

THE DEATH OF ST THOMAS · BLACK MEN & GODS ≠ MARCO POLO

VA in their bodies, *who commend themselves to him in their need*. Now we have told you  
 FB Z VB of this, so we wish to tell you also how *the brothers tell how · the Blest Thomas · the most*  
 TA *holy Apostle* he was killed, *according as I understood, though his Legend says otherwise. But*  
*let us say that which I heard.*<sup>1</sup> It was true that Master Saint Thomas was outside  
 Z his hermitage in the wood, *according as those of that place tell*, and was making his  
 Z V prayers to his *most high* Lord God and he had many peacocks about him *in that*  
 V wood, for you may know that in that country they have *many* more of them [83a]  
 than anywhere in the world. And while Master Saint Thomas was thus making his  
 VB prayer then an idolater who was of the lineage and race of the gavi, *of whom we*  
 Z *have told you before · appeared* and lets go an arrow from his bow intending to kill one  
 Z of those peacocks which was round the Saint Thomas. Nor did this one see<sup>2</sup> him at  
 all; and when he believes that he has hit the peacock then he hits Master Saint  
 R Z Thomas the *most holy* Apostle in the middle of the right side.<sup>3</sup> And when *he felt that*  
 he had received that blow he worships his Creator very sweetly; and I tell you that  
 VB he died of that blow *giving thanks to our Lord God*. But yet it was true that before he  
 V Z came to this place where he died *which was in Indie* he converted many people to  
 Z Z *the faith of Christ* in Nubie. And how and in what way it was *that he converted* we  
 Z shall tell it you well *and clearly* and in order in this book when it shall be time and  
 place for it. Now we have told you of Saint Thomas, and then we will tell you  
 V Z LT onwards of the other things *which are left*. · *For when boys or girls are born · in this*  
 TA Z *province · you must know that · they are born black, but not so black as they are made afterwards*.  
 VA *Because* it is true that when the infant is born *he is born fair; but they anoint him*  
 Z once<sup>4</sup> every week with sesame oil and *that is how* they make them become more  
 FB black than they were born a great deal, *so that they become as black as a devil*. For I tell  
 TA Z you that *in that country* he who is more black is more precious than the others *in*  
 Z *beauty* and is held better than the others who are not so black. And again I tell  
 Z you another thing. For I tell you quite truly that *they make* those people have all  
 P Z their gods and their idols portrayed and painted *very* black, and the devils *they paint*  
 white as snow. [83b] For they say that God and all the saints are black; and they  
 speak of their God and of their saints; and they say that the devils are white. And  
 so they portray and paint them in such way as you have heard; and again I tell  
 you that they make images of idols all black. And you may know that the men

<sup>1</sup> The martyrdom of S. Thomas is omitted by TA<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Z: *odiebat*

<sup>3</sup> Z: *tibiam* VB: *costado senestro*

<sup>4</sup> VA: *i naseno bianchi ma i onzeno . . . tre fiade* P: *ter in ebdomada* LT: *bis uel ter* R: *ogni giorno . . . tre volte*