

52. BAILO (and see ACMAT, c. 85)

bailo R

This title appears only in conjunction with «Achmach» (read «Achmath»)’s name (see «Acmat»), in RAMUSIO’s account of Aḥmad’s murder. In *B*¹, 128, the text, without any comment, is given as follows : Whenever Aḥmad heard of a beautiful girl, his ruffians would go to the girl’s father and say : «Tu hai questa tua figliuola; dalla per moglie al Bailo — poichè davano ad Acmat un nome che corrisponde al nostro *bailo* od al nostro *vicario* — e noi faremo che egli ti dia il tal governo . . . ». This is also the interpretation adopted in the English version made under BENEDETTO’s influence in *RR*, 125; later on, RAMUSIO speaks of the messenger which the conspirators sent «ad Bailo Acmat» (*B*¹, 129), «to the *Bailo* Acmat» (*RR*, 127). But RAMUSIO’s original text is : «Dalla per moglie al Bailo, civè, ad Achmach, perche si diceua Bailo, come si diria Vicario . . . »; the second time, RAMUSIO’s text is that a messenger was sent «ad Achmach Bailo». It is clear that *RR* and *B*¹ do not translate, but correct RAMUSIO. The text, as it is, can only mean what it is made to mean in *Y*, I, 417 : « . . . Give her in marriage to the Bailo Achmath (for they called him ‘the Bailo’, or, as we should say, ‘the Viceregent’) . . . »

Of course, there is here a serious difficulty. «Bailo» was the name of the representative of the Venetian power in Constantinople and in Syria, the same who was called *podestà* during the Latin rule, and Polo uses this last name in the Prologue when speaking of the first voyage of his father and his uncle (cf. Vol. I, 74, and see «Ponte of Venese»). But, although that title was then used in Armenian as *bail*, in Syriac as *Pali* (read **Pail*; cf. PATKANOV, *Istoriya Mongol. Magakii*, 79; BRUNS, *Chron. syriacum*, transl., 523), and, under the form باليرز *balioz*, has long survived in Osmanli as the designation of the Venetian and French representatives in Constantinople, no one can imagine, as YULE rightly says, that this European word was used at the Mongol Court of Peking. Consequently, YULE supposes that we may have here some confusion made by Polo with an Oriental title, and proposes the Arabic *wāli*, «prince», «governor», «chief magistrate». RICCI and ROSS, in their Index (*RR*, 412), have likewise said that *bailo* was «here probably a corruption of the Arabic *Wāli*», without seeing the contradiction between this note and the «amended» version adopted in their text. BENEDETTO, in his Index (*B*¹, 451) prints *bailo* in italics like the words which are not Italian.

I think that YULE is partly right, and that some Oriental word underlies RAMUSIO’s «Bailo»; the way in which RAMUSIO speaks of «Achmach Bailo», not «Bailo Achmach», seems to confirm an Oriental title used in the Persian or Chinese manner. But *wāli* is out of the question; it has never been in use in the Far East, and it is unimaginable that Aḥmad’s illiterate servants, Mongols or Chinese, should have addressed Chinese parents in Arabic. Moreover, there is no necessity for charging the confusion to Polo’s account. Polo, when making the servants speak of their master, or when speaking of the letter addressed to Aḥmad by the conspirators, must have used the title as it was really known to him in the Far East. But RAMUSIO, or perhaps the men responsible for RAMUSIO’s posthumous edition, could not read the foreign title, and altered it to their native and well-known *bailo*; they did not suspect that there had never been a *bailo* in China.