

and is also called Bocara. The city is the best in all Persia.¹ And when they had got thither, they found they could neither proceed further forward nor yet turn back again; wherefore they abode in that city of Bocara for three years. And whilst they were sojourning in that city, there came from Alau, Lord of the Levant, Envoys on their way to the Court of the Great Kaan, the Lord of all the Tartars in the world. And when the Envoys beheld the Two Brothers they were amazed, for they had never before seen Latins in that part of the world. And they said to the Brothers: "Gentlemen, if ye will take our counsel, ye will find great honour and profit shall come thereof." So they replied that they would be right glad to learn how. "In truth," said the Envoys, "the Great Kaan hath never seen any Latins, and he hath a great desire so to do. Wherefore, if ye will keep us company to his Court, ye may depend upon it that he will be right glad to see you, and will treat you with great honour and liberality; whilst in our company ye shall travel with perfect security, and need fear to be molested by nobody."²

NOTE 1.—Hayton also calls Bokhara a city of Persia, and I see Vámbéry says that, up till the conquest by Chinghiz, Bokhara, Samarkand, Balkh, etc., were considered to belong to Persia. (*Travels*, p. 377.) The first Mongolian governor of Bokhara was Buka Boshá.

King Barac is Borrak Khan, great-grandson of Chagatai, and sovereign of the Ulús of Chagatai, from 1264 to 1270. The Polos, no doubt, reached Bokhara before 1264, but Borrak must have been sovereign some time before they left it.

NOTE 2.—The language of the envoys seems rather to imply that they were the Great Kaan's own people returning from the Court of Hulaku. And Rashid mentions that Sartak, the Kaan's ambassador to Hulaku, returned from Persia in the year that the latter prince died. It may have been his party that the Venetians joined, for the year almost certainly was the same, viz. 1265. If so, another of the party was Bayan, afterwards the greatest of Kublai's captains, and much celebrated in the sequel of this book. (See *Erdmann's Temudschin*, p. 214.)

Marsden justly notes that Marco habitually speaks of *Latins*, never of *Franks*. Yet I suspect his own mental expression was *Farangi*.