

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s BARGU BY THE OCEAN SEA

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when it shall be their time and place, for they are really marvellous things to put into writing. *We shall speak of the rule of the great Kaan and of his court, which in my judgement I hold, having searched out and seen many parts of the world, that no other dominion can be compared with the power and wealth and dominion of the great Kaan which is wonderful and almost incredible to him who has not seen it. And I shall bind myself for certain not to say of it more than is according to the truth, that my witness in the sight of all, and chiefly of those who through the times shall see or hear, may be known to be true.* But [30b] now leaving these things we wish to go back to our story in the great plain where we were when we began about the doings of the Tartars.

HERE HE TELLS OF THE PLAIN OF BARGU AND OF THE DIFFERENT CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE. And when one departs from Caracorom and from mount Altai where is the place where are put the bodies of the Tartar lords of the house of the great Kaan as I have told you above, he goes then through a plain & through the country towards tramontaine which is called the plain of Bargu and through this plain are found as it were no dwellings, or few, & this plain lasts quite forty¹ days journeys. The people who dwell there are called Mecrit and are very wild people, and for the most part they live on animals which they take in the chase, and the most are deer which are very large, of which they have many. And what is more I tell you that they domesticate and ride the deer by way of horses, they are so large. They live likewise on birds, because there are many lakes, ponds, and marshes, & the said plain borders toward tramontaine on the Ocean sea, and those birds which lose their old feathers live the more part of the summer round those waters, and when they are all naked so that they cannot fly, those people take them at their good pleasure; & they live also on fish. And uses and customs they have like the Tartars, and they belong to the dominion of the great Kaan. And they have no fields of corn nor wine. And in the summer they have hunting and chase of four-footed beasts and birds enough and take a great quantity of birds, but in the winter no beast nor bird stays there for the great cold of that region. And when one has gone riding (as was said) these forty days marches over this great plain then one finds the Ocean sea, and there on the sea shore they have a very high mountain where the goshawks and peregrine falcons are found in plenty. In those mountains they have their nests. And the plain is like this.² For you may know that there are no men nor women nor beasts nor birds except the peregrine falcons & one kind of bird which are called bagherlac, on

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¹ R: sessanta L: 4 FA,FB say that one reaches Bargu after a journey of 40 days. LT: *Quando homo recedit de tartaro et peruenit alchay . . . homo uadit magis ultra bargu* P(rubric): *De ciuitate bargu*

² R: e nella pianura. VB: *In dite montagne*