

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD<sup>s</sup> WILD OXEN & MUSK DEER

.72.

and some Saracens also, those who worship by the law of Mahomet. There are noble cities enough and villages in the said province, and the capital city is named Ergiuul. And from this city towards sirocco one can go into the countries of Catai, and on this road of sirocco towards the countries of Catai [30d] he finds a city which has Silingiu to name, and the province is called Silingiu, and there are towns and cities enough under it, and it is also part of the abovesaid province of Tangut itself and belongs to the dominion of the great Kaan. And the people likewise are idolaters and people who worship Mahomet, and there are also some Nestorian Christians. And there are great numbers of wild oxen and cows which are as large as it were as elephants & they are very good and beautiful to see, for they are all hairy except the back, and they are white and black. And the hair is about three palms long;<sup>1</sup> and they say that their hair is wonderful, and is very fine and white wool, and the said wool is more fine than silk is. I Marc Pol brought some of it here to Venese as a wonderful thing, and so it was counted for such by all. They are so beautiful that it is a wonder to see. And of these same oxen they have many domesticated, [with hair] so long, but not so long as the wild. For they catch some of the wild ones when they were small and make them breed with the domestic cows, so that they already have a very great number of them. And the oxen which are born of them are wonderful animals, and more fit for labour than any other animal. And they load them with great loads and plough with them, and I tell you that in a short time they plough twice as much as the others and have double strength. And in this country is produced the best musk and the finest that is to be had in the world. And you may know that musk is found in this way that I shall tell you. You may know quite truly that in this country there is a little kind of wild animal which is of the size of a gazelle,<sup>2</sup> that is of a goat, but its fashion is thus. It has deer's hair, but very much more thick, and the feet large as a gazelle, horns as the gazelle it has not, it has a gazelle's tail; but it has four teeth, two below and two above, which are quite three fingers long and are very thin, and white as ivory, and go two upwards and two downwards. And it is a very beautiful beast to see; and it is called gudderi according to the Tartar tongue. And I carried with me here to Venese the head and the feet of one of the said animals dried, and some musk in the musk sac, and pairs of little teeth.<sup>3</sup> But the musk is found in this way. The hunters sally forth at the full of the moon to catch the said animals;

<sup>1</sup> R: *I loro peli sono in cadauna parte del corpo bassi eccetto che sopra le spalle, che sono lunghi tre palmi*, Z omits the sentence.

<sup>2</sup> TA,LT,VA,P: "a cat"—and so just below.

<sup>3</sup> VB: *edel muschio enel chapo del muschio pare pote de denti picolli*—of which the exact sense escapes me.