

THE MYSTERIES OF THE "MARCO POLO MAPS"

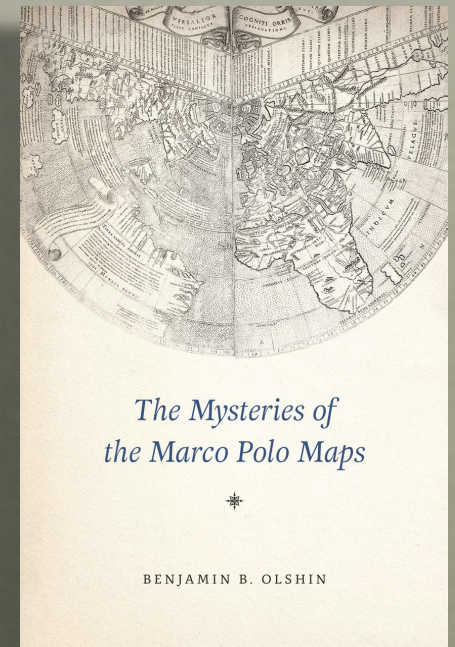
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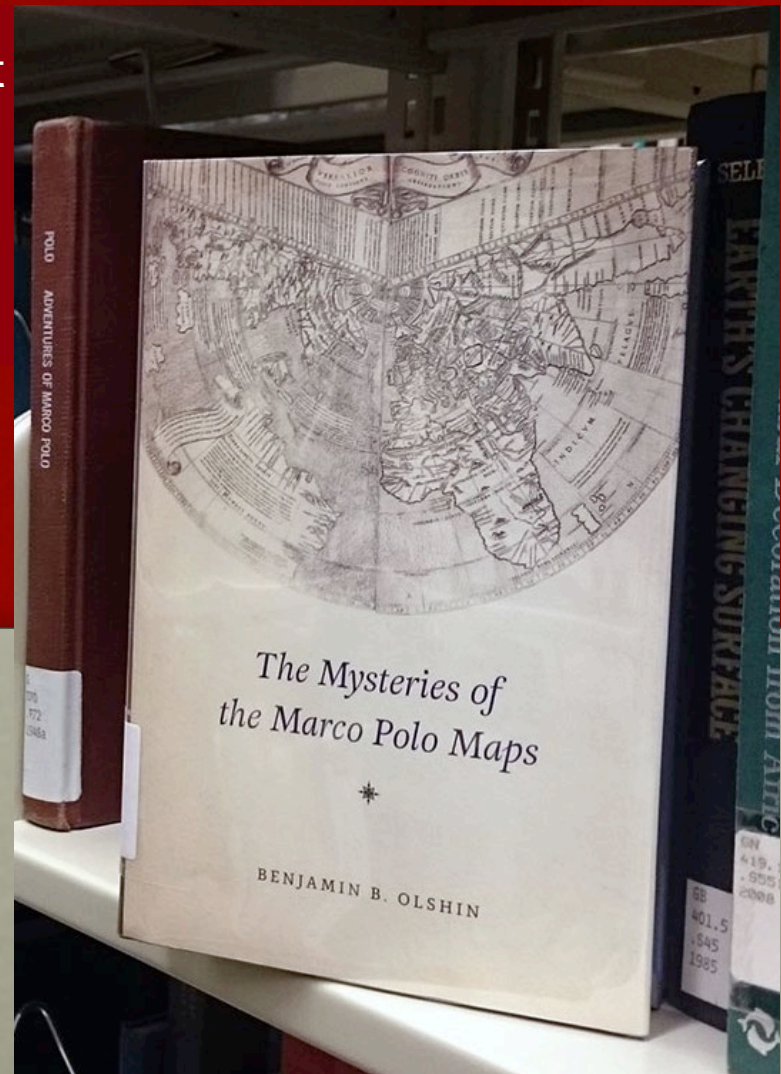
The University of the Arts

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.



If you are interested in learning more about the maps of Marco Polo, check out *The Mysteries of the Marco Polo Maps*.

Available for purchase online [here](#).



Why should one buy this book?

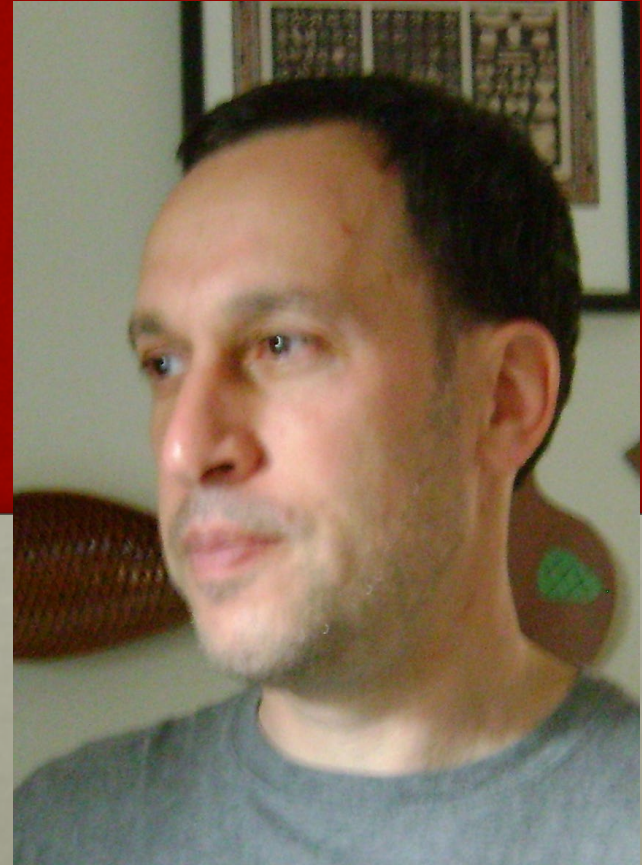


Think of the author's child going hungry due to low book sales...

Some Background...



1989, graduate student at the University of Toronto...



...2015, a greatly aged "scholar"

*The labors of the history of cartography
can age a researcher markedly...*

A Project about Some "Marco Polo Maps"?

Introduction

- How I became interested in this subject...

What are the "Marco Polo Maps"?

