

William of Rubruck's Account of the Mongols

- [Map of Rubruck's route](#)

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Introduction

A Flemish Franciscan monk, William of Rubruck (Willem van Ruysbroeck, ca. 1210-ca. 1270) wrote the most detailed and valuable of the early Western accounts of the Mongols. William had participated in the crusade of King Louis IX of France to Palestine and there heard about the Mongols from friar Andrew of Longjumeau, a Dominican who had been involved in papal diplomacy aimed at trying to enlist the Mongols in the Christian crusade against the Muslims. Rubruck then decided to undertake his own mission to the Mongols primarily in the hope of promoting their conversion to Christianity. In 1253 he set out through the lands of the western part of their empire (what we know as the Golden Horde)--that is starting out through the southern steppes of what is now Ukraine and Russia. His roundtrip journey lasted the better part of three years. William had the distinction of being the first European to visit the Mongol capital of Karakorum on the Orhon River and return to write about it. He provides a unique description of the Khan's palace there and abundant detail about the individuals of various ethnicities and religions whom he encountered.

Understandably, he was particularly interested in the Nestorian Christians. His describes generally with great precision Mongol traditional culture, many features of

which have survived amongst the herders one may observe today in inner Asia.

The text here is the translation by W. W. Rockhill: *The journey of William of Rubruck to the eastern parts of the world, 1253-55, as narrated by himself, with two accounts of the earlier journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. tr. from the Latin and ed., with an introductory notice, by William Woodville Rockhill (London: Hakluyt Society, 1900). Notes and some additional headings have been added, and the text checked against the more recent Hakluyt Society translation, whose extensive notes by two noted Mongol specialists make it the preferred edition for those who wish full scholarly annotation: *The mission of Friar William of Rubruck : his journey to the court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253-1255*, tr. by Peter Jackson; introduction, notes and appendices by Peter Jackson with David Morgan (London: Hakluyt Society, 1990). The light annotation provided here has been appropriated from the latter. Alternative translations from the Jackson edition are provided throughout the text in the format [J: *alt. translation*].

The digitalization has been done by Janeen Richards (April, 2002); the annotation and check against the Jackson translation by Lance Jenott (July, 2002).

--Daniel C. Waugh

O the most excellent lord and most Christian Louis, by the grace of God illustrious King of the French, from Friar William of Rubruck, the meanest in the order of Minor Friars, greetings, and may he always triumph in Christ. It is written in Ecclesiasticus of the wise man: "He shall go through the land of foreign peoples, and shall try the good and evil in all things." This, my lord King, have I done, and may it have been as a wise man and not as a fool; for many do what the wise man doth, though not wisely, but most foolishly; of this number I fear I may be. Nevertheless in whatever way I may have done, since you commanded me when I took my leave of you that I should write you whatever I should see among the Tartars, and you did also admonish me not to fear writing a long letter, so I do what you enjoined on me, with fear, however, and diffidence, for the proper words that I should write to so great a monarch do not suggest themselves to me.

Be it known then to your Sacred Majesty that in the year of our Lord one thousand two hundred and fifty-three, on the Nones of May (7th May), I entered the Sea of Pontus, which is commonly called Mare Majus, or the Greater Sea, and it is one thousand four hundred miles in length, as I learnt from merchants, and is divided as it were into two parts. For about the middle of it there are two points of land, the one in the north and the other in the south. That which is in the south is called Sinopolis, and is a fortress and a port of the Soldan of Turkia [=the Seljuk sultan of Rum]; while that

which is in the north is a certain province now called by the Latins Gazaria [=Khazaria; the modern Crimea], but by the Greeks who inhabit along its sea coast it is called Cassaria, which is Cesaria. And there are certain promontories projecting out into the sea to the south toward Sinopolis; and there are three hundred miles between Sinopolis and Cassaria, and so there are seven hundred miles from these points to Constantinople in length and breadth, and seven hundred to the east, which is Hyberia [=Iberia], that is to say, the province of Georgia.

So we made sail for the province of Gazaria, or Cassaria, which is about triangular in shape, having on its west side a city called Kersona [=Cherson; modern Sevastopol], where Saint Clement was martyred. And as we were sailing past it we saw an island on which is a temple said to have been built by angelic hands. In the middle, at the summit of the triangle as it were, on the south side, is a city called Soldaia, which looketh across towards Sinopolis: and thither come all the merchants arriving from northern countries, and likewise those coming from Roscia [=Russia] and the northern countries who wish to pass into Turkia. The latter carry vair and minever, and other costly furs: the others (the former) carry cloths of cotton or bombax, silk stuffs and sweet-smelling spices. To the east of this province is a city called Matrica, where the river Tanais [=Don R.] falls into the sea of Pontus [=Black Sea], through an opening twelve miles wide. For this river, before it enters the sea of Pontus, forms a kind of sea to the north which has a width and breadth of seven hundred miles, with nowhere a depth of over six paces, so large vessels do not enter it, but the merchants of Constantinople who visit the said city of Matrica send their barks as far as the River Tanais to buy dried fish, such as sturgeon, barbell and tench [J: shad (and) eel-pout], and other fishes in infinite varieties. The said province of Cassaria is therefore encompassed by the sea on three sides: to wit, on the west, where is Kersona, the city of Clement, and to the south where is the city of Soldaia, to which we were steering, and which makes the apex of the province, and to the east by the sea of Tanais [J adds: where the city of Matrica and the mouth of the Sea of Tanais are situated]. Beyond this opening is Zikuia, which does not obey the Tartars [J: which is not subject to the Tartars], and to the east (of that) are the Suevi and Hiberi, who do not obey the Tartars. After that, to the south, is Trapesund [=Trebizond], which hath its own lord, Guido by name, who is of the family of the emperors of Constantinople, and he obeyeth the Tartars. After that is the country of Vastacius, whose son is called Ascar after his maternal grandfather, and who is not subject (to them). From the opening (of the sea) of Tanais to the west as far as the Danube all is theirs (i.e., the Tartars'), even beyond the Danube towards Constantinople, Blakia [=Wallachia], which is the land of Assan [=Asên, the ruling dynasty of Bulgaria], and minor Bulgaria as far as Sclavonia, all pay them tribute; and besides the regular tribute, they have taken in the past few years from each house one axe and all the iron which they found unwrought.

