

THE PEARL FISHERS AND BRAAMAN OF MAABAR = MARCO POLO

Z fish them as I shall tell you. And there will be many ships¹ like this because it is true that
 Z there are many merchants who² pay attention to this fishing; & they make many companies.
 Z And all the merchants who are associated together on one ship will have several boats which will tow
 VB the ship through the gulf. The small boats carry the anchors of the large boats to land. And they
 G Z buy many men who can swim well and clever pearl-fishers for hire, with whom they make
 VB P agreement by the month, that is they give them so much³ for the whole month of April till
 Z P mid May or so long as the said fishery lasts in the said gulf. There are moreover in that
 L P bay of the sea a multitude of great fishes which would kill the fishers going down into the sea. But
 provision against that danger is made by the merchants in this way. The merchants take certain
 VA P magicians with them who are called braaman, who with their enchantments and diabolical
 art control and stupefy those fishes so that they can hurt no one. And because this fishing is
 done by day & not by night, those magicians make spells by day which they break for the following
 R P night; for they are afraid lest anyone go down by stealth without⁴ the leave of the merchants
 VA P R into the sea by night to take pearls. But the thieves do not attempt to go down into the sea by
 P night from fear of the fishes; nor is any found who knows how to make such enchantment
 except those braaman who are hired by the merchants. And the merchants give such duty
 Z on them, on these pearls or scallops, as I shall tell you. First of all they give the tenth
 FB part of what they take to the king. Again they give some to him who charms the
 FA large fishes that they may not do harm to the men who go under the water to find
 L the pearls; to this they justly give one of twenty⁵ of them, and these are [78c]
 Z Z called braaman, who charm the fishes by day; but they charm them by day only, for
 at night they break the charm so that the fishes can do with them as they please,
 TA Z so that no one fishes by night. And again I tell you that these braaman know how to
 Z charm also all beasts, both all birds and all animals. And when they come to the place,
 Z the ship is anchored and the men who are in the small barques and who come to have
 the hire of the merchants leave the barques and go under the water some four paces
 V Z and some five, up to seven and twelve, according as the water is more and less deep in any

¹ Jordan of Sévérac says that more than 8000 ships were sometimes employed. cf. CORDIER *Les Merveilles de l'Asie* p. 116 (Pl. IXa): *Intra istam insulam & terram firmam capiuntur perle seu margarite in tanta quantitate quod est mirum, ita quod aliquociens sunt plusquam octo milia barcarum seu nauium per tres menses continue*

² *quia* (?) Read probably *qui*, see p. lxx.

³ *aitant* perhaps for *autant* or possibly for *a.i.tant* (*a un tant*). B. by some accident prints *u[n]tant* as if the original were *utant*

⁴ R: *senza* P accidentally(?) omits *et sine* Port: *e sem*

⁵ Z, V: "ten"