

that direction, except this one, and that other of which we have to tell you, called Zanghibar. This is because the sea-current runs so strong towards the south that the ships which should attempt it never would get back again. Indeed, the ships of Maabar which visit this Island of Madeigascar, and that other of Zanghibar, arrive thither with marvellous speed, for great as the distance is they accomplish it in 20 days, whilst the return voyage takes them more than 3 months. This (I say) is because of the strong current running south, which continues with such singular force and in the same direction at all seasons.<sup>4</sup>

'Tis said that in those other Islands to the south, which the ships are unable to visit because this strong current prevents their return, is found the bird *Gryphon*, which appears there at certain seasons. The description given of it is however entirely different from what our stories and pictures make it. For persons who had been there and had seen it told Messer Marco Polo that it was for all the world like an eagle, but one indeed of enormous size; so big in fact that its wings covered an extent of 30 paces, and its quills were 12 paces long, and thick in proportion. And it is so strong that it will seize an elephant in its talons and carry him high into the air, and drop him so that he is smashed to pieces; having so killed him the bird gryphon swoops down on him and eats him at leisure. The people of those isles call the bird *Ruc*, and it has no other name.<sup>5</sup> So I wot not if this be the real gryphon, or if there be another manner of bird as great. But this I can tell you for certain, that they are not half lion and half bird as our stories do relate; but enormous as they be they are fashioned just like an eagle.

The Great Kaan sent to those parts to enquire about these curious matters, and the story was told by those