

By Jin Bohong



**In the
FOOT
STEPS
of MARCO
POLO**

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	5
MY DAYS IN XINJIANG UYGUR AUTONOMOUS	
REGION	7
Tajiks — "Descendants of Eagles"	7
Kashi, an Ancient Silk Road	21
The Grand Corban Festival	30
In Search of a Vanished Ancient City	39
Every Woman Is a Beauty and They All Wear Hats	44
Among the Pilgrims to Niyamaza	49
Visiting the Ruins of an Ancient City	53
MY DAYS IN QINGHAI PROVINCE	63
Camping with Oil Workers	63
MY DAYS IN GANSU PROVINCE	79
Savoring the Night Rhythm of Mingsha	79
Prosperous Farmers in Business	96
The Story of Monk Xuchan	105
National Day at a Confucian Temple	113
Meeting with a Reinstated Former Rightist	118
The Wonderful Yellow River Carp	123
MY DAYS IN NINGXIA HUI AUTONOMOUS REGION	127
Lovely Tanyang Lambskins	127
MY DAYS IN INNER MONGOLIA AUTONOMOUS	
REGION	139
Enjoying Hot Pot in a Mongolian Yurt	139
COMING TO BEIJING	148
Marco Polo Bridge	148

PREFACE

The first time I met Mr. Harry Rutstein, president of the Marco Polo Foundation, was in a room of the Xiyuan Hotel in Beijing, in the summer of 1983. He was in China to look into the possibilities of making a trip all along the route that Marco Polo, the Venetian traveler, had taken 700 years ago in the fabled land of Cathay.

The Marco Polo Foundation is a non-governmental academic organization whose objective is to retrace the path taken by Marco Polo from Venice to China and to study the people and cultures on the way, as a contribution to East-West understanding.

Harry had divided this project into two parts. The first, from 1975 to 1981, was spent traveling from Venice, over the Mediterranean Sea to Israel, then through Turkey, Iran and into Afghanistan. The second part took him through Pakistan all the way up to the Chinese border. By that time, he had traveled a total of 9,500 miles. The final lap of his journey was to be in China, 4,500 miles in all.

In order to complete this odyssey, Harry had, back in 1971, contacted the Chinese Embassy in the U.S., the Permanent Chinese Delegation to the United Nations, the Ministry of Defense and China Central Television. However, none of them could help him at the time, because his projected route through five provinces and autonomous regions would take him through many places as yet not open to foreigners. By the time he finally managed to get the green light in 1985, he had been working on the project for over ten years.

Between 1978 and 1979, I accompanied Mr. Che Muqi, Editor-in-Chief of the magazine *People's China*, on a trip along the Silk Road. Mr. Che called me one day in the summer of 1983, when I was back on holiday from studies in the U.S. He told me about the Marco Polo Foundation, and asked me to take some copies of his three volume *Journey Along the Silk Road* recently published by the Japanese Shogakukan to show to Harry. The work was illustrated with photographs that I had taken on our trip.

When I went to see Harry, we hit it off immediately. I told him about my experiences along the Silk Road, he told me about his plans

and hoped that I would help him realize them. And that is how I became involved in the whole project. My next two years were spent flying back and forth between China and the U.S. making arrangements. Finally, at the end of April 1985, an agreement was signed with the China Press Agency. Permission was granted for the trip. The day Harry got the news, he was overjoyed. "I feel as good as Marco Polo must have felt when he got his papers of safe-conduct from Kublai Khan," he declared.

The Chinese and Americans were to meet at twelve noon on August 15, 1985, at Kunjirap Daban on the Sino-Pakistani border. The motor caravan would then proceed through Taxkorgan, Kashi, Hotan, Yutian, Ruoqiang (Qarkilik), Dunhuang, Zhangye, Wuwei, Lanzhou, Yinchuan, Hohhot to arrive in Beijing on October 20.

