

brief but pregnant sketches of Marco Polo, so singularly corroborated even to minutiae in our own day by Captain Wood, and these fragmentary memoranda of Benedict Goës. It seems impossible absolutely to determine the route followed by Marco, but from his mentioning a twelve days march along the lofty plain it seems probable that he followed, as certainly the ancient Chinese pilgrims did, a course running north from the head of the Oxus valley over the plateau to the latitude of Tashbalik before descending into Eastern Turkestan. Goës and his caravan, on the other hand, following what is probably the usual route of later days, would seem to have crossed athwart the Pamir, in the direction of the sources of the Yarkand river, and passing two or more of the ridges that buttress the Bolor on the east, to have descended on Yanghi-Hissar, a city intermediate between Kashgar and Yarkand. A modern caravan route, laid down by Macartney in the map attached to Elphinstone's "Caubul," seems evidently to represent the same line as that taken by our traveller's party, and both representations appear to suggest the view of its general course which has just been indicated.

The country in which Goës found himself after the passage of these mountains has been equally shut up from European access since the days of the great Mongol empires, but has become better known from Chinese sources, having been for long intervals and from a very early date under the influence of the Chinese. This region, perhaps best designated as Eastern Turkestan, but named in maps of the last century (I know not why) as "Little Bokhara," forms a great depressed valley of some four hundred miles in width from north to south, supposed by Humboldt from botanical inductions not to exceed twelve hundred feet in the absolute elevation of its lower portions. It is shut in on three sides by mountain ranges of great height, viz. : on the north by the Thian Shan or Celestial Mountains of the Chinese, separating it from the plains of the Ili, on the south by the Kuen-Lun propping the great plateau of Tibet, and on the west by the transverse chain of the Bolor dividing it from Western Turkestan. The greater part of the surface of this depression is desert, of clayey soil and stony surface towards the foot of the mountain