

[The province of Gíl (Gílán), which is situated between the mountains and the Caspian Sea, and between the provinces of Azerbaíján and Mazandéran (H. C.)], gave name to the silk for which it was and is still famous, mentioned as *Ghelle (Gíli)* at the end of this chapter. This *Seta Ghella* is mentioned also by Pegolotti (pp. 212, 238, 301), and by Uzzano, with an odd transposition, as *Seta Leggi*, along with *Seta Masandroni*, *i.e.* from the adjoining province of Mazanderán (p. 192). May not the Spanish *Geliz*, "a silk-dealer," which seems to have been a puzzle to etymologists, be connected with this? (See *Dozy and Engelmann*, 2nd ed. p. 275.) [Prof. F. de Filippi (*Viaggio in Persia nel 1862*, . . . Milan, 1865, 8vo) speaks of the silk industry of Ghílán (pp. 295-296) as the principal product of the entire province.—H. C.]

The dimensions assigned to the Caspian in the text would be very correct if length were meant, but the Geog. Text with the same figure specifies *circuit (zire)*. Ramusio again has "a circuit of 2800 miles." Possibly the original reading was 2700; but this would be in excess.

NOTE 8.—The Caspian is termed by Vincent of Beauvais *Mare Seruanicum*, the Sea of Shirwan, another of its numerous Oriental names, rendered by Marino Sanuto as *Mare Salvanicum*. (III. xi. ch. ix.) But it was generally known to the Franks in the Middle Ages as the SEA OF BACU. Thus Berni:—

" Fuor del deserto la diritta strada
Lungo il Mar di Bacu miglior pareva."
(*Orl. Innam.* xvii. 60.)

And in the *Sfera* of Lionardo Dati (*circa* 1390):—

" Da Tramontana di quest' Asia Grande
Tartari son sotto la fredda Zona,
Gente bestial di bestie e vivande,
Fin dove l'Onda di Baccù risuona," etc. (p. 10.)

This name is introduced in Ramusio, but probably by interpolation, as well as the correction of the statement regarding Euphrates, which is perhaps a branch of the notion alluded to in *Prologue*, ch. ii. note 5. In a later chapter Marco calls it the *Sea of Sarai*, a title also given in the *Carta Catalana*. [Odorico calls it *Sea of Bacuc (Cathay)* and *Sea of Bascon (Cordier)*. The latter name is a corruption of Abeskun, a small town and island in the S. E. corner of the Caspian Sea, not far from Ashurada.—H. C.]

We have little information as to the Genoese navigation of the Caspian, but the great number of names exhibited along its shores in the map just named (1375) shows how familiar such navigation had become by that date. See also *Cathay*, p. 50, where an account is given of a remarkable enterprise by Genoese buccaneers on the Caspian about that time. Mas'údi relates an earlier history of how about the beginning of the 9th century a fleet of 500 Russian vessels came out of the Volga, and ravaged all the populous southern and western shores of the Caspian. The unhappy population was struck with astonishment and horror at this unlooked-for visitation from a sea that had hitherto been only frequented by peaceful traders or fishermen. (II. 18-24.)

NOTE 9.—[The enormous quantity of fish found in the Caspian Sea is ascribed to the mass of vegetable food to be found in the shallower waters of the North and the mouth of the Volga. According to Reclus, the Caspian fisheries bring in fish to the annual value of between three and four millions sterling.—H. C.]