture of the Rossi Documents.

The Appendix is the result of this subsequent reflexion. Here, the part played by 'Ancestor' Admiral Rugiero Sanseverinus is emphasised. He was given the documents and maps by Marco Polo himself to hold and in accordance with tradition, retain in the family. Next in importance is the Notary, Lorenzo Polo, who was entrusted with the Traveller's documents for safe keeping by Maddalena Feltro Della Rovere of Sanseverinus lineage. Curiosity compelled the Notary to interpret the documents with the result, from Marco Polo's own handwriting, he was able to read about the voyage to the Extreme Orient. With such evidence and that of his daughters, through map and document, this writer is of the opinion that on his voyage from the Bay of Manji (Hangchow Bay) in China to the 'farthest East', Marco Polo at the limit of his journey reached the Kurile Islands and Kamchata, within the years 1285-1290.

A map attached shows a trace, in red, of a possible route taken by the Navigator/Pilot, from the Bay of Manji to Kamchatka.

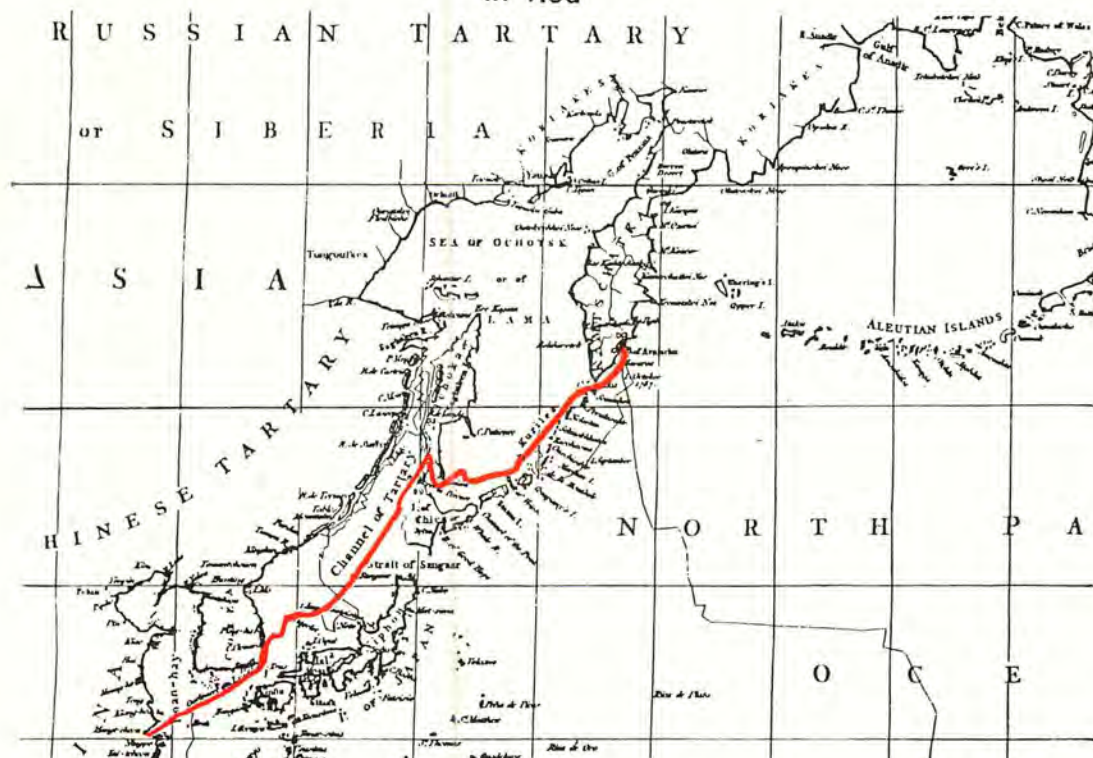
**Addendum :** See - "Salient Features" - 'Sino-Japanese contact in Marco Polo's time. During that period there was considerable trade between the two countries to and from the ports of Ningpo in Chekiang and Hykata in Kyushu<sup>(25)</sup>.

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25. Reference K. Enoki, *Oriente Poliano*, Rome, 1957.

# Marco Polo's Voyage to The Extreme Orient

## in Red



Part of chart of Pacific from London, 1798 edition of Comte de Lapérouse's *A Voyage round the World* . . . 1785 . . . 1788.

Manji Bay (Hangchow)

To

Kamchatka



### - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS -

In writing this monograph, the writer wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the documents and maps received from Louis A. Rossi of San Jose, California. And with many thanks to The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., in particular, Mr. Richard W. Stephenson, Head of Reference and Bibliography Section, for the informative matter sent to me which greatly assisted my research on the subject.

### - NOTE ON PLACE NAMES -

From existing records it would appear Marco Polo did not speak Chinese but was familiar with the Mongolian language. In Explanatory Notes (12) and (20) - reference is made to the difficulty of analysing place and proper names. This is recorded in appreciation of his problem in Romanizing such names to fit in to our present day picture. The Traveller came across not only Chinese and its many dialects but Arabic (Saracen) and the Inner Asian languages of Turkic and Mongolian, making corruptions inevitable. So much so, it is impossible to translate or locate a number of place names used by Marco Polo.

So much has been written by scholars about the famous voyages of Marco Polo that there must be little left to say. Nevertheless, the writer feels that he has opened up the possibility for future study of the Venetian's hitherto unexplained voyage to the Extreme Orient.

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