

Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary: A Journey Through the Commercial Heart of the Mongol Empire

In the vast tapestry of medieval history, the Mongol Empire stands as a colossal empire that stretched from the steppes of Central Asia to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Within this sprawling empire, trade flourished along the Silk Road and other major routes, connecting diverse cultures and economies. One invaluable source that illuminates this vibrant commercial landscape is Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary.



Eastern Trade and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages: Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary and its Commercial Context (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies Book 25) by Kirsten Grind

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
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Word Wise : Enabled
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Pegolotti: A Merchant's Guide to the Silk Road

Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary is a medieval trade manual written by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, a Florentine merchant who traveled

extensively throughout the Mongol Empire. The itinerary, compiled around 1355, provides a detailed account of the routes, markets, customs duties, and currencies used by merchants engaged in trade between the Italian city-states and the East.

Ayas and Tabriz: Hubs of Trans-Asian Trade

The itinerary derives its name from its focus on the cities of Ayas and Tabriz. Ayas, a port city in modern-day Turkey, served as a gateway to the Kingdom of Cilician Armenia and a major hub for trade between Europe and the East. Tabriz, located in northwestern Iran, was a bustling metropolis that became the capital of the Ilkhanate, a Mongol dynasty that ruled Persia.

A Journey Through the Commercial Heart of the Mongol Empire

Pegolotti's itinerary guides merchants along a multitude of routes that crisscrossed the Mongol Empire. These routes traversed diverse landscapes, from the arid plains of Central Asia to the mountainous passes of the Caucasus. Merchants could opt to travel by land caravan or by sea, navigating the vast expanse of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

As merchants ventured along these routes, they encountered a myriad of cultures, languages, and legal systems. Pegolotti meticulously provides detailed information on the customs duties levied at each port and market, as well as the local currencies in use. This practical knowledge was essential for merchants to navigate the complexities of international trade.

A Rich Tapestry of Commercial Activities

Pegolotti's itinerary reveals a vibrant tapestry of commercial activities taking place throughout the Mongol Empire. Merchants traded a vast array of

goods, including spices, textiles, precious metals, and luxury items. Local markets bustled with activity, where merchants bartered and negotiated prices, establishing connections that spanned vast distances.

From the bustling streets of Constantinople to the remote outposts of Central Asia, trade flourished under the Pax Mongolica, a period of relative peace and stability enforced by the Mongol Empire. This period witnessed an unprecedented flow of goods and ideas, contributing to a vibrant exchange of cultures and technologies.

Marco Polo's Influence

While Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary stands as a valuable record of commercial practices in the Mongol Empire, it is also worth noting the influence of Marco Polo, the renowned Venetian traveler. Polo's famous book, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, provided Europeans with their first detailed account of the East, inspiring generations of merchants and explorers.

Birmingham, the Center of Medieval Manuscript Studies

The University of Birmingham, located in the heart of England, houses the Cadbury Research Library, a world-renowned center for medieval manuscript studies. The library contains a vast collection of medieval manuscripts, including a prized copy of Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary.

Byzantine Influences on the Itinerary

Byzantine culture played a significant role in shaping the commercial landscape of the Mongol Empire. The Byzantines, with their centuries-old traditions of trade and diplomacy, exerted significant influence on the legal and administrative systems adopted by the Mongols. Pegolotti's itinerary

reflects this Byzantine influence, providing insights into the interconnectedness of the medieval world.

Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary offers a fascinating glimpse into the commercial heart of the Mongol Empire. It not only provides a wealth of practical information for merchants but also serves as a historical document that illuminates the vibrant trade networks and cultural exchanges that characterized this era. Through its meticulous descriptions of routes, markets, and customs duties, the itinerary paints a vivid picture of the complexities and opportunities of international commerce in the medieval world.



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