

THE AZURE PORCELAIN VESSELS OF TINGIU ≠ MARCO POLO

Z V to the rule of the great Kaan. It is a land of great delight and of great abundance of all
R things which are necessary to man's body, and the people are very quiet, and given to
Z repose and to live idly. To the city come all from upper Indie¹ for the sake of having themselves
R painted, namely with needles, as is said elsewhere above; because in this city there are many
Z able masters of this business. The river which enters the port of Çaiton is very great and broad
and runs very rapidly, so that on account of its speed it makes for itself many channels, that
is it is divided in many places into many branches.² And over this river are five very beautiful
bridges of which the greater lasts quite three miles in length according to the place, where the
river is separated into many branches. And the bridges are built in this manner; for their piers
are of great stones laid one above another and worked like this, because in the middle those
stones are broad and go tapering at the ends, so that their ends are pointed as well towards the
sea, because of the great back-flow of the sea which it makes while it flows back, [as] towards
R the course of the river.³ And again I tell you that the most beautiful vessels and plates
Z of porcelain,⁴ large and small, that one could describe are made in great quantity
Z V in this aforesaid province in a city which is called Tingiu, more beautiful than can be
L found in any other city. And on all sides they are much valued, for none of them are made in
Z another place but in this city, and from there they are carried to many places through-
out the world. And there is plenty there and a great sale, so great that for one
Venetian groat you would actually have three bowls so beautiful that none would
Z R Z know how to devise them better. And these bowls are made in this way, as he was told, of
R Z this kind of earth; namely, that those of the city gather as from a mine mud and rotten earth
R Z R Z and make great mounds of it, and leave them thus in the wind, in the rain, and in the sun for
R thirty and forty years that they do not move the mounds. And then in this space of time the
Z said earth being so long time in those mounds is so worked up that the bowls made of it have the
colour of azure, and they are very shining and most beautiful beyond measure.⁵ And you must
R Z know that when a man gathers that earth he gathers for his sons or grandsons. It is clear that
owing to the long time that it must lie quiet for its working up he does not hope to gain profit
from it nor to put it into use, but the son who will survive him will reap the fruit of it, etc..

¹ See p. 296 above.

² R, with some impossible misunderstanding, has: "... rapidly; and it is a branch made by the river which comes from the city of Quinsai. And where it leaves the main channel there is the city of Tingui, of which there is nothing else to say except that in it are made the bowls and plates of porcelain, ."

³ Read *refluit, [quam]uersus cursum fluminis*. See p. lv.

⁴ VA: *porzellane de mar* Z: *de porcelanis*

⁵ R: "In this space of time the said earth is refined so that the said bowls can be made, to which they add the colours which they wish, and then they bake in the furnace."