

SACRED OXEN·GAVI·MEN SIT ON THE GROUND ≠MARCO POLO

those of these realms worship the idols, and the most worship the ox, because they
 VL say that the ox is a very good thing *because it ploughs the land which makes the corn*
 VA *grow*. Nor would any eat anything of *the flesh* of the ox for anything in the world nor
 VL *for any gold in the world* would any kill it in any way. But yet I tell you that there
 is a race of men who are called gavi; these do indeed eat flesh of the ox; but not at
 L all that they dare to kill it *or cause it to be killed in any way*. But when any ox dies of
 VB VA its own death or of another death *through some accident, & is not killed by others*, then
 Z Z these gavi of whom I have told you *do indeed* eat it. And again I tell you that they
 G VL L plaster *themselves* and all their houses *inside* with the dung¹ of the ox, *believing that*
they are preserved by the holiness of the ox. Moreover I tell you [8ob] that they have
 again another custom such as I shall tell you. For you may know that the king
 Z FB VB and the barons and *all* the other people *great and small* sit on the earth² *on carpets*.
 Z V And when one asked them *why they do this* and why they do not sit on something more
 FB honourably, then those said that *they do it because* to sit on the earth is an honourable
 VB thing enough because we were *sprung* from earth and to the earth we must return,
 and therefore one could not honour the earth too much nor must any despise it.
 Z And again I tell you that these gavi *and all their race*, that is all their race who eat
 VB the flesh of the ox when it died, *say that they* are those who, their ancestors, killed
 Master Saint Thomas the Apostle long ago. Moreover I tell you again another
 L thing, that *miraculously* all this lineage who are called gavi, none could go into the
 FB place³ where the body of Master Saint Thomas is, *which is in this province of Maabar*,
 FB *in a little town*; for you may know that ten, twenty, or thirty men would not be
 able to hold one of these gavi where the holy body is. Nor again I tell you that
 twenty men or more could not put one of these gavi into the place where the body
 VB of Master Saint Thomas is *buried*, because the place does not receive them by the
 VB virtue of the holy body. *They say that they have tried the experiment, and that one of the said*
gavi, dragged by force by many men to make him enter where the body of the said Saint Thomas
is buried, could by no amount of force be moved[but remained] firm as a rock. And this very
 VB *special miracle our Lord God showed for reverence of the most holy Apostle*. No corn nor
 Z wheat grows in this kingdom but rice alone *and sesame*. And again I tell you a greater
 FA thing which does well to tell, *that for nothing in the world can any horse be bred in this*
 VB *province, for they have well proved it several times*. For you may know *that this province*
has this nature that if a great war-horse were to cover a great war-horse there is born

¹ TA,P, & others misunderstand this word (*osci*) & say "fat" (*grasso, adipem*) of (dead) oxen, or omit. ² LT (fol. 55v^o) says that the king & barons are not burned when they die but buried in the earth. VL: *mangiano in terra* ³ VA,P,L,VL,&c.: "church"