

BOOK OF THE KNOWLEDGE

Chapter 2: Western and Northern Europe

A Modern English Translation — Exhaustive Version

I left Tolosa and turned along the coast of the country of Burdeo, and then to Rochela, a rich city of France, and thence I went to the point of Sanmae which is in the province of Breteña, thence to the Gulf of Samalo, and thence to the province of Normandia. All these are in the kingdom of Francia, where there are many cities, towns and villages. Leaving Normandia along the coast, I came to the Gulf of Loira into which enters a great river which they call Saina which traverses the whole kingdom of France, and passes through the centre of the great city of Paris. It enters the sea in the Gulf of Loira, and from this gulf to Paris there are four days journey.

Know that the kingdom of France borders on the Mediterranean where there is a city called Narbonne, and on the Alps of Alsace and on the coasts of Flanders, and all the coasts of Gascuña to the Pyrenees. The King of France has three fleurs de lys of gold.

I left Paris and went to Roan and Chalon and thence to a city on the coast which they call Diepa in the kingdom of France, and I left it and reached a rich city called Cales which is in the province of Picardy. Know that from this Cales to the island of England is a short crossing of 8 miles. I departed from Cales and went to the country of Flanders, to a noble city which they call Brujas. The lord of that country has a flag—gold with a black lion.

Thence I went along the coast to a city which they call Solanda and thence to another called Maxa, and to another Leobec which are cities of Germany. Thence I passed to the great and rich city of Dodrec, crossing a great river which they call Rinus, having its origin in the German Alps. This river passes by Coloña, a great city of Germany. In this city they say that the three Magian Kings are interred, who worshipped Jesus Christ in Belem. But when I travelled in the empire of Cataya I was in a city called Solin and they showed me three highly revered monuments and they were in honour of the three Magian Kings who adored Jesus Christ, and they said that they were natives of that city.

In this Germany there are some very high mountains which they call the German Alps. Two rivers rise in them, one called Ruedano which flows by a city called Leon, and unites with another very large river coming from the Alps of Alsace. They flow past Lucdevic and Avinon, a city where the Pope resides, and enter the Mediterranean Sea near a city they call Arle. These cities are in the kingdom of Proençia. They call the other river Rinus and it flows by the city of Coloña which I have already referred to, and enters the German Sea. The other river is called Danubio. It traverses all Germany and enters the middle of the kingdom of Ungria, forming ten large islands. (Further on I will relate how they make a great lake of sweet water, in the province of Barbaria which they call Danoye Lake, near a city called Karispona), and enters the province of Grimania near a city they call Tusna. Afterwards the Danubio enters the province of Panonia, and goes by Patania and Ebruc and Viana and Arruzvar, and afterwards enters the kingdom of Ungria and, crossing the whole of it, enters the greater sea by a city which they call Vesina. After that it forms a very large island. The Emperor of Germany has for his device a flag—yellow with a black eagle crowned.

I departed from Colofnia and went to a city called Colanda in the kingdom of Frisia. I then passed over a great river which they call Albia, rising in the mountains of Boemia. Here the German Sea forms the great Gulf of Frisa, and in that gulf there are four islands. One is called Rayna, another Erria, another Finonia, another Ganglante. The King of Frisia's device is a flag—gold with three long black lions.

I left the kingdom of Frisia and presently entered the kingdom Dacia of the Danes which is all surrounded by the German Sea, and on the other side is the Gulf of Frisa, so that this kingdom only has one single entrance. In it there are twelve great cities. The largest is called Burbena, and in it they crown the Kings of Dacia. Another they call Burgalensis, another Biva, another Abenbruc, another Fandouz, another Artuz, another Arens, another Ardonep, another Damesmare, another Corp, another Dandora, another Dasia, another Bonia. From this point to Norvega the distance is 60 miles. The King of this Dacia has for his device a flag—gold with three black lions. Device on the flag the same as Frisia.

I departed from the kingdom of Dacia and returned to Germany, to a city called Lubec which is in the dukedom of Xaxonia, thence to Rosgot, and thence to Bondismaguc which are cities of Upper Germany, and thence to a city called Grisualdiz on the banks of great lake called Alechon. Passing this I then went to a city called Corveric, thence to Escorpe and thence to another city called Dansicha. By this Dansicha there passes a great river called Turonie which rises in the Bohemian mountains and falls into the Sea of Germany.

