TALKING ABOUT MAPS — IV

In the last chapter we left an increasing number of Christians engaged upon pilgrimages to the Holy Land, which preceded the crusades, called forth by further invasion from Asia.

Just as earlier Asiatic clans had made their way into Europe, so now did the Seljuk Turks. In the 8th century Slavs had entered along the Danube, and in the 9th another horde, the Bulgars. The Seljuks expelled an earlier immigrant leader ruling in eastern Persia. Bagdad fell, but the newcomers embraced Mohammedanism and kept in office both Arab and Persian. The Byzantine empire lost territory in Asia Minor, and in 1071 the Emperor suffered defeat and capture. However, the Turkish Emperor, now entitled "sultan", was merciful (or discreet), and accepted a ransom and the payment of tribute.

Then Jerusalem fell. Again the Sultan exercised restraint, for the Christian community and the pilgrim traffic paid the State well. He demanded only a nominal tribute, and allowed the Patriach of the Christian church and his community to retain possession of their church and the Holy Sepulchre. The real blow fell when Turkish rule passed into more violent hand and seized Jerusalem. Mohammedan violence was unfortunately encouraged by the excesses of a preliminary crusade consisting of thousands of men and women as much moved by the prospect of plunder as by piety. They were led by Peter the Hermit, a fanatic monk of Amiens, unwisely encouraged by the Papacy. Then followed the eight organised crusades from 1096 to the death of King Louis in 1270. (Maps in William Shepherd's historical atlas describe their courses.) Between the fourth and fifth crusades occurred the tragic folly of the Children's Crusade.

In 1099 the bulk of the Sultan's holding in Palestine was wrested from him. Under the protection of the several Orders of Knighthood Christian trade and commerce carried on apace, and held good for half a century. Crusaders grew less and less spiritually minded. Loss of life was so appalling that it threatened serious depopulation in Europe. Private wars and commercial interests deflected crusading armies from their ostensible object. Venice, now a republic in herself, was able to divert the fourth crusade into an attack upon other great ports which she wished to subjugate, Genoa especially. Even more serious political quarrels involved Constantinople itself. Crusaders and Venetians plundered it and slaughtered inhabitants indiscriminately. Meanwhile, Mohammedans gazed upon these excesses, acidly convinced that Christianity had nothing to teach Islam.

The greatest contribution to map-making at this period was land travel. Navigation profited by an advance in instrument making, and ship-building approached adequacy equal to the coming challenge of the wide Atlantic and Pacific by navigators persuaded that if the world was round they could sail straight on eastward or westward, and arrive back where they started from.

But while the crusades and the more enterprising traders opened up western Europe and the near East to an ever widening radius of people, a fresh Mongol invasion into eastern Europe sounded the alarm. On the pretext that ten of his envoys had been murdered in the West the great Khan Ogotai sent his brothers Batu and Hulagu to invade the West. Their several armies operating west and south-west crossed the Volga into Russia, and into Poland, and over the Danube to wreck the Hungarian capital Budapest.

In 1236 Hulagu surged through the Caucasus into Armenia, Mesopotamia and Persia, and there usurped the Seljuk sovereignty. The Pope failed to rouse the West to retaliation. By 1259 Hulagu was ruling from the Oxus to the Euphrates.

Meantime, in 1241, Ogotai died, and from Karakorum his eldest son, the Khan-elect Kuyuk, summoned Batu to return to his own domain on the Volga. In 1243 the unsuccessful pope died, and Pope Innocent IV sent missions to the peoples of North-east Europe, and a legate with a letter to the Great Kahn at his court on the plains of Karakorum. His legate has left us one of the historic stories of journeys to the East.

He was a French Franciscan friar, 65 years old, John Plano de Carpini. Surviving great hardship on his way, he presented the Pope's letter. It was dated November 1246, and still exists in the Vatican Museum. Far from the flattery and adulation with which the great Kahn was accustomed to be addressed, His Holiness proposed humiliation and baptism. The Kahn replied with spirit; reminded his correspondent of the ten murdered envoys, and suggested that the Pope and the Kings of the West owed him an apology and submission, and should travel to him to express this. As for baptism, he wrote, he could not imagine how that ceremony would prosper him, for God had blessed him with so many victories already. He was prepared to send ambassadors under the wing of the Friar to the West, but Carpini evaded the offer. He feared it would discourage the Mongol from further attacks upon Europe if he discovered the continual discord prevailing in the Christian world.

