

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD & THE GREAT TARTAR KAN

.68.

against a castle which had Caagiu for name, and there while he was besieging it he was hit by an arrow in the knee, and of that blow he died after a few days, & he was buried on the great mount Altai. From this there was great loss, for he was a prudent man and wise and a man of war. Now I have described to you how the Tartars first have a lord, and who was their first lord, and that was Cinghis Kan, & he set them free from servitude; and again I have told you how they first conquered Prester Johan. Now I wish to tell you the many other lords who reigned afterwards and of their customs and of their habits as you shall learn.¹

HERE HE TELLS OF THE KAN WHO REIGN AFTER THE DEATH OF CINGHIS KAN. You may know quite truly that after the death of Cinghis Kan first lord of the Tartars Cui Kan² was second lord, the third lord named Batu Kan reigned, & after him reigned the fourth Ulau³ Kan, after Ulau Kan reigned the fifth Mongu Kan, after Mongu Kan reigned the sixth [28a] Cublai Kan who now reigns & is greater and more powerful than was any of the others. For if all the other five were together they will not have so much power as this Cublai, for he inherited what the others had, and then obtained as it were the rest of the world; for he lived about sixty years in his rule. And again I tell you a greater thing than I am telling you: that all the emperors of the world and all the kings both of Christians and of Saracens also, if they were all together, would not have so much power nor could they do so much as this Cublai great Kaan could do, who is lord of all the Tartars of the world, both of those of the sunrising and of those of the sunsetting, for all are his men and subject to him. And this name Kaan means Emperor in our tongue. And I will show you this his great power in its own place in this our book quite clearly. And you may know truly that such a custom is observed; for all the great Kaan and the great lords of the Tartars who are descended from the line of their first lord Cinghis Kan are carried for burial when they are dead to a very great mountain which is called Altai. And wherever the great lords of the Tartars die, if they die a good hundred days marches⁴ away from that mountain, they must be carried there to the said mountain for burial with the others, nor are they willing to be buried in another place. Moreover I tell you another great wonder, that they have this custom that when the bodies of these great Kaan of the Tartars are carried to that mountain to bury, though they may be distant forty days marches or more or

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¹ This story (chapters 64—68) is translated from VB on pp. 494-498 below as an example of the way in which that version deals with the text, adding many words but no facts, & actually omitting several interesting details.

² An old note in the margin of V adds *boccata can*.

³ *Alton* and most texts have something similar; but see PN.

⁴ TA³: *c^o migla*