



Marco Polo

***Excerpts from The Book of Ser Marco Polo:
The Venetian Concerning Kingdoms and Marvels of the East***

BOOK SECOND. PART I.

CHAPTER X. CONCERNING THE PALACE OF THE GREAT KAAN

You must know that it is the greatest palace that ever was. ... The roof is very lofty, and the walls of the Palace are all covered with gold and silver. They are also adorned with representations of dragons [sculptured and gilt], beasts and birds, knights and idols, and sundry other subjects. And on the ceiling too you see nothing but gold and silver and painting.

[On each of the four sides there is a great marble staircase leading to the top of the marble wall, and forming the approach to the palace.]

The Hall of the Palace is so large that it could easily dine 6000 people; and it is quite a marvel to see how many rooms there are besides. The building is altogether so vast, so rich, and so beautiful, that no man on earth could design anything superior to it. ...

BOOK SECOND. PART I.

**CHAPTER XXX. CONCERNING THE BLACK STONES THAT ARE DUG IN CATHAY,
AND ARE BURNT FOR FUEL**

It is a fact that all over the country of Cathay there is a kind of black stone existing in beds in the mountains, which they dig out and burn like firewood. If you supply the fire with them at night, and see that they are well kindled, you will find them still alight in the morning; and they make such fine fuel that no other is used throughout the country. It is true that they have plenty of wood also, but they do not burn it, because those stones burn better and cost less.

[Moreover with the vast number of people and the number of baths they maintain—for every one has such a bath at least three times a week, and in winter if possible every day, whilst every nobleman and man of wealth has a private bath for his own use—the wood would not suffice for the purpose.]

BOOK SECOND. PART III.

CHAPTER LXXV. OF THE NOBLE CITY OF SUJU,¹

Suju is a very great and noble city. The people are Idolaters, subjects of the Great Kaan, and have paper money. They possess silk in great quantities, from which they make gold brocade and other stuffs, and they live by their manufactures and trade.

The city is passing great, and has a circuit of some 60 miles; it hath merchants of great wealth and an incalculable number of people. Indeed, if the men of this city and of the rest of Manzi² had but the spirit of soldiers they would conquer the world; but they are no soldiers at all, only accomplished traders and most skillful craftsmen. There are also in this city many great philosophers and leeches, diligent students of nature.

BOOK SECOND. PART III.

CHAPTER LXXVI. DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT CITY OF KINSAY,³ WHICH IS THE CAPITAL OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY OF MANZI⁴

When you have left the city of Changan and have travelled for three days through a splendid country, passing a number of towns and villages, you arrive at the most noble city of Kinsay, a name which is as much as to say in our tongue "The City of Heaven," as I told you before.

And since we have got thither I will enter into particulars about its magnificence; and these are well worth telling, for the city is beyond dispute the finest and the noblest in the World.