

The Travels of Bar Sauma In Asia and Europe

Sir Wallis Budge (1928). *The Monk of Kublai Khan, Emperor of China; or The History of the Life and Travels of Rabban Sauma, Envoy and Plenipotentiary of the Mongol Khans to the Kings of Europe and Markos who as Yahbh-Allaha III Became Patriarch of the Nestorian Church in Asia*. London: The Religious Track Society.

Sources: Patricia Kellogg, Marco Polo in China @ nationalgeographic.com

<http://chass.colostate-pueblo.edu/history/seminar/sauma.htm>

Bar Sauma (also known as Rabban Sauma or Sauma the Monk) was born in Northern China in the first half of the 13th century (probably in the decade prior to 1245). He was a member of the Onggud Turks, who joined the Mongols early in the reign of Genghis Khan (circa 1200-1210). Like other Onggud Turks, his family were members of the Nestorian Christian church. Sauma was well educated and able to read Syriac, Turkic, and possibly Chinese. He was also deeply religious. By the age of twenty-five, Sauma had taken vows to become a Nestorian monk and built a cell to meditate in isolation.

About 1275, approximately the same time as Marco Polo, his father and uncle arrived at the court of Kublai Khan in China, Sauma and his student, Markos, left Daidu (modern Beijing) on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They followed the Yellow River southwest to Ningxia. They then took the southern silk road south of the Taklamakan Desert and followed the Chenchen river for about 500 miles to Khotan. They continued to Kashgar, which Marco Polo had described in his memoirs as a booming trade town. However, they found it plundered and in ruins. From there they went to Talas, Tus, the Ilykhan capital of Khurasan, Maragha, and finally Baghdad, probably arriving in an area controlled by the Mongol ruler of Persia in 1280.

After arriving in Baghdad and settling in a local monastery, Markos was named patriarch of the Nestorian Church. In 1287, Markos and the local Mongol governor dispatched Sauma to Christian Europe in an attempt to secure agreements from Roman Catholic and Byzantine leaders for a unified campaign with the Mongols against Muslim control over the Holy Land. From Baghdad, Sauma, traveled to the Black Sea, sailed to Constantinople and then to Rome where he met with Pope Nicholas IV. He also traveled to Paris and Bordeaux where he met with the Kings of France and England. Sauma returned to Persia in 1288 with a large number of sacred relics but without a firm commitment for a unified Crusade. He died in Persia in 1294. While Sauma never made it to Jerusalem, he is the first person known to have traveled from Beijing in China to Paris in Western Europe.

Sauma wrote journals in Persian about his life in China and travels across Asia and Europe. Shortly after his death, they were translated into Syriac, a language used by Eastern Christians. Both the original and the translation were lost until a Syriac copy was rediscovered in Iran in 1887. In 1928, a British scholar published an English translation of Sauma's works.

CHAPTER I. The History of Rabban Sauma .

There was a certain man who was a believer, and he was a nobleman and a fearer of God. He was rich in the things of this world, and he was well endowed with the qualities of nature; he belonged to a famous family and a well-known tribe. His name was Shibān the Sa'ora (the Inspector). He dwelt in the city which is called Khan Baligh or Khan Balik, that is to say the royal city in the country of the East. He married according to the law a woman whose name was Keyamta. And when they had lived together for a long time, and they had no heir, they prayed to God continually and besought Him with frequent supplications not to deprive them of a son who would continue [their] race. . . . Now God made the spirit of conception to breathe upon the woman Keyamta, and she brought forth a son, and they called his name . . . Bar Sauma," [the " son of the fast."]. And they rejoiced [with] a great joy, neighbours of his family and his relations rejoiced at his birth.

And when they had brought him (after a praiseworthy system of education) to the period when he was capable of receiving instruction, they handed him over to a worthy teacher, and before him (under his direction) they trained him diligently in ecclesiastical learning. . . . And when he was twenty years of age the divine fire was kindled in his heart, and it burned up the brambles (thorny growth) of sin, and cleansed his chaste soul from impurity and contamination of every kind. For he preferred more than any other thing whatsoever the love of his Lord, . . . Then he divided all his possessions, that is to say, his apparel and his clothing generally, among the poor, and took the garb of the monk; and he received the tonsure from the holy and pious father, . . . He set apart a cell for himself and

he shut himself up therein seven years; and after that [period] he decided to remove himself from the children of men, and to practice himself in the ascetic life in the mountain, in a place which was wholly isolated, so that he might rest there [undisturbed] in his life as a recluse.

CHAPTER II. The History of Mar Yabhb-Allaha, the Catholicus and Patriarch of the East.

