

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD<sup>s</sup> THE PLOT TO KILL HIM

.85.

He reigned then in this power for twenty-two years. Finally the men of the land, that is the Cataians, seeing the infinite injuries and unspeakable crimes which he committed beyond measure as well on their wives as on themselves, being unable by any means to bear it any longer, planned to assassinate him and to rebel against the rule of the city. And amongst the rest was a Cataian named Cenchu, who had under him a thousand men, whose mother, daughter, and wife the said Acmat had violated. Whence it was that full of indignation he spoke about the destruction of this man with another Cataian named Vanchu, who was lord of ten thousand, that they ought to do this when the great Kaan shall have stayed three months in Cambaluc and then departs and goes to the city of Ciandu, where he stays in the same way for three months; and in the same way Cinchim his son departs and goes to the usual places; and this Acmat remains for the custody and guarding of the city, and when any accident happens he sends to Ciandu to the great Kaan, and he sends him his wishes in reply. These Vanchu and Cenchu, having made this plan together, wished to communicate it to the greater Cataians of the land and by common consent made it known in many other cities and to their friends, namely that having planned to do such a deed on such a day, that as soon as they saw the fire-signals they should kill all those who have beards, and make the signal with fire to the other cities that they should do the like. And the reason why it was said that the bearded ones should be massacred is that the Cataians are naturally without beard, and the Tartars and Saracens and Christians wear it. And you must know that all the Cataians hated the rule of the great Kaan because he set over them Tartar, and for the more part Saracen, rulers, and they were not able to bear it, seeming to them to be like slaves. And then the great Kaan had not the rule of the province[*of*] Catai by right, but rather had obtained it by force; and not trusting them he gave to rule the lands to Tartars, Saracens, & Christians who were of his own household faithful to him, and were not of the province of Catai. Now the aforesaid Vanchu & Cenchu, when the date had been determined, entered the palace by night. And Vanchu sat on a seat and had many candles lighted in front of him, and sent a messenger of his to Acmat Bailo who lived in the old city, on behalf of Cinchim son of the great Kaan who that moment was arrived by night, that he must come to him immediately. And having heard this Acmat, much wondering, went immediately because he feared him much; and entering in at the gate of the city he met a Tartar named Cogatai, who was captain of twelve thousand men with whom he kept continual guard over the city, who said to him, Where are you going so late? To Cinchim, who is this moment come. Said Cogatai, How is it possible that he is come so secretly that I have not known it? And he followed him with a certain number of his people. Now these Cataians said, If only we can kill Acmat we have no one else to fear. And the moment that Acmat came into the palace, seeing so many candles lighted, he knelt down before Vanchu, believing that he was Cinchim; and Cenchu who was there ready with a sword cut off his head. And seeing this, Cogatai who had stopped