- Private collection of fourteen unique and largely unknown documents relating to Marco Polo and his travels to Asia
- Documents are part of the "Rossi Collection", after one of their owners, Filomeno Emanuele Marciano Rossi



A Look at the Documents...

A brief description of the collection...

1. Apparently passed down to the present owners by way of a branch of the famous Sanseverino clan in Italy
2. Mixture of maps, geographical and descriptive texts, and letters
3. Apparent dates of the material range from the 13th to the 18th century...
4. Includes maps allegedly drawn by members of the family of Marco Polo and others...

A Look at the Documents...

A brief description of the collection (continued)...

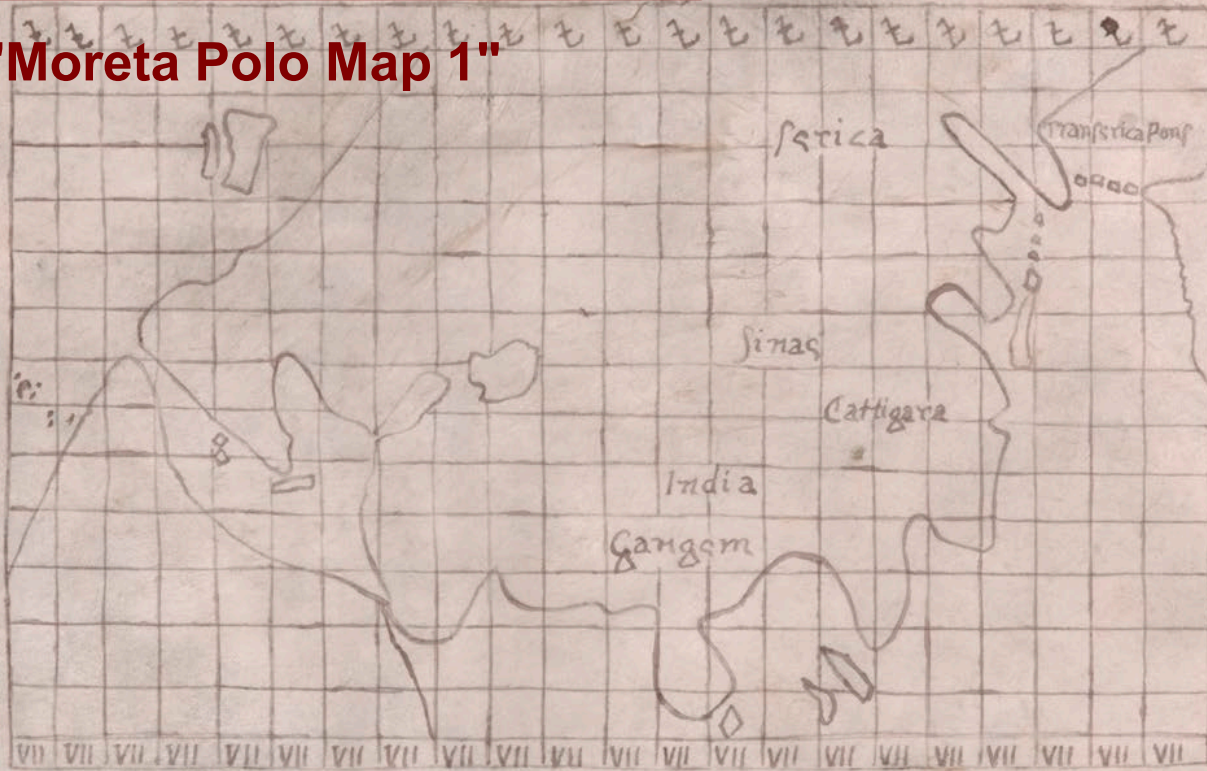
5. Maps contain a number of very significant historical characteristics, e.g., echoes of the ancient maps of Ptolemy, depictions of parts of the northern Pacific Ocean; inscriptions in Chinese and Arabic, and so on
6. Only published scholarly article on collection is short piece done by historian of cartography Leo Bagrow in the 1940's...
7. In the early 1930's, a few brief notices concerning collection appear in U.S. newspapers...
8. The Library of Congress, which held part of collection for a time (and still possesses one map), put together a somewhat longer study, almost half a century ago — never published, and incomplete...

The Challenges for an Historian of Science...

- These documents are privately owned, which means careful communication with the owner...
- The material is sensitive, in the sense that it could change an accepted historical narrative *and* because there is the potential for revealing forgery or fabrication in this case...
- As in business, there were a number of "stakeholders" involved in this project: the owner; the Library of Congress; National Geographic; the University of Chicago Press; two documentary film companies...
- The material requires knowledge in a wide variety of fields — Latin, Italian, and even Chinese languages; ancient and medieval maps; early exploration; the Marco Polo narrative and the manuscript tradition; European, Central Asian, and East Asian history; early Chinese legends; genealogy; paleography; vellum and inks; carbon dating; history of forgeries (e.g., the Vinland Map)...

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Moreta Polo Map 1"



