Marco Polo and John Mandeville

Seeing the World

Who was Marco Polo?

Description of the World

Le livre des merveilles

Il Milione

The Travels

[Image of Medieval Worldview map]

TO map

Asia

Africa

Europe

Jerusalem

[Image of Portrait of Marco Polo]

Cover of the first printed edition of The Travels of Marco Polo. 1477.

[Image of Columbus margin notes on Marco Polo’s Le Livre des Merveilles, Latin edition]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ColumbusNotesToMarcoPolo.jpg
Taking the Cross

Crusades

- First Crusade 1096-1099 ff
- Second Crusade 1145-49
- Third Crusade 1189-92

Fourth Crusade (1201-1204)

- Pope Innocent III
- Venetian bargain
- Dispute over Byzantine Succession

Taking Constantinople

- Baldwin of Flanders, Emperor
- Latin Empire
- 1204-1261

Greek restoration

Venetian merchants expelled

Gengis Khan's conquest, d. 1227
Mongol Khans

Mongol Map

http://mapcollection.wordpress.com/2012/06/27/the-mongol-empire/

Polo Family

Timeline

1354 Marco Polo born
1355-1260 Niccolò & Maffeo in Constantinople, travel to Crimea
1261 Latin Empire falls
1262 War, Hulegu v. Barka Khan
1269 Polos Return to Acre, Venice
1271 Niccolò, Maffeo, and Marco (17) depart for Cathay
1292 Polos return to Venice, Marco (38)
1299 Marco captured by Genoese
1300 Niccolò dies, Marco (46) marries Donata

Three daughters
1310 Brother Maffeo dies
1318 Uncle Maffeo dies
1324 Marco Polo dies (70)

Venice

1400
Li Livres du Graunt Ciam
French

Niccolò and Maffeo 1255-69

• Constantinople,
  – Emperor Baldwin
• Heading East,
  – Barak, Khan of the Golden Horde
  – Hulegu, Il-Khan of Persia

Bodleian Library
MS. Bodl. 264
The Polos’ routes

Did Marco Polo go to China?

Documentary evidence

- Family wills, deeds, and contracts
  - 4 golden tablets of authority
  - Mongol headdress, “tartar” embroidery
- Family wealth rises after 1291
- Marco & daughters all married into Venetian elite
  - fraterna compagnia
  - traded in musk
- His routes can be mapped
12C Qingming Scroll of Kaifeng

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/70/Qingming_Festival_3.jpg

12C Qingming Scroll of Kaifeng

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d4/Qingming_Festival_4.jpg

The Khan at war
UB Graz Sig.: HB 15 210/P 778.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1a/Qingming_Festival_5.jpg
Marco Polo

- What was his worldview? His centre of reference?
  - Matured in world of the Tartar, Muslim, and Mongol
  - Venetian merchant and commercial agent for Khans
  - Court of the Mongols

The Romance of Alexander

Rustichello of Pisa
Romance writer

Who was John de Mandeville?

The Book of John de Mandeville

Author / Compiler

Author = persona

- A typical "medieval" product of late 1350s
  - Sources, compiler/narrator, copyists, translators, editors, some with an agenda
- French, either Anglo-Norman or Continental
- Translations
  - Middle English
  - Latin
  - Higgins' translation: first English translation from the French since 1400

Author / Compiler

Two "backbone" Latin texts

- William of Boldensle, Dominican pilgrim, 1332
  - Book of Certain Regions beyond the Mediterranean, 1337
  - Orderly and skeptical memoir
- Odoric of Pordenone, Franciscan missionary to India and China, 1320
  - Account, 1330
  - Miscellany, random account of pious missionary awed by foreign wonders
  - Both well modified, especially Odoric
But not Marco Polo

(But Odoric did borrow from Polo's text)

Author / Compiler

Purpose

- Stated in Prologue
  - But conveyed in the text?
  - Others?
- Vernacular French
  - Why?

Best-seller

- Well researched, engaging, meant to satisfy its curious reader
- Read and rewritten by and for clerics, scholars, travelers, and "courtly" and urban elites
- Appeals to a public with inquiring curiosity
  - "Diversities" and "new things give pleasure"
- Bound with many other and varied works
- Reliable facts and fabulous marvels

What does it reveal about the medieval worldview?

- Who are the "other"?
- Are all others regarded the same?
- How does his attitude verge on syncretism?
- How does the text both confirm and challenge:
  - common medieval assumptions?
  - common modern assumptions?

http://flemishamerican.blogspot.ca/2010/10/fl
ish-inspiration-and-travels-of-sir.html

http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/ssg/0016

Digitized German 15thC version