

ICE AND MUD IN THE LAND OF TRAMONTAINE ≠ MARCO POLO

R V *faithfully obey keeps his people in great peace, which is the proper duty of a king. And they have very great quantities of flocks, these are camels, horses, oxen, and sheep,*
V Z VB *and many other animals.¹ They have also very large bears as large as large oxen, all*
LT TA *white, which are for the more part more than twenty palms long each. They have*
L VB V TA V VB *many foxes all black and very large. And they have many great wild asses. They have*
V *weasels large as cats. And they have plenty of sables;² these are they from which the*
Z P *dear skins are made, of which I have told you above. (in the second book, chapter 20).*
Z G *that they are of so great value that one mans skin coat, that is a knights cloak, is worth*
TA V LT LT *1000 bezants of silver.³ And they have squirrels in very great abundance which have*
LT *very delicate and dear skins. They have the rat of Pharaoh of which they catch in summer*
VB LT *such a supply and such a very great multitude that they scarcely eat other flesh, and all the*
VA LT *summer they live on them, for they are not very large⁴ of their kind. They have*
VB VB *enough of all other wild things because they live in very wild and out of the way*
VB *places, and places very strong by their position and nature. And again you may know*
R LT *quite truly that this king has some country all uninhabited and like a desert, on the*
R *borders of the land of which we have spoken above, before one comes to the place where the said*
LT *Tartars dwell, such that no horse can go there, nor any very large or heavy animals such*
as oxen, asses, and camels, or any other like animals, because it is a land where there are
TA LT *many lakes and many springs and streams which make that region very marshy, and*
because of the exceeding cold of that province there is almost always ice so thick that boats
cannot pass by there, and yet there is not so much strength in the ice that it can bear heavy carts
LT or heavy animals, and in all the rest of the plain beside the lakes, because of the multitude of
R *springs of water which are almost always running, the ice is so great there (except for*
LT *some months of the year when the sun melts it) and the mire and the mud that no road*
by which a cart or any large, heavy, and stout animal can pass is visible, and a horse cannot
LT go there.⁵ And this country so bad lasts for thirteen days⁶ journeys, and because
there is so great a multitude of the aforesaid precious skins of which very great trade and very
great profit are made, so the men of that province have found such a remedy, for this purpose
that the merchants and traders of other parts may be able to have a way and access to them, for

¹ FRAMPTON adds "but they are deade." VL: *uari asai e cari* so for "deade" read "deare".

² LT: *animalia parua que uocantur in lingua eorum rondes . . . hec pelles uocantur çambeline* — and so P. The second book, chapter 20 (21 in LT), is part of chapter 94 above.

³ VA,G: "of gold."

⁴ *car il sunt mout grant* Z,V,L,P,LT support the text of F as it stands, but it may be possible that we should read "they are very great[hunters]", or as in VA.

⁵ R adds "except at that time when there is ice."

⁶ TA,V,VL: "twelve" and so below. G: "twenty-two"