

THE FISH SHIPS AND HOT WINDS OF CURMOS ≠ MARCO POLO

well, and to be healthy, they eat dates and salt fish; these are tunnies; and they  
 LT also eat *coarse foods such as are garlic and onions*. And to keep well they use this food  
 VB LT of which I have told you, *which here for us is unwholesome food*. The men of this city  
 Z L Z *have many ships, and their ships are very bad and weak and very dangerous, and many*  
 V Z of them are lost because they are not nailed with iron pins like ours, because it is  
 R Z a hard wood of which they are made of a certain kind brittle as pottery, so that as soon as a  
 R Z R Z R nail is driven into it it rebounds on itself and as it were is broken up, but the planks are  
 Z bored with iron drills as carefully as they can at the ends, and then are fixed with little  
 Z treenails; afterwards they bind them or they are sewn with coarse thread which is made  
 FB R of the husks of the trees of nuts of Indie, which are large and over them are threads like  
 R horsehair. For they have it soaked<sup>1</sup> and when the substance is rotted it remains clean and it  
 V VA becomes like strands of horse [17a] hair and then it is spun like silk; then they make this  
 L thread of it and so sew the ships with it, and it is not easily rotted by the salt water of  
 FB P the sea but lasts long in it, but it cannot last in a storm. And indeed strengthening with iron  
 V VA is better. And they go with them to fish, & so many of them perish. And the ships have only one  
 VA L mast and one sail and one rudder and have no deck. But when they have loaded them  
 FB a covering, on the hides they put the horses which they carry into Indie to sell. They  
 TA FB have no iron of which to make nails and so they make pins of wood with which they  
 VA FB VA VB nail their ships, and then sewing of that aforesaid thread. They have no iron anchors, but  
 anchor with other tackle of theirs, and so they perish with every little storm. And for this  
 reason it is great danger to sail in those ships, and I tell you that they sink many  
 R V of them because the sea of Indie is very terrible and often makes great storms. And  
 V VA V the people of the said land are all black and worship Mahomet. And in all the summer  
 the people do not stay in the city because there is so great heat there that they  
 LT all die there, but I tell you that they go outside to their gardens which they have  
 VA in places where there are rivers and water enough,<sup>2</sup> so that everyone has water enough  
 P for his garden led through conduits & canals. And for all this they would not escape  
 if there were not that which I shall tell you. It is true that many times in the  
 R P VA summer from half terce till noon every day a strong wind blows from towards the desert of  
 Z Z sand which is round that plain, which is so extremely fervent and hot that preventing  
 Z Z one through excessive heat from breathing it would suddenly suffocate and kill the men—and  
 none can escape from it if he is found on the dry land—if it were not that as soon as the  
 FB VA P men see that that hot wind is coming they all immediately run & go into the water

<sup>1</sup> macerer FA,FB: batre But TA,LT,R take it to mean "soak". VA: maxerare

<sup>2</sup> VB: zerchando le riue del mar . . . le riue del mar e de fiume