Marta Zeniero
da Padova

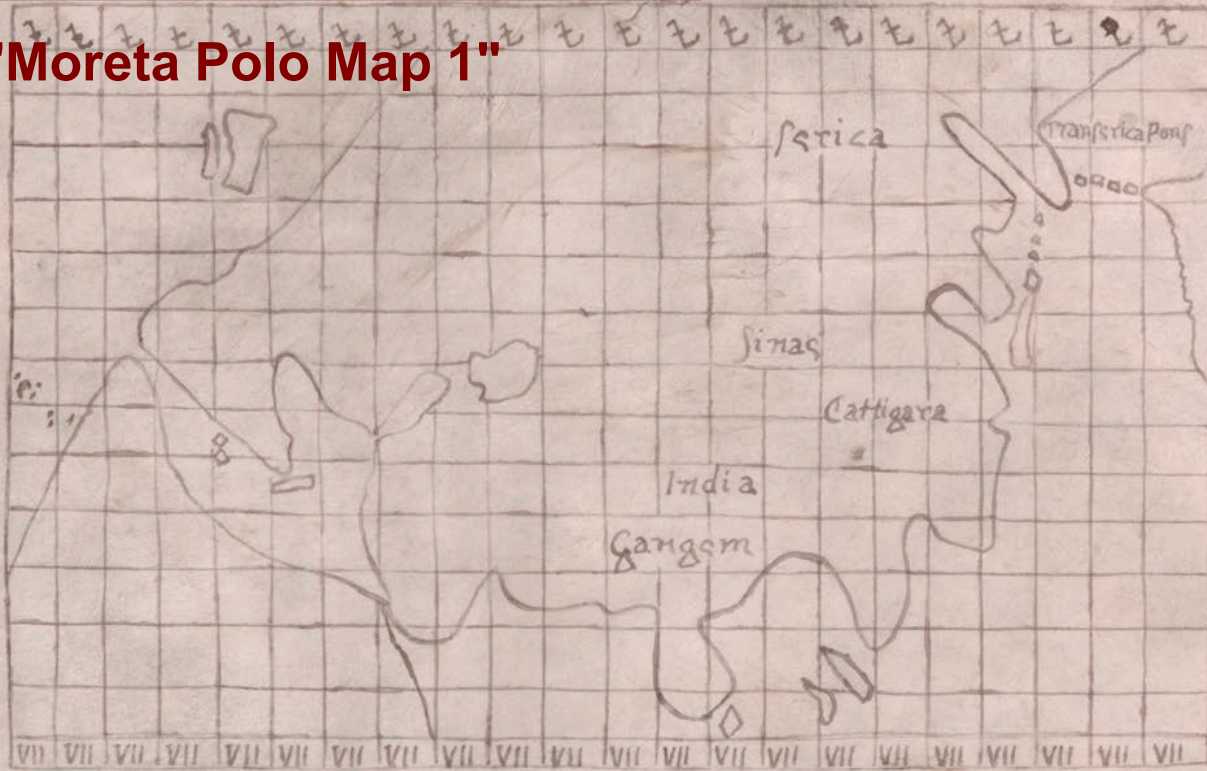
Peregrinatione fato da Maffeu, Nicholou e Marco Polo, da Tenegia ad Acra en Persia e da Acra en fin a Campulu en Tartaria, peregrinando per valle e montagne e poi en la città tuta mese d'entorno, cascuna città è fato un Templu entree lo quale ha el Ruda divin co gambe incroscas // Quand Messer Marco articola la lingua Tartara lo Re per mecedu lo prende a soa cura, poi lo designò Summu Nauticu, et el navigò lo Maro en fin la estremidà Oriental et en fin una longa Penisola tuta circontea de luri mariu e congiunta a una granda Tera de tute ignota ke è pita a lora de la Tera de li mariu appellata Serica, da ogni femena è arcador e cascun homo arcador de lo Re masquera de oro, clli per lo pregio habitan en cambra rorida // lo Re del logo involuò Messer Marco en soa cambra co maniera coctosa // Messer Marco portaa una maschera d'oro a lo Re en Tartaria per loke lo Re lo colocaa a governar una soa Provincia // Bast notar ke segondo un nauticu Siricu a servizio de Messer Marco Polo, dije co veritate ke dict Penijala è pita a ~~11~~ Gradi VIII hora de varieta de le pole anze Mauritania en lo Maro Atlanticu // Et plu de doi hora da Tartaria da donde en un tempu demigraa sta zente // Lo scriptura sopra li faxi dije ke sta zente demigraa da Tartaria quard signoreaa Itia // La preserava zente en lingua mongolica nomaa sta Tera fozan / plu epaco fozan //

Moreta Polo

Tenegia, MCCCXXXVIII //

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Moreta Polo Map 1"



Peregrinatione fatto da Maffeo, Nicholou e Marco Polo, da Tenegia ad Acra in Persia e da Acra in fin a Campoli in Tartaria, peregrinando per valle e montagne e poi...

Already, one can see the challenges... Text in Chinese and Italian, a strange map, and the apparent signature of Moreta Polo — the daughter of Marco Polo! There is also a strange text at the bottom of the map...

Et plu de doi hora da Tartaria da donde en un tempo demigrao s'ita zente//
La scriptura sopra li faxi d'ite he q'ta zente demigrao da Tartaria quora signorezaa itia//
La premesara zente en lingua mongolica nomaa s'ita fo'ra/ plu spaco fo'ra//

Tenegia, MCCCXXXVIII

Moreta Polo

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Moreta Polo Map 1" — details

[Text at the bottom of the map]

Journey made by Maffeo, Nicholau [sic], and Marco Polo from Venice to Acre in Persia, and from Acre finally to Campalu in Tartary, voyaging through valleys and mountains, and finally, to the completely walled city. Each city is built with a temple inside, within which sits a divine Buddha with crossed legs. When Messer Marco spoke [i.e., learned to speak] the Tartar language, the king, in gratitude, took him under his care. Then he [i.e., Marco Polo] drew a *summu nauticu* and navigated the sea up to the eastern extremity, and finally a long peninsula completely surrounded by sea wolves [*luvi marini*] and connected to a huge land, completely unknown that is situated beside the land that by the Moor is called Serica. There [i.e., in that huge land], every woman is [an] archer and each man [is an] archer of the king... There, because of the cold, they live in round chambers. The king of [this] locale invited Messer Marco into his chamber in a courteous manner. Messer Marco brought a mask of gold to the king in Tartary, where the king placed him to govern one of his provinces. It is sufficient to note that according to the Syrian sailor in the service of Master Marco Polo, it is said in truth that the aforementioned peninsula is situated *DCCCC* [= 900?] degrees [or] eight hours difference from the islands off Mauritania in the Atlantic Ocean. And [this peninsula is] more than two hours from Tartary, from where at one time this people emigrated. The writing on the stones says that this people emigrated from Tartary... The aforementioned [?] people, in the Mongolian language, named this land *Foxaa*, [or] more exactly, *Focaa*.

A Look at the Documents...

