

writing of *Tsin* in Hebrew at Tudela. Benjamin appears to have heard these tales of the voyage to China at the island of Kish, which would seem to have been the limit of his travels;¹ what he relates of India likewise being to all appearance mere hearsay. Indeed the eleventh and twelfth centuries are more bare of notices of communication between China and western nations than almost any others since the beginning of our era.

87. ABULFEDA (1273-1331) belongs to a date subsequent to the rise of the Mongol power, which we have fixed as a dividing mark in the treatment of this subject; but it will be more convenient to dispose of his notices of China now, in connexion with those of the other Arab writers who have been already cited. Notwithstanding the facilities which his age afforded for obtaining correct information about China, he does not seem to have been in the way of profiting greatly by them. His knowledge of those regions is, as he himself complains, very much restricted, and his accounts are chiefly derived from books long antecedent to his own time and to that of the Mongol sovereigns, though they are not altogether devoid of recent information. Some extracts of the essential part of his information on China will be found in the supplementary notes, and will show this curious mixture of the obsolete statements of the geographers of the tenth or eleventh centuries with items of modern knowledge;² affording an analogy to the maps of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which in remoter Asia sometimes present a strange jumble of Ptolemy, Marco Polo, and recent discoveries.

VIII. CHINA UNDER THE MONGOL DYNASTY, KNOWN AS CATHAY.

88. We now arrive at the epoch of the Mongols, during whose predominance the communication of China with the western

¹ I have fallen into an error in the notes on Odoric (p. 52), and again at p. 400, in confounding the large island of *Kishm*, near the mouth of the Persian Gulf, with the much smaller *Kais* or *Kish*, about a hundred miles further up, which last was the real terminus of Indian trade for several ages, and the seat of a principality, *Quisci* of Polo. At least two modern editors of Polo seem to have made the same mistake. Yet Marco, I see, shows the true approximate position of *Quisci* as two hundred miles further up the Gulf than Hormuz. Kish, in the map before me (*Steiler's Hand Atlas*), is termed *Guase* or *Kena*.

² See note XIII.