

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD'S STREETS AND BRIDGES

saw afterwards clearly with my own eyes and knew it, as I shall tell you. [For] Master Marc Pol was in this city many times and determined with great diligence to notice and understand all the conditions of the place, describing them in his notes, as will be briefly here said below. It was contained in that writing first of all that the city of Quinsai is so large that in circuit it is in the common belief a hundred miles round or thereabout, because the streets and canals in it are very wide and large. Then there are squares where they hold market, which on account of the vast multitudes which meet in them are necessarily very large and spacious. And it is placed in this way, that it has on one side a lake of fresh water which is very clear, and on the other there is an enormous river which, entering by many great and small canals which run in every part of the city, both takes away all impurities and then enters the said lake, and from that runs to the Ocean. And this makes the air very wholesome; and one can go all about the city by land and by these streams. And the streets and canals are wide and great so that boats are able to travel there conveniently and carts to carry the things necessary for the inhabitants. And there is a story that it has 12000 bridges, between great and small, for the greater part of stone—for some are built of wood. And for each of these bridges,¹ or for the greater part, a great & large ship could easily pass under the arch of it; and for the others smaller ships could pass. But those which are made over the principal canals and the chief streets are arched so high and with such skill that a boat can pass under them without a mast, and yet there pass over them carriages and horses, so well are the streets inclined to fit the height. And let no one be surprised if there are so many bridges, because I tell you that this town is all situated in water of lagoons as Venese is, and is also all surrounded by water, and so it is needful that there may be so many bridges for this, that people may be able to go through all the town both inside and out by land; and if they were not in such numbers you could not go from one place to the other by land, but only by boats. On the other side of the city there is a ditch perhaps forty miles long which shuts it in on that side, and is very wide and full of water which comes from the said river. And this was made by order of those ancient kings of that province so as to be able to draw off the river into it every time that it rose above the banks; and it serves also as a defence for the city, and the earth which was dug out was put on the inner side, which makes the likeness of a little hill which surrounds it. There are ten principal open spaces, beside infinite others for the districts,

Z FB R
V Z FB
R FB R
R R Z
Z
Z
R
Z VA
FB Z Z
L TA' R
VA
R

¹ la cite de quin | sai gie enuiron.c.miles.& ha.xii^m. | pōt. de pieres e por chascun de cesti | pont It is tempting to guess that a line has dropped out, and to read something like: la cite de quin | sai gire enuiron.c.miles.& ha.xii. | pōte. & encore hi a plus de.iii^c. grant | pōt. de pieres e por chascun de cesti | pont But there seems to be no manuscript support at all for such a correction, except G (with LA², LA³) which reads und umme das hot si xij steynyne bruckin. The same extraordinary exaggeration is found in Odoric, but in that case there is a possible explanation of the corruption to be found in one of the texts. cf. *The New China Review* IV, 1922, pp. 32-35.