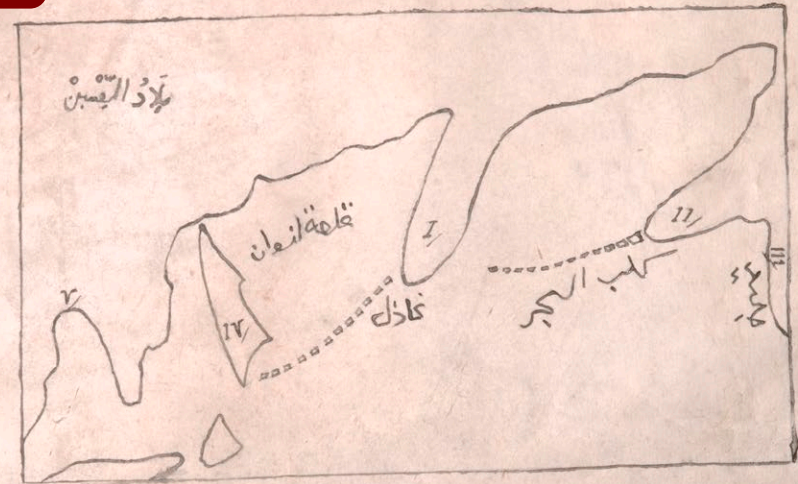
Example: "Sirdomap Map"

A map of northeastern Asia with toponyms in Arabic lettering; the map has a short text in Italian below it, apparently written by Bellela Polo, and mentioning a certain Biaxio Sirdomap.

The map has toponyms referred to by the Roman numerals I-V.

In the text, Bellela notes that:

"[M]y father Marco Polo wishes me, Bellela, to show this world map which he obtained from the pilot Biaxio Sirdomap who, for at least thirty years, had sailed the coasts of Asia from Syria to the Far East, trading in seal skins..."



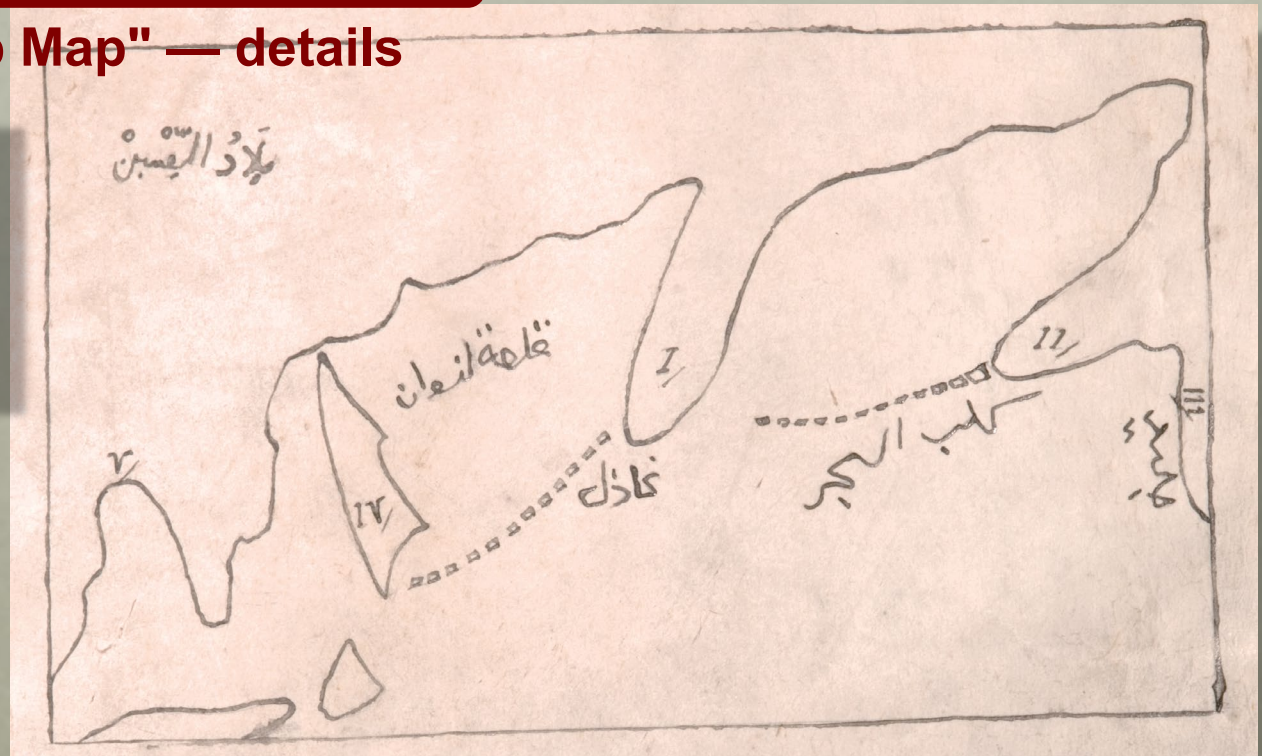
Maio he lo nobile lezdrizic poran trovar plu dileto xerca el regname del pou femerina
en la Cina e lutan levante/ ma pare Marco polo conpeglio a me Bellela de mostar questo
mappamondo lo qual otene dal pilota Biaxio Sirdomap lo qual aveva da ben trenta ani
cortegiato l'Asia da la Siria en fin all'estremo levante marcando peloria de phoca marina //
En questo mappamondo se opeva cum plu claritate como misier Marco polo fese vela dal
colfo Manoj e vexo levante en fin a la penisola deli xervi / ali encontro el pilota
Sirdomap lo qual depoi lo duoveva a l'ipola dele femene sita a tramontana e occidente //
E ancora ve digo ho segundo como scrive Sirdomap / en questa contra o una zonerazion
tra peguendo como le dicono li Oracoli / en un tempo remoto / questa gente a caxon
de la penuria de cibaria / abandonaron le cavernes de li monti Auzei e dala scythia
scove luta l'Asia e entro en questa contra ke mo demora // Ognia provincia e apellata
en lengua Sirizica como qui se vede scritta // Mai ebe accesso ala longa estreta ipola a la
qual nepi omo ni apialico ni latino zedi poner passo en questa ipola si no irra scabato e mor to da
le arcadizic en depra de la loro castidade e su peccahumana belezza // Ma misier Marco polo piando
ke duoveva piago una damocela / poro presentarse al palazio de qula reyna / cuppi lo peva cortesia
e donote piores proxiop //

- I / penisola de li xervi //
- II / penisola phoca marina //
- III / Valle concupita e giorata //
- IV / Ipola dele femene //
- V / Colfo Manoj //

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Sirdomap Map" — details

I, penisola de li zervi //
II, penisola phoca marina //
III, Valle conzonta e giazata //
IV, isola de le femene //
V, Eolfo Mangi //



