

que le autre dou païs et plus sajes et plus mercaant." Pauthier's text runs thus: "Il ont une generation de gens, ces Crestiens qui ont la Seigneurie, qui s'appellent Argon, qui vaut a dire Gasmul; et sont plus beaux hommes que les autres mescreans et plus sages. Et pour ce ont il la seigneurie et sont bons marchans." And Ramusio: "Vi è anche una sorte di gente che si chiamano Argon, per che sono nati di due generazioni, cioè da quella di Tenduc che adorano gl' idoli, e da quella che osservano la legge di Macometto. E questi sono i piu belli uomini che si trovino in quel paese e più savi, e più accorti nella mercanzia."

In the first quotation the definition of the *Argon* as sprung *de la lengnée, etc.*, is not intelligible as it stands, but seems to be a corruption of the same definition that has been rendered by Ramusio, viz. that the Argon were half-castes between the race of the Tenduc Buddhists and that of the Mahomedan settlers. These two texts do not assert that the Argon were Christians. Pauthier's text at first sight seems to assert this, and to identify them with the Christian rulers of the province. But I doubt if it means more than that the Christian rulers *have under them* a people called Argon, etc. The passage has been read with a bias, owing to an erroneous interpretation of the word *Argon* in the teeth of Polo's explanation of it.

Klaproth, I believe, first suggested that *Argon* represents the term *Arkhaiun*, which is found repeatedly applied to Oriental Christians, or their clergy, in the histories of the Mongol era.\* No quite satisfactory explanation has been given of the origin of that term. It is barely possible that it may be connected with that which Polo uses here; but he tells us as plainly as possible that he means by the term, not a Christian, but a *half-breed*.

And in this sense the word is still extant in Tibet, probably also in Eastern Turkestan, precisely in Marco's form, ARGON. It is applied in Ladak, as General Cunningham tells us, specifically to the mixt race produced by the marriages of Kashmirian immigrants with Böt (Tibetan) women. And it was apparently to an analogous cross between Caucasians and Turanians that the term was applied in Tenduc. Moorcroft also speaks of this class in Ladak, calling them *Argands*. Mr. Shaw styles them "a set of ruffians called *Argoons*, half-bred between Toorkistan fathers and Ladak mothers. . . . They possess all the evil qualities of both races, without any of their virtues." And the author of the *Dabistan*, speaking of the Tibetan Lamas, says: "Their king, if his mother be not of royal blood, is by them called *Arghun*, and not considered their true king." [See p. 291, my reference to *Wellby's Tibet*.—H. C.] Cunningham says the word is probably Turki, *ارغون*, *Arghun*, "Fair," "not white," as he writes to me, "but ruddy or pink, and therefore 'fair.' *Arghun* is both Turki and Mogholi, and is applied to all fair children, both male and female, as *Arghun Beg*, *Arghuna Khatun*," etc.† We find an *Arghun* tribe named in Timur's Institutes, which probably derived its descent from such half-breeds. And though the *Arghun* Dynasty of Kandahar and Sind claimed their descent and name from *Arghun* Khan of Persia, this may have had no other foundation.

\* The term *Arkaiun*, or *Arkaun*, in this sense, occurs in the Armenian History of Stephen Orpelian, quoted by St. Martin. The author of the *Tárikh Jahán Kushai*, cited by D'Ohsson, says that Christians were called by the Mongols *Arkáun*. When Hulaku invested Baghdad we are told that he sent a letter to the Judges, Shaikhs, Doctors and *Arkauns*, promising to spare such as should act peaceably. And in the subsequent sack we hear that no houses were spared except those of a few *Arkauns* and foreigners. In Rashiduddin's account of the Council of State at Peking, we are told that the four *Fanchan*, or Ministers of the Second Class, were taken from the four nations of Tájiks, Cathayans, Uighúrs, and *Arkaun*. Sabadin *Arkaun* was the name of one of the Envoys sent by Arghun Khan of Persia to the Pope in 1283. Traces of the name appear also in Chinese documents of the Mongol era, as denoting *some* religious body. Some of these have been quoted by Mr. Wylie; but I have seen no notice taken of a very curious extract given by Visdelou. This states that Kúblái in 1289 established a Board of nineteen chief officers to have surveillance of the affairs of the Religion of the Cross, of the *Marha*, the *Siliepan*, and the *Yelikhawen*. This Board was raised to a higher rank in 1315: and at that time 72 minor courts presiding over the religion of the *Yelikhawen* existed under its supervision. Here we evidently have the word *Arkhaiun* in a Chinese form; and we may hazard the suggestion that *Marha*, *Siliepan* and *Yelikhawen* meant respectively the Armenian, Syrian, or Jacobite, and Nestorian Churches. (*St. Martin, Mém.* II. 133, 143, 279; *D'Ohsson*, II. 264; *Ilchan*, I. 150, 152; *Cathay*, 264; *Acad.* VII. 359; Wylie in *J. As.* V. xix. 466. Suppt. to *D'Herbelot*, 142.)

† The word is not in Zenker or Pavet de Courteille.