There was, in the city of Kawshang, of the country of the East, a certain righteous and believing man, pure and spotless, who served God continually in His church, and observed His laws strictly and carefully. His name was Bayniel; he was an archdeacon and he had four sons. The youngest of them [who was born in the year of our Lord 1245] was called Markos, and he was trained in ecclesiastical learning more than all his brethren. . . . [

After fifteen days of great labour he arrived at the place where Raban Sauma was. And he gave the salutation of peace to Raban Sauma, who rejoiced in him and received him gladly. . . . And MARKOS said unto him, "I wish to become a monk (or anchorite). Because I heard the report of thee I dropped everything and have sought thee; deprive me not of my desire." And Raban Sauma said unto him, "O our brother, this path is difficult. Even the old [and experienced] monks endure the hardness thereof with the greatest difficulty; shall I permit youths and children to Journey on it?" And having besought him for many reasons to return to his parents, and Markos having refused to do so, Raban Sauma admitted him [to his cell] and taught him; and he clothed him in a woollen garment, and made him to labour in the ascetic life. After three years Markos received the tonsure, that is to say the garb of the monk. . . .

CHAPTER III. Rabban Sauma and Rabban Markos Wish to Go to Jerusalem

One day they meditated, saying, "It would be exceedingly helpful to us if we were to leave this region and set out for the West, for we could then [visit] the tombs of the holy martyrs and Catholic Fathers and be blessed [by them]. And if Christ, the Lord of the Universe, prolonged our lives, and sustained us by His grace, we could go to Jerusalem, so that we might receive complete pardon for our offences, and absolution for our sins of foolishness. . . . And the two of them having agreed together that neither of them should be separated from his companion, even if one of them might have to submit to what was evil for his sake, they rose up and distributed their furniture, and the objects which they used in everyday life, among the poor, and they went to that city (Pekin) so that they might take companions for the journey [join a caravan] and provide themselves with food for the way. . . .

And Rabban Sauma and Rabban Markos came to the city of Kawshang. And when the people of the city and the parents of Rabban Markos heard that these two monks had come there, they went out to meet them with joy, and they welcomed them with gladness and delight, and they escorted them into the church with great honour. And they enquired of them how they had come to make the journey thither. Now they thought that the two monks were going to tarry with them, and that Rabban Markos had done so in order that he might be near the people of his family. And when they knew of a certainty that they were going to Jerusalem, and that they had made their plan to travel to the West, they suffered greatly and were sorely afflicted.

And the report of the arrival of the two monks reached the lords of that city, Konbogha (Sun-worshipper) and Ifogha (Moon-worshipper), the sons-in-law of the King of Kings, Kublai Khan, and as soon as they heard the report they sent messengers and had the two monks brought to the Camp. . . . And the kings mentioned above replied, "Ye have no knowledge of the length of this journey, and the expenses which it demands. We, however, do know, and we advise you not to set out empty [handed]; if ye do ye will be unable to arrive at the place which ye have decided to be your destination. Accept then these gifts from us as a loan (or trust), and if some occasion of necessity should befall you, spend what ye need from them; if, on the other hand, the necessity does not arise, and ye arrive safe and sound, distribute them among the monasteries and habitations of the monks which are there, and the Fathers (Bishops), so that we may enjoy association with our Western Fathers. . . . Then the two monks, seeing that the kings were giving with a sincere heart, accepted what they gave to them. And they bade farewell to them sorrowfully, and they shed tears wherewith joy was mingled.

And they came from thence to the city of Tangoth [Tanghikut, a country in Central Asia]. When the people of that city heard that Rabban Sauma and Rabban Markos had come there in order to go to Jerusalem, they went forth eagerly to meet them, . . . And they loaded the two monks with gifts of every kind, and they received their

blessings, and a crowd escorted them on their way, and shed tears, saying, "The Lord Who hath elected you to the honour of His service shall Himself be with you. Amen."

And from there they went to the country of Khotan [a city between Tangoth and Kashgar], a toilsome and fatiguing journey of two months; the region was a bare and barren desert and it was without inhabitants, because its waters were bitter, and no crops are sown there. And on the whole journey there were only eight days when, with the greatest difficulty, was sweet water found which the travellers could carry with them. And in the days when they arrived at Khotan it happened that a war was raging between the King of Kings Kublai Khan and King Oko.

And Oko had fled from him and had entered [this] country, and destroyed thousands of men therein. The caravan roads and ways had been cut, and grain was scarce and could not be found; and many died of hunger and perished through want. And after six months the two monks went forth from that place and came to the country of Kashgar [a city on the frontiers of China and Turkestan]. And they saw that the city was empty of its inhabitants, because it had been already plundered by the enemy. And because the aim of the monks was right, and they pleased God with all their hearts, He delivered them from every affliction, and no suffering attacked them, and He saved them from obstructions by highway robbers and thieves. And they came to the place where King Kaido [a nephew of Kublai Khan] was encamped by the Teleos. And they went into his presence, and prayed that his life would be preserved, and they blessed his kingdom, and they asked him for a written order so that no man in his country might do them harm. And with the greatest difficulty and in a state of exhaustion whereto fear was added, they arrived at Khorasan [a province of north-eastern Persia, which lay between Persian 'Irak and Afghanistan]. Having lost the greater part of what they had on the road, they went to the monastery of Saint Mar Sehyon, which was in the neighbourhood of the city of Tus [the capital of Khorasan], and they were blessed by the bishop who lived therein and by the monks. . . .

