

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE TARTARS FIGHT ~~of~~ MARCO POLO

P use their horses in such a way. And when they come to battle with their enemies in the
 LT field they defeat them as much by flight as by pursuit in this way: for they are not
 R turned from them in shame of flight; for they are never mingled with them altogether,
 R but go shooting now here now there, riding continually around their enemies,¹ [and]
 VB VA often they pretend to fly and in this way they lead their enemy where they wish and cause great
 R loss to the enemy with those arrows. And they have so trained their horses that at a sign they
 P turn themselves here & there at the will of the riders as quickly as a dog would do. And
 when one chases them and they go flying they fight as well and as stoutly as when
 they are face to face with the enemy. For when he flies more quickly then he turns
 V himself back against them with his bow and makes great volleys of arrows and kills
 FB some of the horses of the enemy and some of the men also who are pursuing them
 R behind their backs; as if they were fighting face to face; and when the enemy believe they
 LT have discomfited and conquered them by putting them to flight, then they have lost,
 V LT V for they find all their horses are killed and themselves in plenty by those arrows which
 are poisoned. And when the Tartars see that they have killed some of the horses of
 L their enemies and some of the men too, united together at length they turn themselves
 FB upon them & come back all at once to the battle and behave themselves so well and so
 FB valiantly and so orderly & with so great noise that they put their enemies to flight and
 FA V conquer them immediately. For they are very brave in battle and strong and hardened, &
 they make cruel battles. And in this way they have already won many battles and
 V conquered many people. And this is the truth, & all that I have told you are the ways
 VB and customs of the real Tartars. But I tell you that now they are much debased &
 L have forsaken some of these customs, for those who frequent Catai keep themselves very
 VA greatly to the ways and to the manner and to the customs of the idolaters of those
 L regions and have very much left their law; and those who frequent the Levant keep

¹ *car il ne sen torment ad honte de fuit car il uoit arcaor la or entor a lor ennimis* This is evidently corrupt, but it is not very easily mended. The first clause was apparently taken to mean that they were not ashamed to pretend to fly, and so FB: *Car Jlz nont honte de fuir*; and nothing like the second clause seems to be found in the other texts except R. It seems rather to mean that if they are repulsed they do not take to shameful headlong flight but return and ride round the enemy. The last sentence will then be, *il uont or ça or la entor a lor ennimis* or perhaps, *il uont arcaor or ça or la entor &c.* R suggests, as B. points out, yet another slightly different idea: *mai si meschiano totalmente con loro, anzi continuamente caualcano à torno quà, & là saettando, et alle volte fingono di fuggire.* VA: *in bataglia con i suoi nimixj segli ano el pizere egli non ano vergognia nisuna* VL: "When the Tartars begin a skirmish with their enemies they always set their ambushes in hidden places, and those who attack set themselves immediately in flight as if they were weaker than the enemies, and as they fly they lead their enemies into their ambushes."