

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s WHY IT WAS WRITTEN

. I .

HERE BEGINS THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS BOOK WHICH IS CALLED THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD. LORDS Emperors, and Kings, Dukes, and Marquesses, Counts, Knights, and Burgesses, and all people who *are pleased* R & wish to know the different generations of men and the diversities of the different regions *and lands of the world, the diversities also of the kingdoms and provinces and regions of* R LT *all the parts of the east, . and to know their customs and uses,* R take then this book and have it read, & here you will find all the greatest marvels and the great diversities of the Great *and Less* R LT *Armenie and of Persie, Media, .Turquie,* Z R and of the Tartars and Indie and of the many other provinces *about Asya Media and part of Europe, . going toward the Greek wind,* Z R *levant, and tramontaine,* just as our book will tell you clearly in order, as Master Marc Pol *of the Melion,* O wise and noble citizen of Venese, relates because he saw them with his own eyes. But there are some things there which he did not see, but he heard them from men fit to be cited and of truth. And therefore *in writing* R we shall put the things seen for *things* O R LT seen and the heard for heard; *and this was done* O R LT so that *this* our book may be *pleasing and right and truthful* VB VB with no falsehood & *that the things said may not be counted fables.* R And each one who shall read or hear this book must believe it *fully,* R because all are *most truthful things.* R For I make you know that since our Lord God [4b] *fashioned Adam our first father & Eve* V with his hands until this moment never was Christian, *Saracen,* V nor pagan nor Tartar nor Indian nor any man of any kind who *saw & knew or inquired* V so much of the different parts of the world & of the great wonders so much as *this said Master Marc Pol* Z Z R *searched out & knows, nor had travelled through them, .nor had such ability to see & understand; & even from the course of his life it can* VB *be understood & judged that this noble citizen is of an excellent and good understanding, because he was always highly valued by all lords and princes wherever he went.* And therefore he says to himself that it would be too great evil if he did not cause all the great wonders which he saw & which he heard for truth to be put in writing so that the other people who did not see them nor know may know them by this book. Moreover I tell you that to know this he stayed in those different parts & provinces quite twenty-six¹ years, *from the beginning of his youth until the age of forty years.*² R And afterwards, when he was staying in the dungeon of Jene *because of the war, . not wishing* R Z *to be idle he thought he ought to compile the said book for the enjoyment of readers.*³ R And he himself *noted down only a few things which he still kept in mind; . & they are little compared to the many* R & almost infinite things which he would have been able to write if he had believed it possible to return to these our parts; *but thinking it almost impossible ever to leave the service of the great Kaan, king of the Tartars, he only wrote a few small things in his notebooks. . Now he caused* Z

¹ VB: 25

² cf. Z p.v.

³ cf. p. 60, the same phrase in Pipino.