Details of toponyms referred to by the Roman numerals I-V:

- I / *penisola de li zervi* // [i.e., “Peninsula of the Stags”]
II / *penisola phoca marina* // [i.e., “Peninsula of the Marine Seals”]
III / *Valle conzonta e giazata* // [i.e., “Connected and frozen valley”]
IV / *Isola de le femene* // [i.e., “Island of Women”]
V / *Eolfo* [i.e., *Golfo*] *Mangi* // [i.e., “Gulf of the Mangi”]

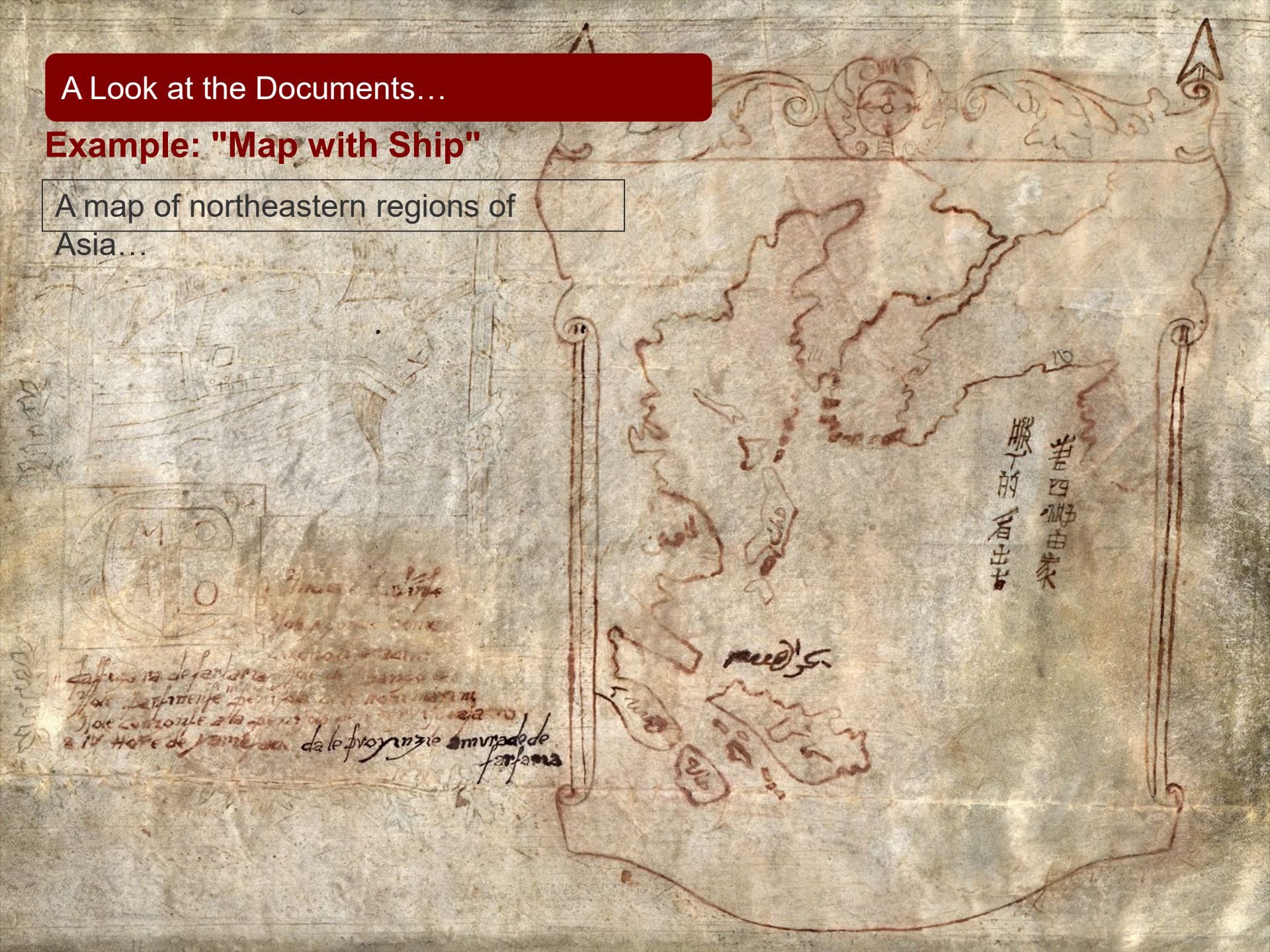
Arabic toponym, from west to east across the map, as follows:

- [1] “the land of China”
[2] “Ghadil” [?]
[3] “Linwan [?] Castle”
[4] “Kalb al-Bahr” [i.e., “Dog of the Sea”]
[5] “Jalid” [i.e., “frost”]

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Map with Ship"

A map of northeastern regions of Asia...



A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Map with Ship" — detail

The Chinese characters here seem to have no particular meaning; one can just read:

丁, 的, 百, 出, 七, 四, 由, and 家.

There is Arabic script again, although the meanings are not entirely clear.

There are also numbered toponyms, with a key in Italian:

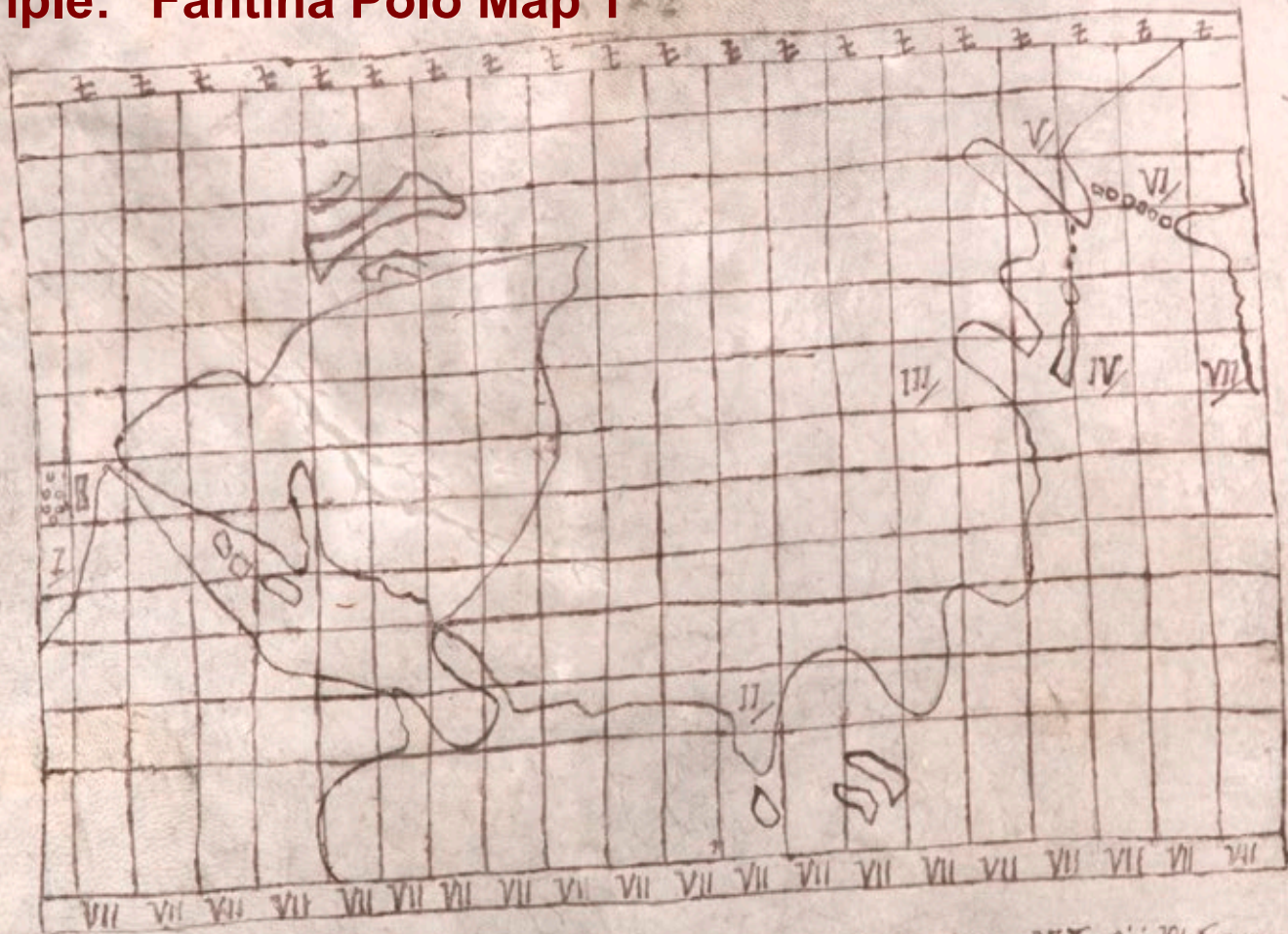
I. India e pertinen[te] isole secondo come dicono li saracini. II. Cattigara de tartaria isole de Zipango e isole pertinente. III. Peninsola de li lioni marini. [IV] Isole consonte a la peninsola de li servi situata a IV hore de varietade de le provinzie amurade de tartaria.

I. India and adjacent islands, according what the Saracens say. II. *Cattigara* of Tartary, islands of Japan, and adjacent islands. III. Peninsula of the Sea Lions. IV. Islands connected to the Peninsula of the Stags, situated at four hours difference from the walled provinces of Tartary.



A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Fantina Polo Map 1"



I, Canarie II, India III, Tartaria IV, Zipangu V, Uan Seian VI, Ja Qui VII, fozza

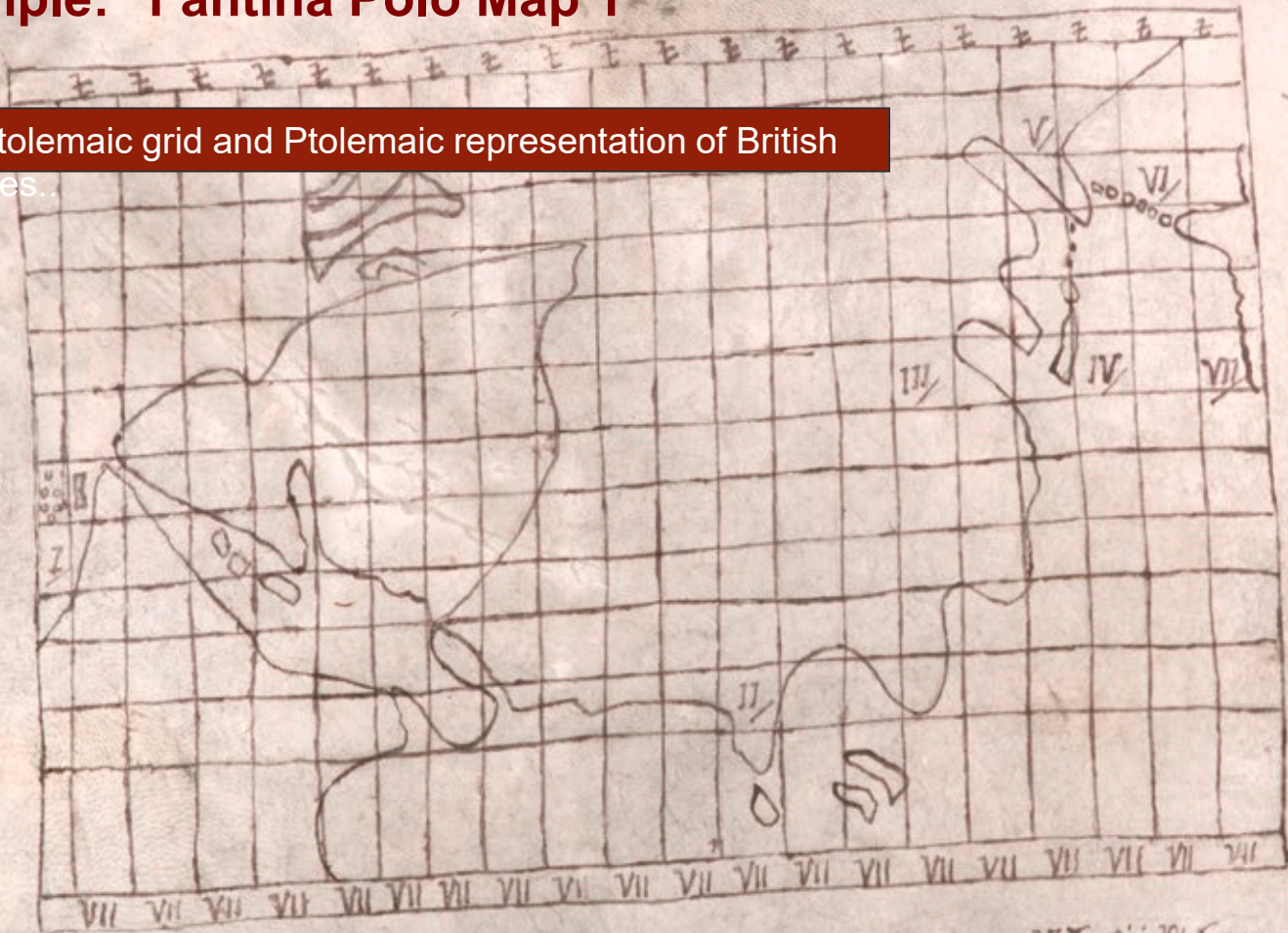
En la mar Atlantica de Canarie / a una de Syucia / plu en C'otra parte
 En la mar Atlantica de Canarie / a una de Syucia / plu en C'otra parte
 de Tartaria o Syucia / en fozza de dentro en la grande boca
 incognita nomada fozza / si a una distancia plu de VIII oras /
 quando en Europa a fozza / ali a d'omon /
 fantina polo

