

THE AUTHORITY OF THE THAI & THE SCIENG \neq MARCO POLO
 VA provinces, of which I have told you above, and in their cities, to which they send rulers
 for the great Kaan. And when they have chosen them, such as it seems to them that
 they may be good and sufficient, they make them known to the great lord, and the
 VA great lord confirms it and makes one give him a tablet of gold & of silver according
 FB to the usage of his court, such as is suitable to his domain. And again these twelve
 FB barons have so much authority that they are [45b] to provide where it is right for troops to go
 P VA every year. & to stay, and they send them where it seems good to them and that number
 TA which they wish; but it is always according to the wish and with the knowledge of the
 FB great lord.¹ And they do what they wish, as I have told you of those two things,
 with all the other things which are needed for all the provinces of which I have
 R told you. These have also to superintend the collection of tribute and revenue, and about the
 VA control and spending of them, and all the other affairs which belong to the rule & to the domain.
 R LT of the great Kaan, excepting that which concerns the armies. And these twelve barons are
 LT LT called in the Tartar tongue scieng, which means to say officers of the greatest court
 TA of the great Kaan, because there is no court above them except the great lord. The
 FB palace where they live is also called scieng, the greatest court, in their language. And it
 V is indeed the greatest authority that is in all the court of the great lord, for each
 VB of those twelve, they have indeed the power to do great good and ill to whom they
 P will and to confer many benefits on many, for which reason they are held in great honour by the
 R people. The one and the other then of the said courts, that is of scieng and of thai, have no lord
 over them except the great Kaan: nevertheless thai, that is the court deputed for the oversight
 FB of the armies, is counted more important and of more dignity than any other lordship. I shall
 FB not tell you now of the thirty-four provinces by their names, because I shall tell
 FB you them clearly in our book; and we shall leave speaking to you of this and shall tell
 FB you how the great lord sends his messengers and his couriers and how they have
 FB horses prepared to go swiftly on errands.

L HOW MANY ROADS WHICH GO THROUGH MANY PROVINCES SET OUT FROM THE
 CITY OF CAMBALUC. The manner of the messengers of the great Kaan is wonderful.
 L R That it may be done here conveniently it is ordered like this. Now you may know
 VA L for truth that many different streets and roads² leave this town of Cambaluc which
 FB go through many different regions & provinces separately; that is to say that the one
 FB road goes to such a province, and this to such. And all the roads are distinguished
 FB with the name of the province where to they go. And it is a very wise thing. And you

¹ It is clear that this sentence repeats part of what has been inserted above from R about the military board, and has somehow been put in here out of its proper place. It seemed better to give R as it stood rather than to try to fit it into this sentence. Z omits; others follow F.

² TA: messaggi LT: nuncii