At the end of July, I flew back to Beijing from New York, with a huge suitcase full of film for the Chinese side. I joined my Chinese colleagues and we flew out to Xinjiang to meet the Americans. Shortly before we left, I went to see my old friend Mr. Che Muqi at *People's China*. He suggested I keep an account of all my experiences and then write something for the magazine. I was reluctant to promise anything because I felt that we would only be going over old ground from last time, and it would be difficult for me to say anything new. However, he insisted and so I finally agreed to keep a logbook. I told myself that I would just jot down a few things every day.

When we hit the road, though, I began to feel differently. At each new place, I not only had to take pictures, I also felt I had to ask more questions, take notes, and keep my ears open. At night, I went to bed several hours later than the others, because I had to write up my impressions and reactions. There had been enormous changes in the six years since my last visit. Before I knew it, I had filled one notebook and had started another.

This book is the day-to-day account of that trip. When I look over these entries, I relive those exciting, delightful though exhausting days, and I hope the reader too will share some of that exhilaration.

New York
March 6, 1986

USSR

⊙
URUMQI

XINJIANG UYGUR AUTONOMOUS REGION

Dunhuang

9.19—9.25

Ruoqiang

9.11—9.15

Hotan

8.26—9.2

Minfeng

9.9—9.11

8.15

Kunjirap

Mountain

Pass

9.4—9.9

Yutian

9.15—9.17

Mangya Town

9.17—9.18

Lenghu

QINGHAI PROVINCE

KASHMIR

MONGOLIA

INNER MONGOLIA AUTONOMOUS REGION

Jiuquan
9.25—9.28

9.28—9.30
Zhangye

9.30—10.3
Wuwei

XINING

LANZHOU

GANSU PROVINCE

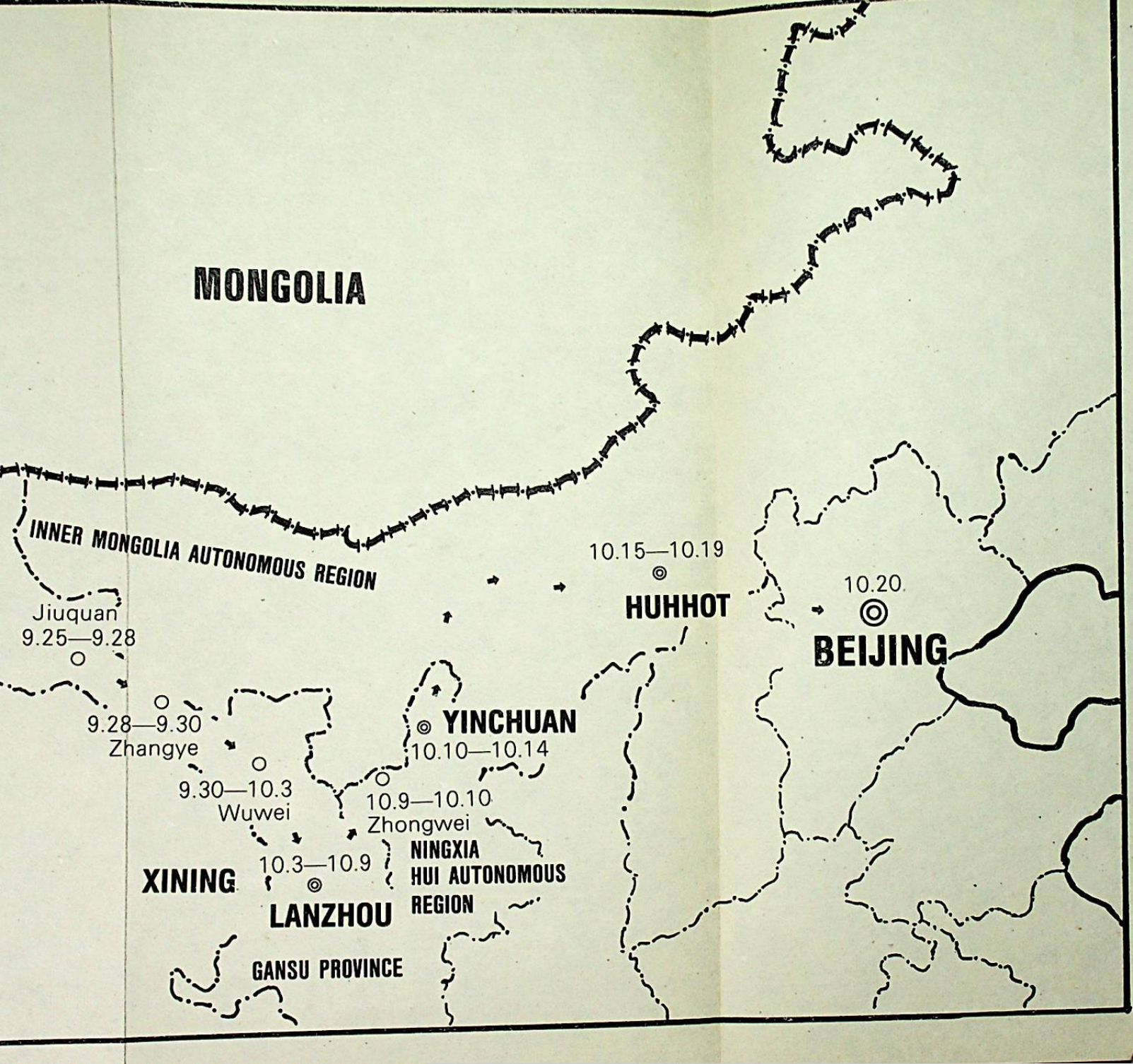
10.10—10.14
YINCHUAN

10.9—10.10
Zhongwei

**NINGXIA
HUI AUTONOMOUS
REGION**

10.15—10.19
HUHROT

10.20
BEIJING



Appendix

A BRIEF CHINESE CHRONOLOGY

Xia Dynasty	c. 21st century B.C. to c. 16th century B.C.
Shang Dynasty	c. 16th century B.C. to c. 11th century B.C.
Zhou Dynasty	
Western Zhou	c. 11th century B.C. to 771 B.C.
