

HOW CINGHIS WAS FIRST LORD OF THE TARTARS ≠ MARCO POLO

V yet it is true that they paid tax to *Prester Johan* of their own free will, a<sup>1</sup> great lord who  
V R was called in their tongue *Uncan*, which is as much as to say the great lord, which, it is  
the opinion of some, means to say in French *Prester Johan*;<sup>2</sup> [26c] and this was the  
V FB *Prester Johan* of whom all the world talks of his great rule. The Tartars gave him  
for his tax of every ten beasts one; and thus he had the tenth of all their things. Now it  
happened that they multiplied much. And when *Prester Johan* saw that they were  
P so great a people he says that they were able to hurt him if by chance they wished to  
R LT rebel and being afraid of them thought how he could harm them, & says that he will divide  
VA R VA them apart & scatter them through the world in several countries that they might have  
R less power. And so every time that he found opportunity when some lord rebelled, he chose three  
and four in a hundred of these Tartars and sent them to those places, and so their power grew  
less; and he acted in a like way in other affairs of his; and then he sends some of his  
V barons there to do this, saying that they must kindly submit to his rule, & if they will not  
do this he will make them submit, to their cost & to their shame. And when the Tartars  
FB FB saw this[&]heard what *Prester Johan* wished to do to them they were much grieved  
R by it. Seeing with what indignity they were subjected to so great slavery, not wishing to be  
LT separated one from another, and knowing that he was seeking nothing but their ruin, they took  
counsel among themselves about this what they had to do. And they accepted the counsel to leave  
that country and go elsewhere where *Prester Johan* could not hurt them nor do harm. And then  
VB R gathering all their goods & flocks they set out all together from the places where they lived  
and go through desert places towards *tramontaine* so far that *Prester Johan*  
LT cannot hurt them. And they were rebels against him and paid him no tax nor any  
TA FB VA tribute. And so they stay some long time, the people of that province, in a safe place.

V VA **H**OW CINGHIS WAS THE FIRST KAN OF THE TARTARS. Now it happened that  
P FB V in the 1187<sup>3</sup> year of our Lord Jesus Christ the Tartars, having stayed thus for  
a long time, by common consent make a new lord & king of theirs who had  
V R *Cinghis Kan* for name in their language. This *Cinghis Kan* was a man very upright,  
V eloquent, and of great valour and of great wisdom and of great prowess, so that he was  
most worthy to receive the lordship. Moreover I tell you that when this man was chosen  
VB for king he ruled with such justice and moderation that he was loved by all and revered  
not as lord but almost as God, so that when this his good fame spread through many lands all the  
Tartars of the world who were scattered through those strange countries came off

<sup>1</sup> a u FB: a vng TA,VA: a uno

<sup>2</sup> F,FA,L,VA,R are the only texts of those consulted which make this statement quite positively. B. changes *prestor iohan* in the text to *le grant sire* on the sole authority of V.

<sup>3</sup> FA,FB,TA,VA,P: 1187 L,LT,VB: 1287 V,R: 1172