

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s THE HERD OF WHITE MARES

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that is June and July and August, sometimes in the marble palace and sometimes in this FB FB
one of cane. And for this reason he stays there at this time and has had it made that he R L
may escape the burning heat, for that the air there is very temperate and good, and that it is R
not very hot, but is very fresh, more than in other places; and for the great pleasure and V FB VB V
delight. And these three months which you have[heard]the great Kaan keeps the
palace of canes made, and immediately when he departs it is taken to pieces, and all the VB
other months of the year he keeps it taken to pieces and folded up, as I have told you. P VB
And he has so planned it that he can make it and take it to pieces at his will very FB
quickly; & it is all packed by pieces and is carried very easily wherever the lord commands.
And when he comes to the twenty-eighth day of the moon of the said month of August R
the great Kaan leaves this city of Ciandu and this palace each year on this day, & I P
will immediately tell you why. It is true that for the greater part of the food of this lord L VB
he has a breed of white horses and of mares white as snow without any other
colour, and they are a vast number, that is that there are more than ten thousand
white mares. And besides he has a great number of very white cows. And the milk of these FB VB
white cows and mares no one else in the world dares drink of it on that day except only VB VB P VB
the great Kaan and his descendants, that is those who are of the lineage of the empire,
that is of the lineage of the great [32d] Kaan. Yet it is true that another race of
people of that region that are called Horiat can indeed drink of it. And Cinghis the P P
great Kaan gives them this honour and this privilege as reward for a very great victory VA VB L
which they won with him to his honour long ago, and they have this preeminence. He P VB
wished that they and all their descendants should live and should be fed on the same food on
which the great Kaan and those of his blood were fed. And so only these two families live on
the said white animals, that is on the milk which is milked from them. Moreover I tell you
that when these white animals go grazing through the meadows and through the forests and R VA
pass by some road where a man wishes to pass, one does them so great reverence that if,
I do not mean only the ordinary people but, a great lord and baron were to see them passing VB VB VB
there he would not dare for anything in the world to pass through the middle of these VB
animals, but would wait till they were all past or would go so far forward in another VA FB
direction, quite half a days journey, that he would have passed them. All give way to VB
them and all do what is possible to please them, and as I have said they are respected by all
with no less honour and reverence than would be done to their own master. And the astrologers
and the idolaters¹ have told the great Kaan that he must sprinkle some of this milk
of these white mares through the air and on the land on the twenty-eighth day of the VB R
moon of August each year so that all the spirits which go by the air and by land may have R FB

¹ TA: degli ydoli L: incantatores