And having enjoyed the conversation of those brethren they set out to go to Adhorbuan [a frontier province of Persia, on the north-west], so that they might travel from there to Baghdad, to Mar Denha [Lord Denha], the Catholicus [head of the Nestorian Catholic Church]. . . . And at the sight of him their joy grew great, and their gladness was increased, and their minds were made to be at peace, and their anxious thoughts were set at rest. And they fell down on the ground before him, and they wept as they did homage to him and they behaved as if they saw our Lord Jesus Christ in the person of Mar Denha, the Catholicus. . . . And when he asked them, "Whence [come] ye?" they replied, "From the countries of the East, from Khan Balik, the city of the King of Kings [Kublai] Khan. We have come to be blessed by you, and by the Fathers (Bishops), and the monks, and the holy men of this quarter of the world. And if a road [openeth] to us, and God hath mercy upon us, we shall go to Jerusalem. . . .

And they did homage to him, and gave thanks to him. And having enjoyed intercourse with him for a few days they brought forward [the following] request: "If we have found mercy (favour) in the eyes of Mar our Father, let him permit us to go to Baghdad, in order that we may receive a blessing from the holy sepulchres (or relics) And when the Catholicus saw the beauty of their object, . . . he wrote for them a pethikha (a letter of introduction) to these countries so that they might be honourably entreated whithersoever they went; and he sent with them a man to show them the way, and to act as guide along the roads. And they arrived in Baghdad, and thence they went to the Great Church of Koke. . . . and they were blessed by all the shrines and monasteries, and the religious houses, and monks, and the Fathers (Bishops) in their dioceses. And they paid the vows which they had laid upon themselves, and they spread tables of food [wherefrom all might eat], and they gave alms and oblations wherever they went. And they turned back and came to the holy monastery of Mar Michael of Tar'il. And they bought a cell, and both of them were received by the monks who were there. And the thought which made them toil through the journey had rest, although they had not arrived at the end of [their] expectation. Now when Mar Denha, the Catholicus, heard of their manner of life, he sent and asked them to go to him; And the Catholicus said unto them, "Ye shall go to King Abagha Khan, the son and successor of Hulagu Khan and great grandson of Genghis Khan, who ascended the throne of Persia as the second Mongol Khan in 1265], and obtain for us pukdane (written orders, or letters patent confirming his appointment as Catholicus)." And the two monks said unto him, "Thus shall it be, but let Mar our Father send with us a man who shall take the Pukdana [from the king] and give it to him (the Catholicus), and we will go on from there to Jerusalem." And the Catholicus granted them this [request], and gave them blessings on their journey. And when the two monks went to the Blessed Camp, the Amirs brought them in before the King, and he asked them about the object of their coming, and what their native country was; and they made a reply to him which revealed unto him their object. And Abagha Khan commanded the nobles of his

kingdom to fulfil their petition, and to give them the written orders (Pukdane) which they had asked for. And the two monks sent the written order which Mar Catholicus had demanded to him by the hands of his messenger, and they and their companions set out for Jerusalem. And when they arrived at the city of Animto [the ancient capital of Christian Armenia, situated on an affluent of the river Araxes], and saw the monasteries and the churches therein, they marvelled at the great extent of the buildings and at their magnificence. And thence they went towards Beth Gurgaye (the country of Georgia), so that they might travel by a clear (or safe) road, but when they arrived there they heard from the inhabitants of the country that the road was cut because of the murders and robberies which had taken place along it.

CHAPTER IV. Rabban Markosis Ordained Metropolitan, and is Called Mar Yahbh-Allaha, and Rabban Sauma Becomes Visitor-General

And the two monks turned back and came to Mar Catholicus, who rejoiced [at the sight of] them, and said unto them, "This is not the time for a journey to Jerusalem. The roads are a disturbed state, and the ways are cut. Now behold, ye have received blessings from all the Houses of God, and the shrines (or relics) which are in them, and it is my opinion that when a man visits them with a pure heart, the service thus paid to them is in no way less than that of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I am now going to counsel you with a council which is appropriate, and it is meet that ye should hearken unto it. I have decided to appoint Markos Metropolitan, and to bestow upon him the apostolic gift. As for thee Rabban Sauma, I am going to make thee Visitor-General, and I am going to send the two of you, each back to his own country." And those monks said unto him, . . . "We have not come from that country (China) in order to turn back and go again thither, and we do not intend to endure a repetition of the hardship which we have already suffered. For the man who is tripped up twice by the [same] stone is a fool. And moreover, we declare that we are unworthy of this gift, and for defective creatures [like ourselves], a responsibility of this kind is too difficult. What we are seeking after is this: to dwell in a monastery and to serve Christ until we die."

