

of the mariners of those seas. But the north wind there blows with such strength that it has caused the sea to submerge a large part of the Island; and that is the reason why it is not so big now as it used to be. For you must know that, on the side where the north wind strikes, the Island is very low and flat, insomuch that in approaching on board ship from the high seas you do not see the land till you are right upon it.<sup>2</sup> Now I will tell you all about this Island.

They have a king there whom they call SENDEMAIN, and are tributary to nobody.<sup>3</sup> The people are Idolaters, and go quite naked except that they cover the middle. They have no wheat, but have rice, and sesamum of which they make their oil. They live on flesh and milk, and have tree-wine such as I have told you of. And they have brazil-wood, much the best in the world.<sup>4</sup>

Now I will quit these particulars, and tell you of the most precious article that exists in the world. You must know that rubies are found in this Island and in no other country in the world but this. They find there also sapphires and topazes and amethysts, and many other stones of price. And the King of this Island possesses a ruby which is the finest and biggest in the world; I will tell you what it is like. It is about a palm in length, and as thick as a man's arm; to look at, it is the most resplendent object upon earth; it is quite free from flaw and as red as fire. Its value is so great that a price for it in money could hardly be named at all. You must know that the Great Kaan sent an embassy and begged the King as a favour greatly desired by him to sell him this ruby, offering to give for it the ransom of a city, or in fact what the King would. But the King replied that on no account whatever