

GIANT GRIFON BIRDS OR RUC IN THE SOUTH ≠ MARCO POLO

FB FB & to the isle of Çanghibar from Maabar come so fast that it is a wonder, for they come
 VB in twenty or twenty-five days, and when they return there to Maabar they hardly
 go in three months, and this happens because the current goes all day toward
 midday, and this happened always that it never runs in another way than toward
 FB midday. Now this is a great marvel. And again you may know quite truly that in
 those other islands which are in so great quantity toward midday, where the ships,
 P as I have said, never go willingly for the current which runs in that region, men
 LT L V who have gone there say¹ that many very terrible grifon birds are found there and they
 P R say that those marvellous birds appeared there coming from toward midday at certain
 seasons of the year. But yet you may know that they are not made at all as our
 people on this side believe and as we have them portrayed; that is that we say
 that it is half bird and half lion, but according as those who have seen them tell
 P this is not truth that they are half bird and half lion. But I tell you that I Marc,
 R when I first heard this told, thought that those birds were grifons, and asked these who said
 P they had seen them, and those who have seen them asserted most constantly that they had
 no likeness of a beast in any part, but have only two feet like birds, [& they] say that it is
 P made all exactly like an eagle in shape, but they say that it is immeasurably great.
 And I will tell you about it some of what those say who have seen it, and again
 I will tell you about it that which I saw of it. They say that it is so great and so
 VA P strong that one of these birds, without the help of another bird, it seizes the elephant
 L VL with its talons and carries it off quite high into the air and kills it, and then it lets
 it drop to the ground so that the elephant is all broken to pieces, and then the
 VA VI grifon bird comes down upon the elephant and mounts up on it and tears it and eats it
 FB V and feeds itself upon it at its will. Those who have seen them say also that some of
 VB VB them are so large that its wings open [92a] more than thirty paces from one side to the
 Z other and that its wing feathers are twelve paces long, and they are very thick as it
 is suitable to their length.² And what I saw of them I shall tell you in another place,
 because it suits our book to do so. Now I have told you of the grifon birds that

¹ & et encore sachies . . . & dient les homes & seems to be superfluous in both places, and is left out from the translation.

² There are traces of two slightly divergent accounts of the grifon or ruc. We may suppose that F,Z preserve the original form of the story when they introduce the name ruc as an afterthought at the end of the chapter, while the introduction of it at first by VA,VB,P, etc. is a subsequent correction. But there are also differences in the measurements. Z,R have 16 and 8 paces; V 16 and 12; F,FB,L 30 and 12; VB 30 and —; VL 13 and —; TA, LT 20 and 12; VA,P — and 12; G — and 10. Thus it seems as if there must have been an early text combining the form of F with the measurements of Z.