And Rabban markos received the rank of Metropolitan of the See of Kati [Kathay, or Northern China], and Ong [Huang], . . . when he was thirty-five years of age [in the year 1280]. And Rabban Sauma also received a blessing from him, and was named "Visitor-General." And they both took letters of introduction; each man's letter being drawn up according to the requirements of his service. And after a few days a report came to the effect that the road by which they had travelled there was wholly cut off, and that it was impossible for any man to use it, for the hearts of the kings of the two frontiers were changed [were hostile to each other and they were fighting]. . . . And therefore the luminaries returned to the monastery of Mar Michael Tar'il, and they sat down in their cell for two years, more or less. . . .

CHAPTER V. Yahbh-Allaha is Elected Patriarch.

Now whilst these things were taking place, Mar Denha, the Catholicus, was still alive, but he had been suffering from sickness for a long time in Baghdad. . . . And after a few days there arose in Mar Yahbh-Allaha (Mar Mark) the thought that he would go to the Catholicus in Baghdad so that he might receive from him a blessing, and the birona (pontifical cloak) and pastoral staff that they might go with him to his country. And when he arrived in the neighbourhood of Baghdad, a certain man who was an acquaintance of his met him, and said unto him, "The Catholicus is dead. . . ." Then, with great anguish and a sorrowful heart, Mar Yahbh-Allaha set out and pressed on quickly until he came to the door of the church; and when he had gone inside he saw some groups of people weeping and some groups praying. And he went up to the bier, and cast aside his turban, and rent his garments, and wept so bitterly and with such anguish that at length he fell down upon the ground like a dead man. After a time the people lifted him up, and put his turban on him, and spake words of consolation to him. And when the prayers for the dead were ended [the Catholicus] was buried [on February 24, 1281]--may his memory be for blessing! And the Fathers returned to the Cell [which was actually a palace] of the Catholicus. And on the following day the Fathers gathered together to elect a person suitable to sit on the [patriarchal] Throne. . . . until at length they all agreed Mar Yahbh-Allaha that should be the head and governor of the Throne of Seleucia and Ctesiphon. The reason for his election was this: The kings who held the steering poles of the government of the whole world were Muglaye (Mongols), and there was no man except Mar Yahbh-Allaha who was acquainted with their manners and customs, and their policy of government, and their language. And when [the nobles of Baghdad]

said these things to him he made excuses and demurred to their statements, saying, "I am deficient in education and in ecclesiastical doctrine, and the member of my tongue halteth. How can I possibly become your Patriarch? And moreover, I am wholly ignorant of your language, Syriac, which it is absolutely necessary for the Patriarch to know." And having pressed upon him their quest, he agreed to their opinion and accepted [the office]. And all the aged men, and priests, and nobles, and scribes, and also the physicians, gave their support to him.

And Mar Yahbh-Allaha rose up and came to the holy monastery of Mar Michale of Tar'il, where Rabban Sauma was. Now the monks had already heard of the death of the holy Father, Mar Denha, and when Mar Yahbh-Allaha arrived, they received him with gladness, and comforted him; and they [told] him that they approved of his being elected Catholicus. It was a divine movement, and an act which proceeded from God, and which all creation was compelled to carry out. And when he talked to Rabban Sauma, the Rabban said unto him, "This is a divine matter, from which thou canst not possibly ask for release; therefore let us go forthwith to King Abagha, and if he consents thereto we shall receive the conclusion."

And they rose up and set out for Adhorbuan together with the aged and venerable men, and Fathers (Bishops), and monks who accompanied them, for at that time the kings used to pass the summer in that place. And they arrived at the place where the king was at Black Mountain, which is known in Persian as Sia Kuh, and the Amirs introduced them, and put forward their request. And the monks said unto the king, "May the king live for ever! The Catholicus is dead, and all the Christians wish and have agreed together that this Metropolitan who hath come from the countries of the East to go to Jerusalem should stand in his place. What doth the king command?" And Abgha replied, "This purity (or sincerity) of thoughts and conscience is worthy of admiration. . . he shall stand for them as their head and shall sit upon the Throne." And he took Mar Yahbh-Allaha by the hand and said unto him, "Be strong and rule, and may God be with thee and support thee. . . ."

Then Rabban Sauma and Mar Yahbh-Allaha rose up and came to Baghdad. And they went to the Great Church of Koke, and Mar Yahbh-Allaha received the Xeipotovia, that is to say, the laying on of hands, to hold the steering poles of the government of the Oriental Church. . . . This laying on of hands took place in the month of the second Teshri, on the first Sunday of the "Consecration of the Church," in the year one thousand five hundred and ninety-three of the Greeks [November, 1281], in the seven and thirtieth year of his age.

CHAPTER VI. The False Accusations Which Mar Yahbh Suffered in the Days of Ahmad the King.