The next traveller to the great Khan was the friar William Rubruck, a Frenchman. He had started from home in the following of King Louis of France (St Louis) who was engaged upon the 7th crusade. During the course of it the king heard that the Khan (Mangu now) reigning in Karakorum was a Christian, and wished to establish friendly contact with him. So he sent Rubruck as his envoy. This was in the year 1253. Rubruck compiled a valuable record of his experiences over some 5,000 miles of travel, taking him two years.

Our third traveller is a merchant, Marco Polo, the value of whose story vies with Rubruck's and is better known. In 1271 when his story begins he was about nineteen. He travelled to the Rar East with his father and uncle, merchant princes of Venice, who had spent several years in the East during the previous decade, and had visited the court in Peking

where Mangu had been succeeded by Kublai Khan, the last and greatest of the Mongol dynasty in China. We remember Coleridge's lines:

"In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree,
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to the sunless sea."

Marco learned the language, and as time went on the Khan employed him — Marco was a prepossessing young man. Only after 17 years did the Polo family manage to get away from the Court. Fearing the death of the now elderly Khan, and unrest in the distant territories of his empire, they offered to escort one of the princesses who was to travel as bride to the Khan's great-nephew, the Mongol King of Persia. They travelled by sea, passing through the straits of Malacca into the Indian ocean.

The last great traveller in these days was not a trader, but the Arab geographer Abu Abdullah Mahommed, generally called Ibn Batuta, whose Dictionary of Geography is the tale of 28 years of extensive travel. His learning, however, served only his own time. He wrote in Arabic, and Europe did not discover him until the 19th century. He died in 1377.

The most capably produced maps of the time we have been considering were the sea-charts or *portolans*. They contained no inland information, but presently even world maps would be founded upon their outline, extraordinarily correct in view of the imperfect instruments of measurement at the cartographers' disposal. They were designed by licensed draughtsmen. Genoa appeared to lead the way now, but another port, Barcelona, on the Catalonia coast of the Iberian Peninsula, comes increasingly into the picture. The Moors now are being gradually edged out of Spain. The kingdoms of Leon, Castile, Navarre, Aragon and Portugal have appeared upon the map, a glittering future ahead. The Moor still occupies southern Spain, not to be cleared out of the fragment remaining to him — Granada — until 1492.

The commercial cities of the Middle Ages played an important part in national as well as civic affairs; the initiative originated in the Mediterranean, and especially in the hands of Venice. She founded her bank and her republic. Florence became a republic in 1250.

The wealthiest of these city-states financed crowned heads, and aided papal ventures into secular affairs. The foundation of the Hanseatic league was initiated in North Germany by Lübeck and Hamburg in the middle of the thirteenth century, a great league of over 70 towns sharing commercial facilities among themselves.

But events were frustrating the merchants' old routine. Emerging from his tented plains south of the Oxus, Osman or Othman — whose name became corrupted to Ottoman — entered and appropriated the Seljuk province of Nicomedia lying at the northern corner of the Sea of Mamora. Osman looked upon himself as a Mohammedan crusader. The Koran

sanctified war against those whom the Koran, in its turn, described as infidels, but, like the Christian crusader, came to confuse the objects of conquest. In 1358 he took Gallipoli, and Constantinople paid tribute to save itself.

The Turk in Europe was not the only disturbance which gave the merchant prince a headache. Unrest in the East broke into revolution in 1368. Land travel eastward assumed a less certain aspect. So it was that determination to discover an ocean route to the east hardened. As early as 1270 the Genoese had turned to thoughts of Atlantic islands and to the west coast of Africa. In that year a Genoese pilot rediscovered the Canary islands. Stories of Arab slave-raiders selling to pirates on the Barbary coast leaked out.

Besides, a Majorcan, an alchemist, confessed himself to be confident that a passage could be found round Africa to the East. In 1341 the King of Portugal renewed contact wit the Canaries, sending out a fleet piloted by a Genoese and manned by Mediterranean seamen. By the middle of the century rediscovery of the Madeiras and Azores had been achieved. Two famous portolans, the Laurentian dated 1351, and the Catalan, dated 1375 delineated these three groups, and also landfalls on the west coast of Africa including the Guinea coast, which Edrisi had marked *Bilad Ghana* — Land of Wealth.