Venogria MCCCCXX

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Fantina Polo Map 1"

Ptolemaic grid and Ptolemaic representation of British Isles...



I, Canarie, II, India, III, Dardaria, IV, Zipangu, V, Uan Seian, VI, Ja Qui, VII, fozra

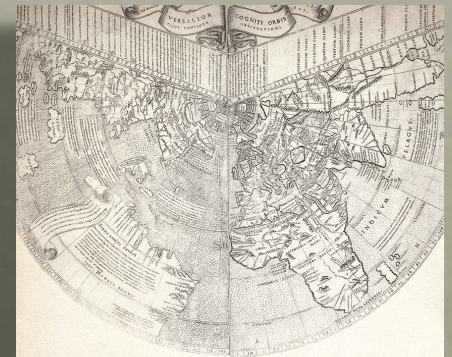
...but with a representation of the coasts of East Asia and lands beyond

Conclusions: Late Copies, Creations, Fabrications, or Forgeries?

Observations...

1. This is *not* a repeat of the "Vinland Map" controversy (see next slide):
 - * many more documents
 - * complex connection between them
 - * no apparent suspects
 - * no apparent monetary or political motives...
2. Perhaps copies from the seventeenth/eighteenth century of genuinely much earlier materials...
3. Perhaps creations from the seventeenth/eighteenth century

APPENDIX: More Documents



*The Mysteries of
the Marco Polo Maps*



BENJAMIN B. OLSHIN

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Fantina Polo Map 2"

A Venetian Italian transliteration of Chinese toponyms from the ancient Chinese legend of Fusang...



De quanta città è in Fantina de saxi tuba murca d'entorno
tant è pleno lo maro Oriente de isole cum duo longa península
inter li qua li cavanno deue entocbaloe en fin en la grande
península he li nauhi fardrei nomean Ia Cui/ la prima de
nome Uan scian/ sopra la catena de isole So Qui/ la prima
cima península Ia Can he è conzonta a facca/ vera
detruca // ale è l'omo cum spoa de avori et zascià una
pamena s'ora traca è tanto della he per una Veneta //

Fantina Polo
Venetia / MCCCCXX

Veti el logo secondo el numero/
I/ Fantina o fancia / II/ Xipangi / III/ Uan scian /
IV/ So Qui / V/ Ia Can / VI/ facca //
VII/ Maro Oriente //

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Fantina Polo Map 2" — details



The place names referred to by Roman numerals run as follows:

- I. Tartaria o Serica [i.e., "Tartary or Serica"] /*
- II. Zipangu [i.e., the early Italian name for Japan] /*
- III. Uan Scian [i.e., Wén Shēn (文身)] /*
- IV. To Qiú [meaning unknown] /*
- V. Ta Can [i.e., Dà Hàn (大漢)] /*
- VI. Focan [i.e., Fú Sāng (扶桑)] //*
- VII. Maro Oriente [i.e., "Eastern Sea"]*

Veti el logo segundo el numero /
I / Tartaria o Serica / II / Zipangu / III / Uan Scian /
IV / To Qiú / V / Ta Can / VI / Focan //
VII / Maro Oriente //

Example: "Fantina Polo Map 2" — details

These toponyms match exactly the place names in the Chinese story of *Fusang* as it appears in the *Book of Liang* (梁書 *Liáng Shū*), dating from the seventh century A.D.:

- **Uan Scian = WénShēn** (文身) [*literally, "tattooed bodies", perhaps a reference to the Ainu people; this land of the "tattooed people" was said to be some "7,000 里 (li)" to the northeast of Japan*]
- **Ta Can = DàHàn** (大漢) [*i.e., 大漢國 DàHàn Guó , literally, "Great Han Country", a land said to be to the east of Wen Shen*]
- **Focan = Fú Sāng** (扶桑) [*a mythical land to distant east of China and/or a mythical mulberry tree (桑) growing there*]

But this story of Fusang was only known in the West in 1761, and was published in French (by the sinologist Joseph de Guignes)... with the placenames romanized into French... certainly not Venetian Italian.

These documents here seem to imply an Italian transcriber of a Chinese speaker.

A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Pantect Map"

Illi reges boni de fenda...
 ad hoc inter...
 f...
 ad hoc...
 Illi ex...
 non...
 tartariae...
 mensis...
 contempna...
 sed et...
 concurre...
 Ego...

In...
 de...
 d...
 O...
 d...
 de...
 rem...
 ta...



- I / ...
- II / ...
- III / ...
- IV / ...
- V / ...

Pantect
 De...
 ...
 ...

...
 ...
 ...

