

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s THE SLAVES OF BANGALA
then and will tell you of a province which is called Bangala as you shall be able below FB
to hear.

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HERE HE TELLS OF THE GREAT PROVINCE¹ OF BANGALA. Bangala is a province
towards midday which in the 1290 year from the birth of *Jesus Christ*, TA
when I *Marc Pol* was first at the court of the great Kaan, he still had not Z Z
conquered. But nevertheless the army and his people were gone there to conquer it, FB FB
and it was conquered by him and put under his rule while I was at the court; and his army VB
stayed a long time at the siege of it, because it is a strong country. But I tell you that these
provinces have kings for rulers and a language for themselves. They are very bad VB
idols—understand this idolaters.² They are on the borders of Indie. There are many
eunuchs³ who are castrated; and all the barons and all the lords who are about that Z FB
province have many of them from there, whom they keep to guard their ladies. The oxen Z Z
also there are tall as elephants but not so stout. They of the province all live for the Z FB P VB
more part on flesh and on milk and on rice, of which they have great quantity. They have VB
cotton enough, in which they do great trade; and they are very great merchants, for they FB L
have spikenard and galingale in great quantity and pepper⁴ and ginger and sugar in VB L VB
great abundance, & many other dear spices of many other kinds. The Indians come⁵ FB
there and buy there of the eunuchs of which I have told you and slaves, who are Z
found there in very great numbers; for all the men who are captured by those people are im-
mediately castrated and afterwards sold. And they buy slave-girls also there in plenty.
For you may know that the merchants buy these slaves and eunuchs and slave-girls Z
enough in this province which they have from other provinces and sell them to the Indians FB FB
and to the other merchants who then take them to sell in many [58b] other places about FB
the world. And the women of this [province] wear trousers. Now in this province there is V

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¹ cite corrected in the margin to *gran prouence*
² *pesimes ydres ce entendes ydules ydres* very generally means idolaters, but just below (see
n. 5) it has taken the place of "Indians" (FB: yndyens Z: Jndi), as *ydules* also has in c. 128
(p. 297) (FB: yndiens Z: Jndis). If it is not a mere matter of scribe's error in all three cases,
it seems to be just possible that *ydres* or *ydules* had become almost a synonym for Indians; but
in any case this present phrase is very difficult and, as far as I know, is not repeated by any of
the old versions.
³ *escuiles* The old mistranslations of this word range from "lions" (V: lioni) to "schools"
(VB: scuolle). VB (followed and improved by R) says: "They have craftsmen and keep
schools and they teach their incantations and idolatries, and this teaching is very widespread
to all; they speak even among the lords and barons."
⁴ *piper* is in L (at Ferrara) but not in L' (at Venice).
⁵ *il hi uiuent les ydres* But FB: Les yndyens y viennent possibly represents the true text,
supported as it is by FA, TA, LT, VB, V, L, Z, R. For *ydres* see n. 2 above.