



## The Customs of the Kingdoms of India

*Marco Polo*

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# **The Customs of the Kingdoms of India**

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## **The Customs of the Kingdoms of India** Marco Polo

As Marco Polo (1254-1324) returned home across the Indian Ocean, after years in the service of Genghis Khan, he picked up a fabulous array of stories from sailors and merchants, about the peoples of the region, some reliable, some wholly implausible, but all fascinating. Great Journeys allows readers to travel both around the planet and back through the centuries - but also back into ideas and worlds frightening, ruthless and cruel in different ways from our own. Few reading experiences can begin to match that of engaging with writers who saw astounding things: great civilisations, walls of ice, violent and implacable jungles, deserts and mountains, and multitudes of birds and flowers new to science. Reading these books is to see the world afresh, to rediscover a time when many cultures were quite strange to each other, where legends and stories were treated as facts and in which so much was still to be discovered.

## **The Customs of the Kingdoms of India Details**

Date : Published February 27th 2007 by Penguin UK (first published February 1st 2007)

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Author : Marco Polo

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## From Reader Review The Customs of the Kingdoms of India for online ebook

### Popco says

"Let me tell you"

"You may take it for a fact"

"You must know"

I don't ever want to read those phrases again. If all variations of "let me tell you" in this book had been left out, there might have been room for the many more interesting things that Polo deemed "tedious to tell/enumerate". I'd swear the phrase pops up at an average of two times a page, which starts getting old after the first ten pages or so.

'The customs of the Kingdoms of India' is repetitive and badly written, sometimes even jumping back and forth between locations because Polo "forgot" to tell a story he had meant to tell earlier in the book. If ever a work needed editing, this would be it.

After all the stories he must have heard on his travels, I would've expected Polo to be a better storyteller himself. And since his travels were written down by an actual novelist (Rustichello) there is no excuse for this absolute travesty. There is no reason whatsoever for a man who reads and writes for a living to sound like a drunken sailor reminiscing about his travels in front of an equally drunk and unwilling audience. And then... and then... LET ME TELL YOU!

So why two stars and not one? Well, it was interesting to read such a completely different and strange recounting of the world through the eyes of someone who lived 700 years ago. In fact, I do plan on reading the complete 'Travels' someday. This excerpt is only about 80 pages, so I don't regret reading it and wouldn't mind recommending it to others.

However, this would have been a much better (not to mention informational) book if it had been annotated, putting Polo's observations in a historical context and trying to parse fact from fiction.

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### Russell Mark Olson says

Stick to traveling Marco, writing ain't your forte, let me tell you.

Still, interesting though.

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### Apesays

This is possibly one of these excerpt books (this being from a set of 20) where I am glad it is just an excerpt, because now I've read this, I don't think I'll bother reading the full book. I am working my way through this set in no particular order, and some I do want to read the full books of; others I don't. Not that it was awful,

don't get me wrong, but it hasn't been my favourite so far.

This one is from the early 1300s, about Marco Polo's accounts of his travels around the middle east and the Indian subcontinent. It's interesting to read the little introduction at the start - this was actually all written down after the event. He was locked up in prison with another guy, and he did the talking, and this guy wrote it down. And it does have this oral element, as he's speaking directly to the reader, often with comments like "now I shall tell you how it worked".

It does get a little repetitive at times, as he skips from city to city, kingdom to kingdom, and starts them all off by saying they had their own language, king, were idolaters, you can see the Pole star this well/bad from there, these are the spices they had... can get a little difficult to distinguish one from the other. And some of the stories are obviously not true, it's like the old fish I caught but it got away story - islands with people who have dogs heads rather than human heads; eagles that carry away elephants... but I suppose all of this was part of the adventurers culture back then.

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### **Rainey says**

Entertaining. Fact heavy, but interesting to see how much the "facts" have changed.

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### **Akshat says**

An interesting insight into medieval India and beyond from a medieval (and slightly prejudiced and racist) European perspective.

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### **Don says**

The term 'India' obviously meant something more extensive to the Europeans of the 13th century than the land we now associate with the subcontinent. In this account it begins in Hormuz, the Persian gulf port now in Iran. Polo provides anecdotes of an ancient 'Sheikh of the Assassins' that could have come from the '1001 nights'.

The on to the lands of the Bay of Bengal - Ceylon and Andaman, whose people are 'idolaters and live like wild beasts.' Then on to Malabar, which is 'the best part of India.' Pearl fishing and the practices of the Brahmins there to entertain us. There are towns and cities aplenty in these rich lands, and their peoples are also idolaters.

