

FINE HOUSES & PEACEFUL PEOPLE IN QUINSAI ≈ MARCO POLO

Z *should be believed, they are so extraordinary a thing. And again I tell you that all the*
 Z FB Z *great men and their wives and also all the heads or great masters of the stations of*
 Z *the trades of which I have told you do nothing at all with their hands, but all live*
 Z *as delicately and as clean[66d]ly as if they were kings and barons. And their ladies*
 R R *and wives are also very delicate and angelic things, as has been said, and tenderly and very*
 Z *delicately reared, and dress with so many ornaments of silk and of jewels that the value of them*
 R L *could not be estimated. Moreover I tell you that it was ordained by their king aforesaid*
 VB *of the said city and province while he reigned that each inhabitant must always do the trade*
 TA Z *of his father and of his ancestors; and if he were to have a hundred thousand besants*
 R *of gold he could not do any other trade than his father had done. Do not indeed*
 Z R Z *suppose that they were obliged to work with their own hands, but yet they were obliged to keep*
 Z *the shop and to keep men as was said above to practise the said ancestral trade. But they are*
 R *not at all bound to this by the great lord, for if an artizan has grown to such wealth that he*
 R *can and will forsake his trade, he is forced by none to practise the trade any more. For the great*
 R *Kaan reasons in this way; if a man practises some trade because he is poor—for otherwise he*
 R *cannot supply himself with necessaries—and in the process of time fortune has so prospered him that*
 R *he can spend his life in dignity without the practice of his trade, why, if he does not wish, must*
 R *he be forced to practise a trade? For it would seem to be unfitting and unjust that, if the gods*
 R *give him good success, men must go against it. They have their houses very well built and richly*
 R *worked, and they take so great delight in ornaments, paintings, and buildings, that the sums they*
 R *spend on them are a stupendous thing. The native inhabitants of the city of Quinsai are peaceful*
 R *people through having been so brought up and habituated by their kings, who were of the same*
 R *nature. They do not handle arms nor keep them at home. Quarrels or any difference are never*
 R *heard or noticed among them. They do their merchandise and arts with great sincerity and truth.*
 R *They love one another so that a district may be reckoned as one family on account of the friendliness*
 R *which exists between the men and the women by reason of the neighbourhood. So great is the*
 R *familiarity that it exists between them without any jealousy or suspicion of their women, for*
 R *whom they have the greatest respect; and one who should dare to speak improper words to any*
 R *married woman would be thought a great villain. They are equally friendly with the foreigners*
 R *who come to them for the sake of trade, and gladly receive them at home, saluting them, and give*
 R *them every help and advice in the business which they do. On the other hand they do not like*
 R *to see soldiers, nor those of the great Kaan's guards, as it seems to them that by reason of them*
 R *they have been deprived of their natural kings and lords. And again I tell you that towards*
 FB Z *midday from the city, that is to say inside the city, is a lake very beautiful and great which*
 V R FB *is quite thirty miles round, and all round this lake are built many very beautiful*
 R *and great palaces and many beautiful houses so wonderfully made that they could*
 R *not be better devised nor made, nor more richly, which belong to gentle men and*