V

In 1395 a third son was born to the King of Portugal and his English wife, sister of Henry IV of England. He was named after his English grandfather, and to later history has become known as Prince Henry the Navigator, the imaginative and scholarly force behind Portugal's achievements at sea for nearly half a century. Actually, he never went to sea. His concern was to promote the science of navigation, ship-building and the ordering of voyages. He began his labours in 1417. Two years earlier he had distinguished himself at the capture of Ceuta from the Moors, the key port on the Africa side of the Strait of Gibraltar. The King appointed him Governor of the southernmost Portuguese side of the strait, and the prince established his court at Cape St Vincent (Sagres) ; gathering into his service learned men and skilled pilots irrespective of race, other than the competitive Spaniard.

He was not left to pursue his conquests without competition. Besides pirates and the Spanish there were Flemish, English and French who now and then literally did battle for the trade as between fleet and fleet. When the war of succession broke out — 1475-79 — between Castile and Portugal, Castile took the opportunity to apply to the Pope for the reversal of the papal bull granted to Prince Henry some twenty years before, whereby the Guinea Coast — all the land, indeed, and seas beyond Cape Bojador — became the Prince's property. Castile failed to reverse the bull, and after the war relinquished her claims. However, dispute again arose between Spain and Portugal after the discovery of the Americas, and another "Pope's Line" appears on the map.

In 1459 Friar Mauro, a Venetian, completed the finest map of the World of his time upon which Prince Henry's attainments appear. Of the Atlantic Islands the Cape Verde group, discovered very shortly before his death, appear on the map of west Africa in the atlas compiled by Grazioso Benincasa in 1468.

Prince Henry died in 1460. After his death the Crown continued his work. Constantinople had fallen to the Turk in 1453, and the event occasioned even more need to discover the ocean routes.

As we stand in the wings awaiting the drama of Portuguese conquest in the East, and the discovery of the other half of the world by the navigators of all western Europe, it is as well to remember that navigators of the Age of Discovery did not sail upon these voyages for the benefit of scientific enquiry eager for first-hand information about hitherto unknown lands, foreign climates, primitive people or unsuspected civilisations, much as today we contemplate life upon other planets, and weekends on the moon. They sailed in search of wealth. It used to be said: "Trade follows the flag". It never did. The flag followed trade which revealed how worth while it was. Navigators sought slaves, gold, spices, precious stones and any other commodity Europe would buy, either because Europe could not produce it, or because the luxury trade demanded it. And there *was* a luxury trade; a trade facing the demands of the approaching Renaissance — a renewal of classicism; of secular scholarship, fine craftsmanship, graceful living. The time was coming when ocean-born trade would be organised by Companies of Merchant Adventurers, nationally of immense importance, to one of which we in South Africa owe our origin.

At this period even the Arctic was not first attacked by, nor expeditions even aided and abetted by, men of science, but by these same traders in search of a north-east or north-west passage — the shortest possible passage to the East and its treasure. Davis, Frobisher, and the rest made discoveries and rediscoveries which we recall at the sound of their names. They didn't find the passage — they threw in their hand or gave their lives — but they brought Canada into being, and sailed round Lapland, and found a landfall on Nova Zembla.

I am not going to labour stories familiar to us all — stories of Diaz, Da Gama, Columbus, Magellan, Albuquerque, Cortez and Pizzaro, and of the trade routes established across the Atlantic and the Pacific. (Though I might in passing remind you that it was not, as Keats supposed, 'stout Cortez' who in 1513 'silent upon a peak in Darien' discovered the Pacific, but Balboa.) Nor need we here enlarge upon the exploits of pirates and privateers, the definition between them almost non-existant. If you have forgotten the misdirected glamour of these stories George Wycherley in his *Buccaneers of the Pacific* is one of those who will revive your memory.