In the kingdom of Boemia there are seven great cities, Grisna, Posna, Sirca, Noxia, the largest called Praga where they crown the King of Boemia. This Praga is all surrounded by a lofty range which they call the mountains of Boemia. In the middle there is a great plateau, and in its centre is the city surrounded by a great river called Albia. Another larger river also rises in those mountains called Vandalor near an extensive land called Avandalia. In ancient times the people of Avandalia conquered Andalusia of Spain and gave it that name. The King of Boemia has for his device a flag—white with a red lion crowned.

I left BOEMIA and went to a province which they call SANT NURIO, and to another the name of which was CURCONIA and CULMAN which are great provinces between Germany and the greater sea, and though it may be that they are inhabited by Christians still they are schismatics: and I arrived at two great cities between the greater sea and the Sea of Germany called LITEFAMA and CATALANT between the greater sea and the German Sea. It is a very populous land and the King of it has for a device a white flag with this sign.

I left LITEFAMA and entered the kingdom of POLONIA where there are five great cities, the largest being SANTA MARIA where they crown the kings. Another they call RINALIA, another VÇIBANT, another UNGRADIA, another VIRONA, and it is known that between the two cities of UNGRADIA and VIRONA there flows a great river which rises in a great lake, called TANAIZ, of which I shall say more further on. And they say that this river enters the German Sea, which is a gulf of the western sea. For the German Sea is a gulf which enters the western sea as far as the province of PALONIA, passing between Germany and the Norwegian mountains. Also by this PALONIA another flows: a very great river which is said to rise in the snows of the TRASMONTANA, and to form a great lake near VIRONA. The King of POLONIA has for his design a green flag with this sign in red.

I left the kingdom of POLONIA and went to the kingdom of LEON which the Germans call LUMBREC in which there are five great cities. They call the first LEON, another CHINA, another VASADINO, another TINEZ. It must be known that this kingdom of LEON borders on the province of RUMENIA, and with the kingdom of SUAVA. The King has a green flag with a red cross as is here shown.

After this I turned to the other coast of the German Sea, to the part of the TRASMONTANA being the land of Europe which I will mention further on. I entered a great province they call SUEVIA and found a city called RODERIN very rich and populous though the land is very cold. It has in it nine cities, to wit TARSA, ANDINE, CHICOBERGIS, LANDIS, YSTAT, FORMEANS. In this kingdom there are two great lakes, one called ESCARSE and the other ESTOCOL. The King of this SUEVIA has for his device a yellow flag with two red lions facing each other in the way as follows.

I left the city of RODERIN and, going on board a ship, I passed to an island they call GOTLANDIA which is in the German Gulf, and on this island there is a great city called BISUY in which there are ninety parishes, and the island is well peopled. There is a smaller island called OXILIA. The King of these islands has a flag of gold and purple bars.

I departed from GOTLANDIA and went to a province which is between SUEVIA and NORUEGA called GOTIA. There I found three great cities, the first ESTOCOL, another CALMAN, and another SURDEPINCHE. This city of ESTOCOL faces the German Sea, a great gulf on the shores of which there are many cities. The water of this gulf gets frozen from the cold of the TRASMONTANA. The people of this GOTIA conquered Spain and were the Lords of it for a long time. The devices of this kingdom are a yellow flag with two red lions facing each other as for Suevia.

I departed from GOTIA and ascended the lofty mountains of NORUEGA which is a very strong kingdom containing three great cities. They call the largest REGIS where they crown the kings, another is called NIDROXIA, another TRONDE, another TRUNBEREC. In the mountains of this NORUEGA they breed many birds, Girifaltes, Açores and falcons: also many fierce beasts, white javalis and white bears. They say that a prince, son of the King of NORUEGA, conquered the country of Flanders in the time of King Arthur of Britain. And be it known that this NORUEGA towards the north is uninhabited, and that the year makes one day for six months, and another six months night, and there are men who have their heads fixed on their breasts with no necks whatever, but I did not see them. The King of this Noruega has for his device a flag—gold with a black lion.