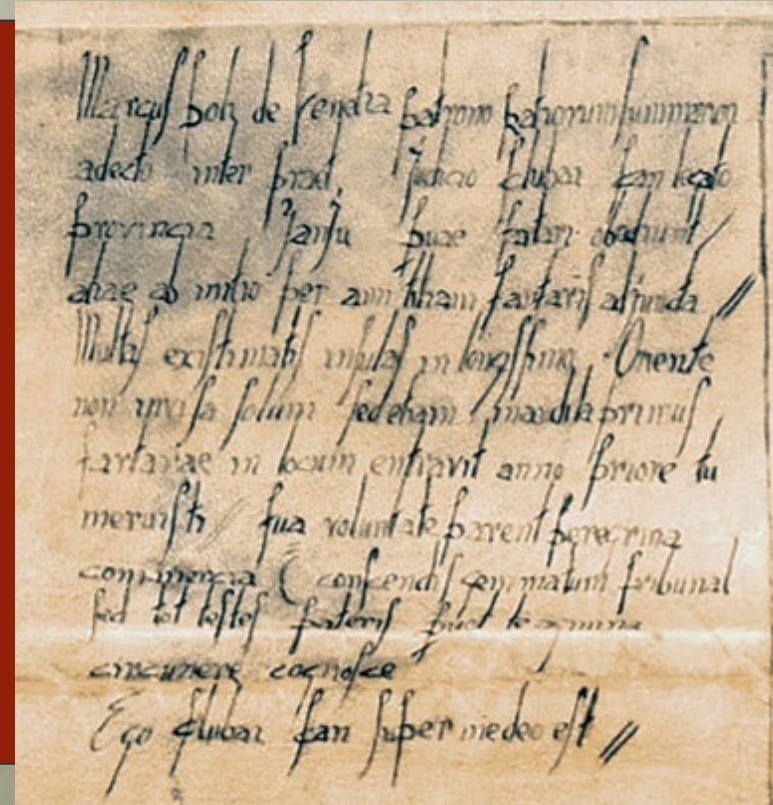
A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Pantect Map" — details

A strange Latin text on the "Pantect Map"...

*Marcus Poli de Venetia patron<us> ratio<n>um summarum
ad<l>ecto inter praet<orios> iudicio Kublai K<h>an legat<us est>
provincia<e> Janju <cui> Ta<r>tari ob<o>ediunt,
<et ad> alia<ae> ab initio per ami<c>itiam Tartaris adjuncta<e>.
Multas existimatis insulas in longissimo Oriente
non invisa<s> solum sed etiam inaudita<s>. Primus
Tartariae in locum <i>ntravit anno priore. Tu
meruisti. Tua voluntate parent peregrina
commercium cum conscendis gemmarum tribunal,
sed tot testes pateris quot te agmina
circum<i>re cognosce.*

Ego Kub<l>ai <Kh>an <sum>, super me de<us> est.



A Look at the Documents...

Example: "Pantect Map" — details (cont.)

[Latin text on the "Pantect Map"]

Marcus Poli de Venetia *patronus ratio summarum adlecto inter praetorios iudicio* Kublai Khan *legatus est* provincia Janju cui Tartari obediunt, et alia ab initio per amicitiam Tartaris adjuncta. Multas existimatis insulas in longissimo Oriente non invisas solum sed etiam inauditas. Primus Tartariae in locum intravit anno priore. Tu meruisti. Tua voluntate parent peregrina commercia cum *conscendis gemmatum tribunal, sed tot testes pateris quot te agmina circumire cognosce.*

Ego Kublai Khan sum, super me deus est.

[English translation]

Marco Polo of Venice, a defender of the highest counsels, granted praetorian rank by the will of Kublai Khan, legate of the province of Janju which the Tartars obey and of others joined to the Tartars through friendship from the beginning. You think that there are many islands in the most distant East, not only unseen but unheard of. He first entered the territory of Tartary a year ago. You have served me well. With your good will let them do business as merchant merchants when you ascend the bejeweled tribunal, but you permit as many witnesses as the number of regiments surrounding you, understand. I am Kublai Khan, above me is God alone.

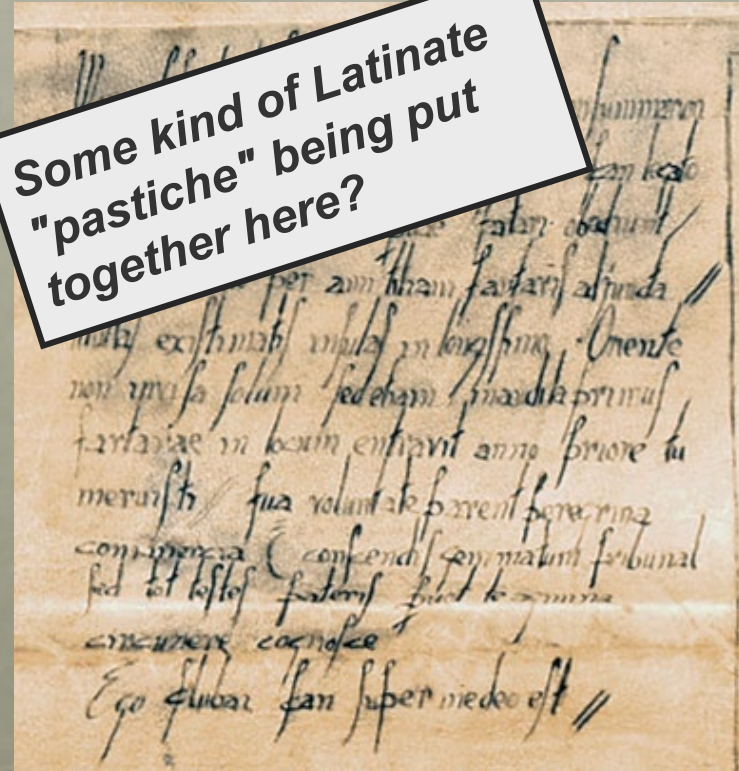
[Latin phrase from an early inscription, first published in 1895, though "Pantect Map" seems to be earlier than that...]

patronus rationum summarum adlectus inter consulares iudicio... legatus

[Latin phrase from Cassiodorus]

considis geniatum tribunal: sed tot testes pateris quot te agmina circumdare cognosci

Some kind of Latinate "pastiche" being put together here?



Question Session