Cartography from the 16th century developed, apart from its improvement in scientific approach, an exquisite art of its own. Also the number of cartographers and publishers rapidly increased. We all know of volumes presenting fine reproductions of 16th-18th century maps. Italy led the

way in the printing of fine maps; then France excelled; England did good work, notably in her surveys and county maps. and in her contribution to the science of cartography, for instance — Mercator's familiar projection was originally based upon the work of Edward Wright, Fellow of Caius College, Cambridge; but from the last quarter of the sixteenth century for the next hundred years the finest maps were produced in Holland, and to conclude my story, I want to deal with an atlas printed in Holland which is peculiarly our own.

I mean the atlas of the Cape of Good Hope entitled *Tablae Geographicae Coloniae Spei,* printed by Messrs. J. H. de Bussy, sponsored by the Royal Dutch Geographical Society, and edited by E. Koeman. Some of you who treasure Africana will possess it, and will know that there is a romantic touch about it. Little more than a year before our tercentenary in 1952 a collection of maps in manuscript of Cape Colony was discovered in the archives of the Ordnance Survey at Delft, just in time to be published as a contribution to our celebrations.

With the exception of two maps of the whole colony — one made by John Barrow in 1801 during the British occupation, and the other, based upon Barrow's, and published in 1815 by Dr. Lichtenstein, the maps are of the 18th century, coloured, and graced with charming symbols and a perfection of calligraphy. Originally, they were collected together from the Cape files and revised by the Governor C. J. van der Graaff during his period of office from 1785 to 1791, and were carried off to Holland on his return home where he continued his work upon them. They consisted of surveys, routes of expeditions, and habitable lands, which record the remarkable labours of a comparative handful of men who along the years opened up the country of the Cape Colony. It was an heroic achievement, accomplished for the most part by men in the ordinary course of duty, without any luxury of equipment. Of the surveyors, Captain Duminy, designing that were earlier called in the Mediterranean, 'portolans' — seacharts — was the most skilled cartographer among them.

This atlas should be in every school library — an edition less elaborately bound to lessen cost, and with the same end in view, its introduction printed in two languages instead of three. Incidentally, in the introduction the printing error may be eliminated which here and there has repeated paragraphs twice over. But perhaps even a modest edition is too much to ask for? Geography appears to be the Cinderella of Examination syllabuses. I remember being horrified years ago at the remark of a young friend who, after passing a brilliant 'matric' had chosen a secretarial course, and undertook to type a manuscript of my own which presently emerged from Harraps as *The Background of Geography.* I was dictating it to her, and as we went along I had constantly to spell for her the names of places. 'I never did any geography," she explained, "after I was eleven." I myself had never heard anything more educationally heathen. I made some enquiries the other day and was assured that geography is still rushed off to bed even earlier than Cinderella. Is

history still taught in this disjointed fashion, which ignores the effect of geography upon people? Upon physique, upon opportunity, upon ingenuity of adaptation to circumstances?

The interrelation of geography and history creates a philosophy of life based on the facts of life, which are the inevitable basis of vision, if vision is not to be illusionary.

Another volume which every individual at school should posses, apart from the treasures we have been talking about for the school library, is a good historical atlas of the World; the indispensable companion of history books. My own is William Shepherd's. I know of none more detailed. He has thought of everything. A class teacher takes some time to explain in so many words the spread of Christianity in Europe, the number of monasteries and universities in the Middle Ages, and upon what routes merchandise was transported. Shepherd shows the seeker at a glance. Moreover, to look at the pictured facts is a more effective method of memorising. I believe Shepherd is out of print, and needs a sequel after 1930, but he starts with 2100 B.C.

There is no better picture-book in the world than a fine atlas. But when it comes to the young I prefer the old Dutch school of delineation. The whole map is such a delicate picture to the eye, the symbols immediately intelligible. I am reminded of the polite scorn with which a learned geographer once challenged my predilection for 'caterpillars'. Caterpillars, geographically speaking, are mountain ranges. The modern practice in maps, as you know, is to describe altitude by the formality of deepening colour. It leaves the young cold. I have seen it happen. Change over to an older map where the young enquirer may see for himself where the range breaks, and his face lights up as he discovers at once where on his last drive up the country he passed through the ranges into the lands beyond. The modern map is a static affair to any but the already initiated.

In conclusion I cannot do better than repeat William Shepherd's quotation from the author and traveller Captain John Smith who lived from 1579-1631:

"For as Geography without History seemeth a carkasse without motion, so History without Geography wandreth as a Vagrant without certaine habitation."

Margaret Whiting Spilhaus.