

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD'S DIVISION OF PROPERTY or under any pretext be received or recovered. And I testify that the aforesaid loss inflicted on us as well by the aforesaid lord Comnenus of Trebizond as in his territory was in sum about four thousand *hyperpera*."<sup>1</sup>

It is tantalizing that we are not told who were the three who suffered this loss, nor the exact occasion. But the dates which are known seem to justify the conclusion that the trouble occurred when the party reached Trebizond on the way home from China. And we may be fairly sure that the three who shared equally in the loss were Nicolò, Maffeo, and the younger Marco. Marco, who certainly represents himself as the leading figure in China, and who was of a vigorous and seemingly grasping character, may well have insisted on having an equal share of the profits with his father and uncle. It was Marco who had actually received the 1000*l.* which had already been recovered. On the other hand Maffeo's will, which has been quoted, mentions two other combinations. In the very next sentence he says, "When I was in *fraterna compagnia* with the said Marco and Matteo Polo, sons of the late Nicolo once my brother"; and here too he claims only one third of the property concerned, sharing equally with his two nephews. And some way further on in his long will he describes the division of rights in the property in S. Giovanni Grisostomo. We may conjecture that that property had been bought while Marco was in prison at Genoa. The value had been divided into twenty-four equal parts or *carats*. Of these the elder Marco or his son had paid, as we have reason to suppose, four and a half, and Nicolò and Maffeo shared the remainder equally. Maffeo, who had no children, now bequeaths four parts of his share to his nephews Stefano and Giovannino (Nicolò's natural sons born perhaps in the East), two parts to his nephew Nicolò, and the remainder (three and three-quarter *carats*) to his nephew Marco. Thus we find Marco already in possession of more than half the property, and lending money to his uncle and other relatives, always, it seems, to his own advantage. In July 1319 he obtained judgement against his cousin Marcolino for repayment of a debt of the latter's father, plus double the amount for fine, and interest at 20 per cent. for thirteen years.<sup>2</sup> And so, while the Polo family was carried on in the male

<sup>1</sup> Or. p. 27, d.6. See p. 531 below. For *hyperpera* see PN.

<sup>2</sup> Or. d.13. All this passage is based on ORLANDINI's article mentioned above, especially on d.6. I am obliged also for reasons of space to assume constantly that the careful reader will have read Marco's own Prologue (chapters 1-19) which tells us all that we really know of his birth and early life till he found himself in prison at Genoa in 1298 at the age of about forty-five.