After Abgha there rose up as king, his brother, Ahmad, the son of Hulagu. He lacked education and knowledge, and he persecuted the Christians greatly because of his association with the Hagaraye [the descendants of Hagar, the Muhammadans], towards whose religion he leaned, and because of two of the envious old men (Bishops), who found the opportunity to fulfil their desire. . . . These two bishops had plotted together and agreed that the one of them should become the Catholicus, and the other Metropolitan and Visitor-General. . . . Now the king who lacked understanding, inasmuch as he had cast God aside, did not ponder in his mind, saying, "These men can have no benefit in this matter, why should they bring themselves to make false accusations?" but he believed the words of the crafty ones. And by his command Mar Yahbh-Allaha, the Catholicus, and Rabban Sauma and the Amir Shamot were brought up into the Great House. After the written authorisations (Pukdane) which he had given to them, he took away the house of Mar Catholicus. . . . And when Mar Yahbh-Allaha and Rabban Sauma had gone into the Hall of Judgment, they did not know what was required of them, and they remained there stupefied, saying, "What have we done?" And the messenger who had brought them into the Hall of Judgment said unto them, "Your holy men, and the scribes, and the men of your Communion have made accusations against you before the king."

And the great Amirs, that is to say the judges said unto the Catholicus, "What evil thing hast thou seen in the king that thou shouldst lie concerning him, and shouldst send calumnies about him to the King of Kings, Kublai Khan saying, 'This man hath abandoned the way of his fathers and hath become a Muhammadan. And the Catholicus replied, 'I do not understand.'" And the judges said unto him, "Thy scribes have declared these things against thee." And the judges brought the scribes, and when each one of them had been questioned by himself, every one of them stated that which he knew. And Mar Catholicus said, "O Amirs, why do ye weary yourselves? Fetch back that messenger, with whom are the letters, and examine them. If this accusation which hath been made

against me is [proved] true, I will die ungrudgingly in my own blood. But if it be [proved] to a false, it rests with you to judge and to take vengeance [on my behalf].”

And the Amirs accepted this proposal, and they made it known to the king, and the king sent after the messenger, and took back from him all the letters in the neighbourhood of Khorasan. And when the letters had been opened and read, there was found in them nothing which any way resembled the accusations. But the judges said nothing about this to [the accusers of the Catholicus], and therefore we know that they had taken the letters as a pretext.

And the Catholicus remained in prison for forty days, more or less, in great anxiety, and bitter suffering and anguish all day long, until God in His mercy visited him, and he was saved from death. Now King Ahmad was exceedingly wroth with him, and as the thirsty man longeth for cool waters, even so did the king thirst to shed his blood. And would have done so had it not been for the Angel of Providence who governs this holy throne, and who wrought upon the mother of the king, and upon the Amirs, and prevented him from carrying into effect the thought which he had devised. And further, through the word of those whom we have mentioned, the Catholicus found mercy in the sight of the king, and he gave him [back] the Letter of Authority (Pukdana) and the Paiza, and he made his heart happy and sent him back.

CHAPTER VII. On the Departure of Rabban Sauma to the Country of the Romans in the Name of King Arghon and of the Catholicus Mar Yahbh-Allaha.

And King Ahmad and his troops went to Khorasan in order to seize King Arghon, the son of King Abgha. And he had made a pact with the two persons who have been mentioned above, and with the chiefs of the Arabs, that when he had seized that prince he should slay the rest of the royal children, and that he should become Khalifah in Baghdad, and put an end to the life of the Catholicus also. But his thought returned empty, and his plan had no result, for the Lord setteth aside the thoughts of the children of men, and establisheth His design. He dismisseth kings and maketh kings to pass away, but His kingdom standeth for ever. And the armies of Ahmad were scattered--now, the greater number of the troops took the side of Arghon and Ahmad was captured and killed [in the year 1284]. . . . And the joy of the Catholicus was great, not because of the death of Ahmad, but because Arghon had become king. And there and then the Catholicus, and the old men and the monks went to offer their congratulations to King Arghon, and to pay the homage. . . .

Now Mar Yahbh-Allaha, the Catholicus, increased in power, and his honour before the King and Queens grew greater daily. He pulled down the church of Mar Shalita which was in Maraghah, and he rebuilt it at very great expense. And instead of using [the old] beams [and making a single roof] he made [the new church] with two naves; and by the side of it he built a cell in which to live. For his affection for the house of King Arghon was very warm, because Arghon loved the Christians with his whole heart. And Arghon intended to go into the countries of Palestine and Syria and to subjugate them and take possession of them, but he said to himself, “If the Western Kings, who are Christians, will not help me I shall not be able to fulfil my desire.” Thereupon he asked the Catholicus to give him a wise man, “one who is suitable and is capable of undertaking an embassy, that we may send him to those kings.” And when the Catholicus saw that there was no man who knew the language except Rabban Sauma, and knowing that he was fully capable of this, he commanded him to go [on the embassy].

