

Plano Carpini, the first traveller to Mongolia whose narrative we have, says nothing of Prester John. Rubruquis, a few years later, goes into considerable detail on the subject.¹

"At the time," he says, "when the Franks took Antioch the sovereignty in these regions of Northern Asia was held by a certain Coir-Khan. *Coir* was his proper name, *Cham* his title, the word having the meaning of soothsayer, which is applied to their princes, because they govern the people by means of divination.² And we read in the history of Antioch that the Turks sent for succour against the Franks to King Coir-Cham; for all the Turks came originally from those parts of the world. Now this Coir was of Cara Catay: *Cara* meaning *Black*, and *Catay* being the name of a nation, so that *Cara Catay* is as much as to say the Black Cathayans. And they were so called to distinguish them from the proper Cathayans, who dwell upon the ocean in the far east, of whom I shall tell you something hereafter. But these (Black)

had met with in those parts (*in partibus illis*). Baronius refers this to "the King of the Indians, vulgarly called *Pretejanni*, reigning far and wide over Ethiopia," and supposes it possible that the church possessed in his own time by the Abyssinians, at the back of the apse of St. Peter's, might have been granted on this occasion. The commentator, Pagius, rejects this, and considers the king to have been Prester John of Asia.

But I suspect that Baronius is right, and that the King of Abyssinia is in question. The *illis partibus* is vague, and may refer to Egypt or to Palestine, where Doctor Philip might well have met with Abyssinian pilgrims. There is no mention of the term *Prester John* in the document itself; and the application of that title to the Abyssinian king was probably a good deal later than this, though earlier than has generally been supposed, as will appear hereafter (*Annal. Eccles.*, Lucæ, 1746, vol. xix, p. 450).

A letter given by Matthew Paris, which was written from the Holy Land, in 1237, by Philip, Prior of the Dominicans there, speaks of the heads of the various sects of oriental Christians; and among others, of one who was over all the Nestorians in the east, and whose prelacy extended over India the Greater, and the kingdom *Sacerdotis Johannis*, and other realms still nearer the sun rising. Here it is, doubtless, the Asiatic potentate who is spoken of (*Rerum Angliæ Scriptores*, etc., Francofurti, 1601, p. 301).

¹ Page 259 *et seq.*

² The old "medicine-men" of the Tartars, before the introduction of Buddhism, were really called *Kams* (*Qámán* of the Persian writers, see *D'Ohsson*, i, 17, and also between 429 and 435). But I do not suppose there is any connexion between *Khán* or *Qán* and this *Kam*.