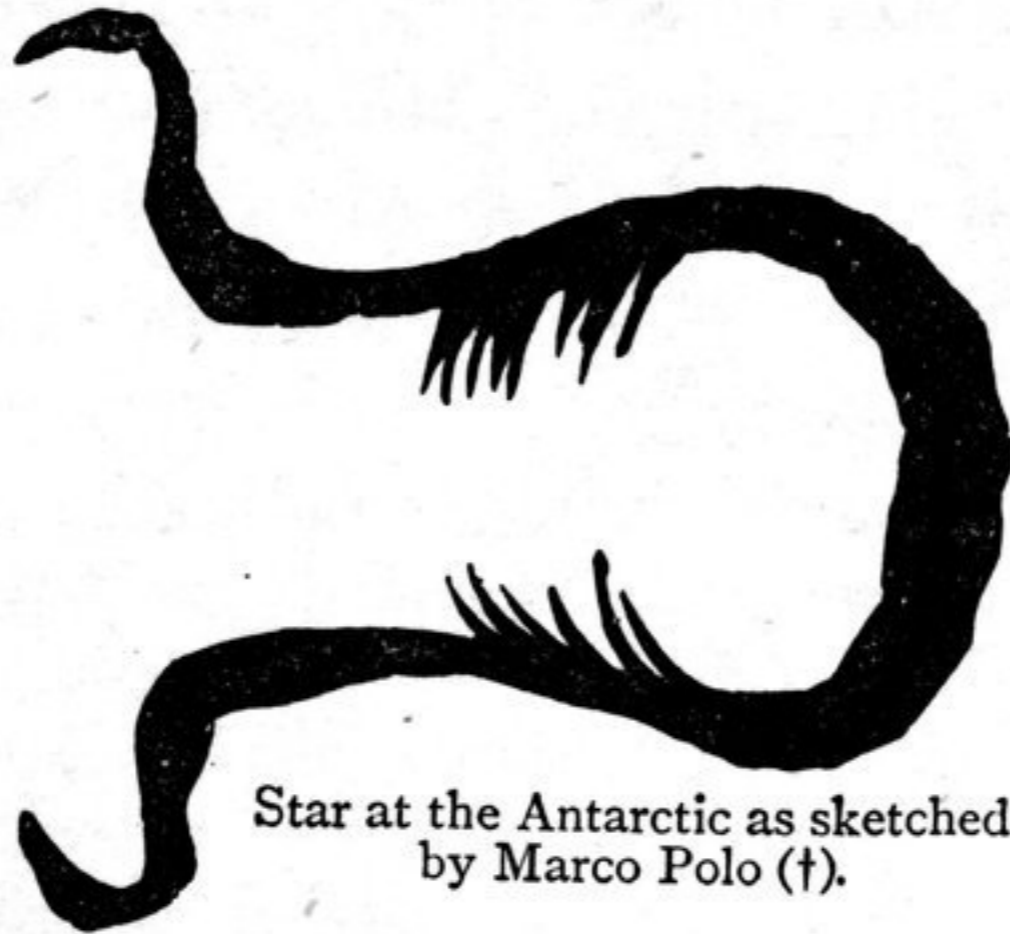


"In the country of the ZINGHI there is seen a star as big as a sack.



Star at the Antarctic as sketched  
by Marco Polo (†).

I know a man who has seen it, and he told me it had a faint light like a piece of a cloud, and is always in the south.\*

I have been told of this and other matters by MARCO the Venetian, the most extensive traveller and the most diligent inquirer whom I have ever known. He saw this same star under the Antarctic; he described it as having a great tail, and drew a figure of it *thus*. He also told me that he saw the Antarctic Pole at an altitude above the earth apparently equal to the

length of a soldier's lance, whilst the Arctic Pole was as much below the horizon. 'Tis from that place, he says, that they export to us camphor, lign-aloes, and brazil. He says the heat there is intense, and the habitations few. And these things he witnessed in a certain island at which he arrived by Sea. He tells me also that there are (wild?) men there, and also certain very great rams that have very coarse and stiff wool just like the bristles of our pigs.‡

In addition to these five I know no other contemporary references to Polo, nor indeed any other within the 14th century, though such there must surely be, excepting in a Chronicle written after the middle of that century by JOHN of

\* The great Magellanic cloud? In the account of Vincent Yanez Pinzon's Voyage to the S.W. in 1499 as given in Ramusio (III. 15) after Pietro Martire d'Anghieria, it is said:—"Taking the astrolabe in hand, and ascertaining the Antarctic Pole, they did not see any star like our Pole Star; but they related that they saw another manner of stars very different from ours, and which they could not clearly discern because of a certain dimness which diffused itself about those stars, and obstructed the view of them." Also the Kachh mariners told Lieutenant Leech that midway to Zanzibar there was a town (?) called Marethee, where the North Pole Star sinks below the horizon, and they steer by *a fixed cloud in the heavens*. (Bombay Govt. Selections, No. XV. N.S. p. 215.)

The great Magellan cloud is mentioned by an old Arab writer as a white blotch at the foot of Canopus, visible in the Tehama along the Red Sea, but not in Nejd or 'Irak. Humboldt, in quoting this, calculates that in A.D. 1000 the Great Magellan would have been visible at Aden some degrees above the horizon. (*Examen*, V. 235.)

† [It is curious that this figure is almost exactly that which among oriental carpets is called a "cloud." I have heard the term so applied by Vincent Robinson. It often appears in old Persian carpets, and also in Chinese designs. Mr. Purdon Clarke tells me it is called *nebula* in heraldry; it is also called in Chinese by a term signifying cloud; in Persian, by a term which he called *silen-i-khitai*, but of this I can make nothing.—*MS. Note by Yule*.]

‡ This passage contains points that are omitted in Polo's book, besides the drawing implied to be from Marco's own hand! The island is of course Sumatra. The animal is perhaps the peculiar Sumatran wild-goat, figured by Marsden, the hair of which on the back is "coarse and strong, almost like bristles." (*Sumatra*, p. 115.)