Eastern Zhou	770-256 B.C.
Spring and Autumn Period	770-476 B.C.
Warring States Period	475-221 B.C.
Qin Dynasty	221-206 B.C.
Han Dynasty	
Western Han	206 B.C.-A.D. 24
Eastern Han	25-220
Three Kingdoms	
Wei	220-265
Shu	221-263
Wu	222-280
Western Jin Dynasty	265-316
Eastern Jin Dynasty	317-420
Southern Dynasties	
Song	420-479
Qi	479-502
Liang	502-557
Chen	557-589
Northern Dynasties	
Northern Wei	386-534

Eastern Wei	534-550
Northern Qi	550-577
Western Wei	535-556
Northern Zhou	557-581
Sui Dynasty	581-618
Tang Dynasty	618-907
Five Dynasties	
Later Liang	907-923
Later Tang	923-936
Later Jin	936-946
Later Han	947-950
Later Zhou	951-960
Song Dynasty	
Northern Song	960-1127
Southern Song	1127-1279
Liao Dynasty	916-1125
Jin Dynasty	1115-1234
Yuan Dynasty	1271-1368
Ming Dynasty	1368-1644
Qing Dynasty	1644-1911
Republic of China	1912-1949
People's Republic of China	1949-

沿着马可·波罗的足迹

金伯宏 著

施晓菁 译

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In the FOOTSTEPS of MARCO POLO

By Jin Bohong

This book is a vivid day-to-day account of the first post-1949 exploration trip the Chinese government ever permitted Westerners to make over the entire Chinese section of the route of Marco Polo's travels. The five



provinces and autonomous regions covered by the trip feature not only the most extraordinary landscape of boundless deserts and grasslands, elevated plateaus, and low-lying basins but also numerous historical and cultural sites of the famed ancient Silk Road. The region is home to over a dozen of China's minority ethnic groups. The author's diary is greatly enhanced by his broad understanding and knowledge of the area from several previous assignments as a journalist covering the Silk Road. Informal and personal, his account of this eventful trip provides valuable insights. The book will be of interest to both scholars and general readers of the history and romance of the ancient Silk Road.

More than forty beautiful, full-color photographs taken by the author illustrate the text.

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