

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD & THE PEOPLE OF ABASCE

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the less, & firm land, & it is under the great Kaan. Now you may know indeed that the greatest king of all this province is Christian and all the other kings of the province are subject to him, and they are six¹ kings & six kingdoms very large, which are divided into two parts. Among whom are three of them Christians and three Saracens.² I was told that all the Christian people of this province have three golden marks on their faces in form of a cross that they may be known as more noble by others, that is one on the forehead, the two others on the cheeks; and the mark which is on the forehead stretches from the forehead to the middle of the nose, and then they have one of them on each cheek. And these marks are made with hot iron, and they make them when they are small, and it is for their second baptism with fire, for when they are baptized in water then those marks of which I have told you are made afterwards, and they have this from custom, and it is regarded as for great gentility and they say for completion of the baptism, and also because it contributes much to their health. And again I tell you that there are very many [93b] Jews and these also bear like marks on their faces, but Jews have two marks, that is one long line on each cheek. And the Saracens of whom there are very many have only one such mark alone, that is from the forehead to the middle of the nose.³ And they all do it with the hot iron. The great Christian king of the whole province, to whom all the rest are subject, dwells indeed in the middle of the said province, but the Saracens dwell towards the province of Aden. And the coming of the said people to the Christian faith was in this way, that when Master Saint Thomas the glorious Apostle had preached in the kingdom of Nubie & made it Christian, he first came and preached in this province and after he had converted some of this people with his preaching & miracles to the Christian faith he went off to the province of Maabar where, after he had converted infinite people, he was killed and his most holy body is, just as we have told you in our book above.⁴ And you may know that in

dellisole But even so the passage is rather difficult and confused, since the two series Ciamba to Mutifili and Maabar to Kesmacoran overlap one another.

¹ P: "seven"

² *et iiij. saraçinz* The first *i* is unlike the rest and the whole is probably a carelessly written .iiij. V: *e tre sono iachopiti*

³ G: "are marked also under the eyes with seven long lines which go from the forehead to the mouth."

⁴ Z (p. c) has: "Apostles indeed converted these to Christianity, but we do not know who they were." This marked divergence between Z and F is to be noticed, and all the more as it comes in the chapter from which B. (p. clxv) chose a long passage to illustrate the exact verbal agreement between the two texts. It does not seem that tradition knows anything of the preaching of S. Thomas in Nubia or Abyssinia. Eusebius *Hist. Eccles.* (tr. HANMER, 1636, p. 35) says "Thomas (as by tradition we receive) chose Parthia." and the *Breviary* (21 Dec.