But India also stretches across the Indian Ocean and Madagascar and Zanzibar and also includes the strange land of Male and Female Island, where women live on one and men the other. The account seems to be a fantasy woven around a few basic facts leaving you to wonder exactly what the traveller saw there.... Then, the circuit goes through Aden, whose Sultan was supposedly so cruel to his Christian subjects, and eventually arriving back at Hormuz.

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## **A.K. Klemm says**

I picked this book up for two simple facts: 1. I am collecting all of Penguin Books Great Ideas publications and 2. There are elephants on the front cover. I adore elephants. They are powerful, dignified, trustworthy, humorous, and endearing. Marco Polo's The Customs of the Kingdoms of India has little to do with elephants...

read my review here: <http://anakalianwhims.wordpress.com/2...>

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## **Andrew says**

The Customs of the Kingdoms of India is a brief excerpt from Marco Polo's "Travels." This excerpt covers the Eastern kingdoms of Africa, the coast of Western India, including Gujarat, and Malabar, Hormuz and Iran, and Ceylon. Marco Polo traveled these areas in the late 13th century, on his way to visit the Yuan Emperor in China. Travels is a wonderful travelogue by a European in a world full of mystery. His culture shock is evident in his writing, as is the excitement of discovering something he has never experienced before. The Customs of India section is equally interesting.

So why just 3 stars? I rated this three stars because I should have just read the full "Travels." This book seems a bit skeezy as a business model. Breaking up a book that is about 400 pages long, into 4 or 5 texts and selling them individually may be a bit strange. The Customs of India is interesting, to be sure, but so are Marco Polo's travelogues through Central Asia, China, and the Middle East. The whole package is surely a bit more enjoyable than just a taste.

All things considered, Marco Polo's travelogues are obviously works of classic literature. Part travel writing on customs, trade goods, and cultural norms, part filled with stories and legends from those he encounters, part pure fabrication, Marco Polo's travel writings remain exciting and controversial to this day. However, they are surely worth reading in their entirety. This excerpt is interesting, but probably worth passing up for the whole "Travels" as there is much more of interest to read about. The Customs of the Kingdoms of India is a quick and enjoyable read, but it is just a chapter in a larger story. I would recommend that instead.

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## **Bookshop says**

Marco Polo had a very irritating way of writing. He peppered the book with "Let me tell you", "You must know that...", and "I have told you that...". It is not a travelogue but more a patronizing story telling. The story, however, was methodically told from one country to another, moving quickly when there was nothing interesting to tell.

The coverage was quite extensive from India to Africa despite the title. I think there might be more interesting travelogue about this part of the world than this skinny book.

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## **Daren says**

If I had a dollar for every "Let me tell you", "You must know that...", and "I have told you that...", I would be

a little better off than I am now. Similarly annoying in the writing is that the first sentence about any country / province etc explain that the inhabitants are idolaters, and that they go about quite naked... repetitive to say the least.

Still it is interesting to read, as there are many other books which attempt to determine his route and which of his writings can be tied to actual places and events and which are simply fanciful re-tellings of stories Polo was told.

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### **Sarah says**

I bought this from a charity shop because of the nice cover but I regret it ?

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### **Piper says**

Large portions are identical to "Travels in the Land of Serpents and Pearls".

I didn't realize that both were holding excerpts from the same source material.

Like in the other book a lot of sentences begin with "Let me tell you".

The language is simple and very repetitive.

And his accounts (thou interesting) sound quite fantastical so take it with a grain of salt.

I understand that it was a different time back then, but some of his writing is really taking it too far:

"They are quite black and go entirely naked except that they cover their private parts. Their hair is so curly that it can scarcely be straightened out with the aid of water. They have big mouths and their noses are so flattened and their lips and eyes so big that they are horrible to look at. Anyone who saw them in another country would say that they were devils."

2,5 Stars

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### **Angel says**

for the quote on the cover (the cover, of course, being how i choose all my books):

"They say that a man who goes to sea must be a man in despair."

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### **Johanna Lomuljo says**

Binasa ko to noong time na dapat pinag-aaralan ko ang East Asian kingdoms for Histo haha. Pero in all fairness, na-appreciate ko tuloy yung mga lessons namin before. Lalo na yung sa Jainism, dammit hardcore pala super. While binabasa ko ito, ang daming moments na naisip kong "What?" kasi borderline fiction na yata yung stories ni Marco. OA kasi yung details. haha. Pero nice na book.

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