

But his own palace in which he dwells is of vast size and splendour. The basement thereof is raised about two paces from the ground, and within there be four-and-twenty columns of gold; and all the walls are hung with skins of red leather, said to be the finest in the world. In the midst of the palace is a certain great jar, more than two paces in height, entirely formed of a certain precious stone called *Merdacas*,<sup>1</sup> [and so fine, that I was told its price exceeded the value of four great towns].<sup>2</sup> It is all hooped round with gold, and in every corner thereof is a dragon<sup>3</sup> represented as in act to strike most fiercely. And this jar hath also fringes of network of great pearls hanging therefrom, and these fringes are a span in breadth. Into this vessel drink is conveyed by certain conduits from the court of the palace;

<sup>1</sup> Certainly the oriental Jade or *Yu* of the Chinese, which stood as high in the estimation of the Mongols, and figures largely in their legends and their poetry. Thus when Chinghiz was proclaimed Khagan on the grassy meadows of the river Kerulan, a certain stone spontaneously flew asunder, and disclosed a great seal of graven jade, which was kept as a palladium by his descendants, and was almost the only thing saved by the last emperor of his house when flying from the Chinese insurgents. (*Schmidt*, pp. 71, 133.)

The Mongol word for jade cited in this authority is *khas*, which is doubtless the termination of the name used in the text.

I cannot say what the first part of that name is. But it is worthy of notice that the mountain near Khotan, which supplies some of the best jade, is called, according to Timkowski, *Mirjái*, or *Kash-tash* (*Turk.* "Jade-rock"). Can *Merdacas*=*Mirjai-khas*? Further, can the Tartar name have anything to do with the Persian *khás*, "royal, noble"? Crawford technically styles the Burmese jade "noble serpentine," and in the narrative of Goës we find the jade of Yarkand spoken of as "*marmoris illius apud Sinas nobilissimi.*"

It may be added that Pegolotti names, among various kinds of silk in the Eastern markets, *seta merdachascia*; what does *this* mean? (*Pegolotti*, p. 301.) Since writing these words I find that Freytag's Arab. lexicon has "*Midaqs*; *Sericum crudum*," found also in Armenian as *Metaks* (*St. Martin on Lebeau*, ix, 226), which is, therefore, probably the *seta merdachascia* of Pegolotti, as well as the *μέταξα, μέταξις* of the Byzantines. Is it possible that this word was an Orientalised reflexion of *Μηδική* which Procopius says had been the old Greek name for silk stuffs?

<sup>2</sup> MIN. RAM.

<sup>3</sup> *Serpens.*