

We have already spoken of the extensive diffusion of Nestorian Christianity in Asia during the early and Middle Ages. The Christian historian Gregory Abulfaraj relates a curious history of the conversion, in the beginning of the 11th century, of the King of *Kerith* with his people, dwelling in the remote north-east of the land of the Turks. And that the Keraites continued to profess Christianity down to the time of Chinghiz is attested by Rashiduddin's direct statement, as well as by the numerous Christian princesses from that tribe of whom we hear in Mongol history. It is the chief of this tribe of whom Rubruquis and Polo speak under the name of Unc Khan, and whom the latter identifies with Prester John. His proper name is called Tuli by the Chinese, and Togrul by the Persian historians, but the Kin sovereign of Northern China had conferred on him the title of *Wang* or King, from which his people gave him

the slightly corrupted cognomen of **اونگ خان**, which some scholars read *Awang*, and *Avenk* Khan, but which the spelling of Rubruquis and Polo shows probably to have been pronounced as *Aung* or *Ung* Khan.* The circumstance stated by Rubruquis of his having abandoned the profession of Christianity, is not alluded to by Eastern writers; but in any case his career is not a credit to the Faith. I cannot find any satisfactory corroboration of the claims of supremacy over the Mongols which Polo ascribes to Aung Khan. But that his power and dignity were considerable, appears from the term *Pádsháh* which Rashiduddin applies to him. He had at first obtained the sovereignty of the Keraites, by the murder of two of his brothers and several nephews. Yessugai, the father of Chinghiz, had been his staunch friend, and had aided him effectually to recover his dominion from which he had been expelled. After a reign of many years he was again ejected, and in the greatest necessity sought the help of Temujin (afterwards called Chinghiz Khan), by whom he was treated with the greatest consideration. This was in 1196. For some years the two chiefs conducted their forays in alliance, but differences sprang up between them; the son of Aung Khan entered into a plot to kill Temujin, and in 1202-1203 they were in open war. The result will be related in connection with the next chapters.

We may observe that the idea which Joinville picked up in the East about Prester John corresponds pretty closely with that set forth by Marco. Joinville represents him as one of the princes to whom the Tartars were tributary in the days of their oppression, and as "their ancient enemy"; one of their first acts, on being organized under a king of their own, was to attack him and conquer him, slaying all that bore arms, but sparing all monks and priests. The expression used by Joinville in speaking of the original land of the Tartars, "*une grande berrie de sablon*," has not been elucidated in any edition that I have seen. It is the Arabic **برية**, *Bāriya*, "a Desert." No doubt Joinville learned the word in Palestine. (See *Joinville*, p. 143 *seqq.*; see also *Oppert, Der Presb. Johannes in Sage und Geschichte*, and *Cathay*, etc., pp. 173-182.) [*Fried. Zarncke, Der Priester Johannes*; *Cordier, Odoric*.—H. C.]

* Vámbéry makes *Ong* an Uighúr word, signifying "right." [Palladius (*l.c.* 23) says: "The consonance of the names of Wang-Khan and Wang-Ku (Ung-Khan and Ongu—Ongot of Rashiduddin, a Turkish Tribe) led to the confusion regarding the tribes and persons, which at M. Polo's time seems to have been general among the Europeans in China; M. Polo and Johannes de Monte Corvino transfer the title of Prester John from Wang-Khan, already perished at that time, to the distinguished family of Wang-Ku."—H. C.]