I departed from Noruega in a ship of the English, and we shaped a course to the west, and came to an island called INSOLA COLA, then to one called LISTER and then we came to another called INSOLA BONDOLA, and then another very large called SALANDA which is at the entrance of the Gulf of FRISA already mentioned. This island of SALANDA is very populous and has three great cities called SALANDI, RISENT, ESCONDIN, ALENDIA. The King of this island has for his device a flag—gold with a black lion, as in NORUEGA.

I left the island of SALANDA in the said ship and we made a long voyage, arriving at another island called TILLE, and from thence we came to the island of ESCOCIA, and found in it four cities, one called DONFRES, another ENERUIC, another VERUIC. The King of this ESCOCIA has for his device a red flag with three long lions of gold.

I departed from the land of ESCOCIA and came to the kingdom of INGLATERRA. Know that it is a very well populated country and that it contains eleven great cities. The largest, where they crown their King, is called LONDRES, and another GUNSA where are the general studies, another ANTONA, others BRISTOL, ARTAMUA, PREMUA, and MIRA-FORDA. In a province they call GALES there is a great city called DIRGALES which is a lordship of INGLATERRA. The King of those lands has for his arms on a flag quarterly in two quarters fleurs de lys gold on a field azure, because the King is of the house of France, and in the other two quarters in each one on a field gules three ounces gold.

I left INGLATERRA in a boat and reached the island of IRLANDA which is a short crossing of a mile. They say that formerly it was called IBERNIA. Know that it is a well peopled island with a good climate, and that there are three great cities in it. The chief one, where they crown the Kings, is ESTANFORDA, the others YMERIA, GATAFORDA, ROIS, and DONBELIN. In this island there is a great lake, and they say that the lake brings good fortune, because many enchantments were made on its banks in ancient times. The King of this island has the same arms as the King of INGLATERRA.

Being in IRLANDA I sailed in a ship bound for Spain, and went with those on that ship on the high sea, for so long that we arrived at an island called ETERNIS and another called ARTANIA and another called ÇITILANT, and another called IBERNIA. All these islands are in the part where the sun sets in the month of June, and they are all peopled, well supplied and with a good climate. In this island of IBERNIA there are trees and the fruit that they bear are very fat birds. These birds are very good eating whether boiled or roasted. The men in this island are very long lived, some living 200 years. They are born and brought up in a way which makes them unable to die in the island, so that when they become very weak they are taken away and die presently. In this island there are no snakes nor vipers, nor toads, nor flies, nor spiders, nor any other venomous things. In this IBERNIA there is an archiepiscopal city called DUBILIN and the women are very beautiful though very simple. It is a land where there is not as much bread as you may want, but a great abundance of meat and milk. Know that this island is outside the seven climates. The King of this island has for his device the same flag—gold with a black lion—as the King of NORUEGA.

After this I departed from the island of IBERNIA in a ship, and voyaged so far over the western sea that we sighted the Cape of Finisterre, and arrived at Pontevedra in the province of Galicia. Thence I went to a town in the kingdom of Castille, as I mentioned before, which they call TARIFA. It was founded by a very powerful Arab named TARIF. Near this town ALBUAÇEN, King of all the land of the west, was defeated and conquered by the very noble King Don Alfonso of Castille, who pillaged all his tents, and took his treasures, his women, and his horses. I departed from TARIFA and went to the city of ALJEZIRA where is the rock of GIBRALTAR, being places in the dominions of the King of Castille.

Notes on this Chapter

This chapter covers the author's extensive travels through France (including Paris, Normandy, Brittany), Flanders (Bruges), Germany (Cologne, the Rhine and Danube systems), Frisia, Denmark, Bohemia, Poland, Swabia, Gotland, Götaland (Sweden), Norway, Scotland, England, Ireland, and the northern islands (Faroes, Orkneys, Shetlands, Iceland), before returning to Spain via Galicia and Tarifa. The geography becomes increasingly mixed with legend in the far north (six-month days/nights, people with heads on their chests). The text also includes the important note about seeing the tombs of the Three Magi both in Cologne and in China (Solin/Cathay). This is one of the richest chapters for European geography and royal heraldry in the entire work.