Then Rabban Sauma said, “I desire this embassy greatly, and I long to go.” Then straightway King Arghon wrote for him “Authorities” (pukdana) to the king of the Greeks, and the king of the Perogaye (Franks) that is to say Romans, . . . and gave him gifts for each of the kings [addressed by him]. . . . And Rabban Sauma set out on his journey, and there went with him a number of excellent men from among the priests and deacons of the Cell of the Catholicus. And he arrived at Beth Rhomaye [the territory of the Romans] on the borders of the Sea of Meka [the Black Sea], he saw the church that was there, and [then] went down [embarked] in a ship and his companions were with him. Now there were more than three hundred souls in the ship, and each day he consoled them with [his] discourse on the Faith. Now the greater number of those who dwelt in the ship were Romans (Byzantine Greeks), and because of the savour of his speech they paid him honour in no small degree. And after [some] days he arrived at the great city of Constantinople, and before they went into it he sent two young men to the Royal gate (Sublime Porte) to make known there that an ambassador of King Arghon had come. Then the king commanded certain people to go forth to meet them, and to bring them in with pomp and honour. And when Rabban Sauma went into

the city, the king allotted to him a house, that is to say, a mansion in which to dwell. And after Rabban Sauma had rested himself, he went to visit the king . . . and after he had saluted him, the king asked him, "How art thou after the workings of the sea and the fatigue of the road?" And Rabban Sauma replied, "With the sight of the Christian king fatigue hath vanished and exhaustion hath departed, for I was exceedingly anxious to see your kingdom, the which may our Lord establish!"

And after they had enjoyed food and drink Rabban Sauma asked the king to be allowed to see the churches and the shrines [or tombs] of the Fathers [Patriarchs], and the relics of the saints that were therein. And the king handed Rabban Sauma over to the nobles of his kingdom and they showed him everything that was there. . . . And he departed from Constantinople and went down to the sea. . . . And after two months of toil, and weariness, and exhaustion, Rabban Sauma arrived at the sea-shore, and he landed at the name of which was Napoli (Naples); the name of its king was Irid Shardalo [the King Charles II]. And he went to the king and showed him the reason why they had come; and the king welcomed him and paid him honour. Now it happened that there was war between him and another king, whose name was Irid Arkon [the King of Aragon, James II]. And the troops of the one had come in many ships, and the troops of the other were ready, and they began to fight each other, and the King of Aragon conquered King Charles II, and slew twelve thousand his men, and sunk their ships in the sea. Meanwhile Rabban Sauma and his companions sat upon the roof the mansion in which they lived, and they admired the way in which the Franks waged war for they attacked none of the people except those who were actually combatants. And from that place they travelled inland on horses, and they passed through towns and villages and marvelled because they found no land which was destitute of buildings. On the road they heard that Mar Papa [Honorius IV who died in 1287] was dead. . . .

Three days later the Cardinals sent and summoned Rabban Sauma to their presence. And when he went to them they began to ask him questions, saying, "What is thy quarter of the world, and why hast thou come?" And Rabban Sauma said unto him, "The Mongols and the Catholicus of the East have sent me to Mar Papa concerning the matter of Jerusalem; and they have sent letters with me." The Cardinals said unto him, "Where is the Throne of the Catholicus?" He said to them, "In Baghdad. . . . Know ye, O our Fathers, that many of our Fathers have gone into the countries of the Mongols, and Turks, and Chinese and have taught them the Gospel, and at the present time there are many Mongols who are Christians. For many of the sons of the Mongol kings and queens have been baptized and confess Christ. And they have established churches in their military camps, and they pay honour to the Christians, and there are among them many who are believers. Now the king [of the Mongols], who is joined in the bond of friendship with the Catholicus, hath the desire to take Palestine, and the countries of Syria, and he demandeth from you help in order to take Jerusalem. He hath chosen me and hath sent me to you because, being a Christian, my word will be believed by you. . . .

Then Rabban Sauma said unto them, "I have come from remote countries neither to discuss, nor to instruct [men] in matter of the Faith, but I came that I might receive a blessing from Mar Papa, and from the shrines of the saints and to make known the words of King [Arghon] and the Catholicus. If it be pleasing in your eyes, let us set aside discussion, and do ye give attention and direct someone to show us the churches here and the shrines of the saints; [if ye will do this] ye will confer a very great favour on your servant and disciple."

Then the Cardinals summoned the Amir of the city and certain monks and commanded them to show him the churches and the holy places that were there; and they went forth straightway and saw the places which we will now mention. First of all they went into the church of Peter and Paul. . . . And when they had seen all the churches and monasteries that were in Great Rome, they went outside the city to the church of Mar Paul the Apostle, where under the altar is his tomb. And there, too, is the chain wherewith Paul was bound when he was dragged to that place. . . .

Afterwards they went to the country of Pariz (Paris), to king Fransis [Philippe IV le Bel]. And the king sent out a large company of men to meet them, and they brought them into the city with great honour and ceremony. Now the territories of the French king were in extent more than a month's journey. And the king of France assigned to Rabban Sauma a place wherein to dwell, and three days later sent one of his Amirs to him and summoned him to his presence. And when he had come the king stood up before him and paid him honour, and said unto him, "Why hast thou come? And who sent thee?" And Rabban Sauma said unto him, " King Arghon and the Catholicus of the East have sent me concerning the matter of Jerusalem." And he showed him all the matters which he knew, and he gave him the letters which he had with him, and the gifts, that is to say, presents which he had brought. And the

king of France answered him, saying, "If it be indeed so that the Mongols, though they are not Christians, are going to fight against the Arabs for the capture of Jerusalem, it is meet especially for us that we should fight [with them], and if our Lord willeth, go forth in full strength."

And they went forth from that place, that is to say, from Paris, to go to the king of England, to Kasonia (Gascony). And having arrived in twenty days at their city [Bordeaux], the inhabitants of the city went forth to meet them, and they asked them, "Who are ye?" And Rabban Sauma and his companions replied, "We are ambassadors, and we have come from beyond the eastern seas, and we are envoys of the King, and of the Patriarch, and the Kings of the Mongols." And the people made haste and went to the king and informed him [of their arrival], and the king welcomed them gladly, and the people introduced them into his presence. . . . And King Edward gave us many gifts and money for the expenses of the road (74). And from that place we came to the city of Genoa, in order to pass the winter there. And when we arrived there we saw a garden which resembled Paradise; its winter was not [too] cold, and its summer is not [too] hot. Green foliage is found therein all the year round, and trees, the leaves of which do not fall, and which are not stripped of their fruit. There is in the city a kind of vine which yields grapes seven times a year, but the people do not press out wine from them; At the end of the winter there came from the country of Almadan (Allemagne) a man of high degree, who was the "Visitor" of Mar Papa, and who was on his way to Rome. And when he heard that Rabban Sauma was there, he went to visit him and salute him. And when he entered [his house] they gave each other "Peace!" and they kissed each other in the love of Christ. And the Visitor said unto Rabban Sauma, "I have come to see thee. For I have heard concerning thee, that thou art a good and wise man, and also that thou hast the desire to go to Rome." And Rabban Sauma said unto him, "What shall I say unto thee, O beloved and noble man? I have come on an embassy from King Arghon, and the Catholicus of the East to Mar Papa on the subject of Jerusalem. Behold I have been a year of days [since I came], and a Pope hath not sat. When I go back what shall I say and what answer can I make to the Mongols? Those, whose hearts are harder than flint, wish to take the Holy City, and those to whom it belongeth never allow the matter to occupy their minds, and moreover, they do not consider this thing to be of any importance whatsoever! We shall go and say we know not." Then the Visitor said unto him, "Thy words are true. I myself will go and show in their integrity the Cardinals all the words which thou hast spoken, and will urge them to appoint a Pope."

And that Visitor departed from him and went to Rome, and he explained the matter to the king, that is to say Mar Papa, and that same day the Pope sent a messenger to Rabban Sauma and his companions [bidding] them to go to him. And as soon as ever the messenger had arrived, they set out for Rome with the greatest readiness and they arrived there in fifteen days. . . . And when they arrived Mar Papa sent out a Metropolitan bishop and a large company of men to meet them. And straightway Rabban Sauma went into the presence of Mar Papa, who was seated on his throne. And he drew nigh to the Pope, bowing down to the ground as he did so, and he kissed his feet and his hands, and he withdrew walking backwards, with his hands clasped [on his breast]. And he said to Mar Papa, "May thy throne stand for ever, O our Father! And may it be blessed above all kings and nations! And may it make peace to reign in thy days throughout the Church to the uttermost ends of the earth! Now that I have seen thy face mine eyes are illuminated, and I shall not go away brokenhearted to the countries [of the East]. I give thanks to the goodness of God who hath held me to be worthy to see thy face. . . ."

And he gave to Rabban Sauma a small piece of the apparel of our Lord Christ, and a piece of the cape that is to say, kerchief of my Lady Mary, and some small fragments of the bodies of the saints that were there. And he sent to Mar Yahgh-Allaha a crown for his head which was of fine gold and was inlaid with precious stones; and sacred vestments made of red cloth through which ran threads of gold; and socks and sandals on which real pearls were sewn; and the ring from his finger; and a "Pethikha" or Bull which authorized him to exercise Patriarchal dominion over all the Children of the East. And he gave to Rabban Sauma a "Pethikha" which authorized him to act as Visitor-General over all Christians. And Mar Papa blessed him and he caused to be assigned to him for expenses on the road one thousand, five hundred mathkale of red gold. And to King Arghon he sent certain gifts. And he embraced Rabban Sauma and kissed him and dismissed him. And Rabban Sauma thanked our Lord who had held him to be worthy of such blessings as these.

And Rabban Sauma returned. He crossed the seas which he crossed when he came, and he arrived in peace at the place where King Arghon was, sound in body, and with soul safely kept. And he gave to him the Letter of Blessings, and the gifts which he had brought from Mar Papa and from all the kings of the Franks. And he showed him how they had welcomed him with love, and how they had hearkened gladly to the Pukdane (or Royal

Dispatches) which he had carried [to them], and he related the wonderful things which he had seen, and the power of [their] kingdom[s].

CHAPTER VIII. The Good Acts of King Arghon, and his Death

In the year one thousand five hundred and ninety-eight [A.D. 1288], King Arghon gave the command to transport Mar Yahbh-Allaha to the Camp, even as Rabban Sauma had asked. And for the honour of the Catholicus, and also to support (or sustain) the hearts of all the Christians who confessed Christ, and to increase the love for Him among them, he set up a church so close to the Door of the Throne, that the ropes of the curtains of the church intermingled with those of his house. [The church was a tent]. And he made a great feast [which lasted] three days, and King Arghon himself brought food to the Catholicus, and handed the cup of drink to him and to all the members of his company. . . . Now when the state of affairs which we have mentioned had remained thus for a short time, God the Lord of the Universe, the Lord of death and of going forth, removed King Arghon to the seat of joys and to the Abrahamic bosom. And at his departure grief fettered the whole Church which is under the heavens, because the things which were done before his time and were done badly were rightly straightened in his time. And who was there who did not suffer by the change of sovereignty? For how could it be otherwise? Behold it is a matter of difficulty for every man, and hard to describe especially when a man knoweth the nobles of the King and all the members of the royal household, to say nothing of the king of the time himself.

CHAPTER IX. King Kaikhato and Mar Yahbh-Allaha.

Now the Church passed some days with matters in this state, when suddenly, a younger brother of the dead king, who was called Irnaghin Tonghin, burst forth, and was crowned king [under the name of] Kaikhato; he took the sceptre of the kingdom and sat upon the throne of his brother. He [began to] rule in the year of the Greeks, one thousand six hundred and two [AD 1291] in the month of Abh (August) of that year. . . . Now because Rabban Sauma had already become an old man, the hard life of the Mongols, and the prolonged sojourning in desert places, became intolerable to him. And he caused the victorious King Kaikhato to promulgate an order for him to build a church in the city of Maraghan, and to place therein the vessels and the vestments for the service of the church, which the dead King Arghon had set up in the Camp. And his request was granted by the king. And as soon as he received this permission he at once set out for city of Maraghan, taking with him the vessels and vestments for the service of Mar Catholicus. . . .

CHAPTER X. The Death of Rabban Sauma and of the Kings Kaikhato and Baido

Rabban Sauma toiled by night and by day in the church which he had built, and he arranged everything in it in a perfect manner. . . . And having finished the church which we have described above, Rabban Sauma came down in the service of Mar Catholicus to Baghdad, in the year of the Greeks, one hundred six hundred and five, in the month of the first Teshri (October) of that year [A.D. 1293]. And King Baidar, the son of the brother of King Abhgha, made a great feast in a place called Sirzur (in Kurdistan) in honour of the Catholic and he gathered together all the officials of his Court to the banquet. And Rabban Sauma rose up with his temperament disordered and he fell down, being seized with fever. On the following day he bade farewell to King Bidar, and he arrived in the city of Arbil to settle urgent affairs, and [enjoy] the kindness of the church folk. And the sickness of Rabban Sauma increased, and he was seized with severe pains, but he prolonged his life until the Catholicus arrived in the city of Baghdad. And his disease waxed heavy, healing took to flight, his life was despaired of, and he departed from this world of nothingness and tribulation to the world of holiness and to the City of the Saints, Jerusalem which is in the heavens, . . . on the tenth day of the month Kanon' Khrai (January) of that same year (A.D. 1294). And his holy body was buried in the Darath Rhomaye, on the north side of the altar, outside the inner court, on the south side of the house of prayer.

And the Catholicus passed that winter in Baghdad. On the day of the great festival he set out, and met the victorious King Kaikhato at Ala Tak, where the royal Camp was. And the king honoured him with many gifts, . . . Then suddenly storms broke, and the waves of confusion rose high in the kingdom; the Amirs acted treacherously towards the king and the tempests of suffering waxed strong on the world, and turmoil fell on creation. And men were slain without sufficient cause, and very many villages were looted by the soldiery with violence. And in the

winter of the year one thousand six hundred and six [1295], the road from Adhorbijan to Baghdad and to Diarbakr were cut, and the fighters did not cease from the quarrels which they had set afoot, and at length they destroyed King Kaikhato by violent death, and delivered the kingdom to King Baido. This unhappy [prince] only accepted the kingdom through fear for his life. He remained on the throne from the 24th day of the month of Nisan (April) until the 25th day of the month of Ilul (September) of the same year, more or less. He governed and reigned in a state of perturbation, and prolonged his days in perpetual fear. Now without making over long [our] narrative, and making [our] History, which has a definite object, become somewhat different, it is impossible to describe completely the plots, and the trickeries, and the crafty devices, and the treacherous works which the enemies [of the kingdom] set on foot during the five months of the struggle which went on between Baido and the victorious King Kazan, the son of the deceased King Arghon . To speak briefly the murderers of the blessed King Khaikato, plotted the murder of his successor Baidu. Then division fell (took place), and the world was in turmoil. The peoples of the Arabs roused themselves to take vengeance on the Church and its children for the destruction which the father of these kings had inflicted upon them. Then suddenly, . . . on the 25th day of the month of Ilul (September), a rumour was heard of the flight of King Baidu and of his destruction, and with it came the proofs, that in very truth the abandonment of [the Church by] God had taken place.