We arrived then in Soldaia on the 12th of the calends of June (May 21st), and there had preceded us certain merchants of Constantinople, who had said that envoys from the Holy Land were coming who wished to go to Sartach [=the son of the ruler of the Mongols' western forces, Batu (d.1255/6)]. I had, however, publicly preached on Palm Sunday (April 12th) [J: April 13th] in Saint Sophia that I was not an envoy, neither yours nor anyone's, but that I was going among these unbelievers according to the rule of our order. So when I arrived these said merchants cautioned me to speak guardedly, for they had said that I was an envoy, and if I said I was not an envoy I would not be allowed to pass [J: if I denied I was an envoy I should not be provided with safe-conduct]. So I spoke in the following way to the captains [J: "prefects" (Lat. *capitaneos*)] of the city, or rather to the substitutes of the captains, for the captains had gone to Baatu during the winter bearing the tribute, and had not yet returned : " We have heard say in the Holy Land that your Lord Sartach is a Christian, and greatly were the Christians rejoiced thereat, and chiefly so the most Christian lord the King of the French, who has come thither on a pilgrimage and is fighting against the Saracens [=Muslims] to wrench the holy places from out their hands: it is for this I wish to go to Sartach, and carry to him the letters of the lord king, in which he admonisheth him of the weal of all Christendom." And they received us right favorably, and gave us lodgings in the episcopal church. And the bishop of this church had been to Sartach, and he told me much good of Sartach, which I later on did not discover myself.

Then they gave us the choice whether we would have carts with oxen to carry our effects, or sumpter horses. And the merchants of Constantinople advised me to take carts, and that I should buy the regular covered carts such as the Ruthenians [=Russians] carry their furs in, and in these I could put such of our things as I would not wish to unload every day; should I take horses it would be necessary to unload them at each stopping-place and to load other horses; and furthermore I should be able to ride more slowly following the gait of the oxen. Then I accepted their advice, unfortunately, however, for I was two months on the way to Sartach, which I might have traveled in one had I gone with horses.

I had brought with me from Constantinople, on the advice of merchants, fruits, muscadel wine and dainty biscuits to present to the first captains (of the Tartars), so that my way might be made easier, for among them no one is looked upon in a proper way who comes with empty hands. All these things I put in one of the carts, since I had not found the captains of the city, and I was told they would be most acceptable to Sartach if I could carry them to him that far. We set out on our journey about the calends of June (1st June [1253]) with our four covered carts and two others which were lent us by them and in which was carried bedding to sleep on at night. And they gave us also five horses to ride, for us five persons, myself, and my companion Friar

Bartholomew of Cremona, and Gosset the bearer of the presents [J (correcting Rockhill): "the bearer of this letter" (Near the end of the narrative we learn that Rubruck was detained in Acre in Palastine and sent the narrative to King Loius via Gosset)], and Homo Dei the dragoman [interpreter], and the boy Nicholas whom I had bought at Constantinople by means of your charity. They gave us also two men who drove the carts and looked after the oxen and horses.

Now from Kersona all the way to the mouth of the Tanais there are high promontories along the sea, and there are forty hamlets between Kersona and Soldaia, nearly every one of which has its own language; among them were many Goths, whose language is Teutonic.

Beyond these mountains to the north is a most beautiful forest, in a plain full of springs and rivulets, and beyond this forest is a mighty plain which stretches out for five days to the border of this province to the north, where it contracts, having the sea to the east and the west, so that there is a great ditch from one sea to the other. In this plain used to live Comans before the Tartars came, and they forced the cities referred to and the forts to pay them tribute; but when the Tartars came such a multitude of Comans entered this province, all of whom fled to the shore of the sea, that they ate one another, the living the dying, as was told me by a certain merchant who saw it, the living devouring and tearing with their teeth the raw flesh of the dead, as dogs do corpses. Toward the end of this province are many and large lakes, on whose shores are brine springs, the water of which as soon as it enters the lake is turned into salt as hard as ice. And from these brine springs Baatu and Sartach derive great revenues, for from all Ruscia they come thither for salt, and for each cartload they give two pieces of cotton worth half an yperpera. There come there also by sea many ships for salt, and all contribute according to the quantity (they take) [J: according to their capacity].

After having left Soldaia we came on the third day across the Tartars, and when I found myself among them it seemed to me of a truth that I had been transported into another century [J: I really felt as if I were entering some other world]. I will describe to you as well as I can their mode of living and manners.

[Yurts and their furnishings]

Nowhere have they fixed dwelling-places, nor do they know where their next will be [J: Nowhere have they any 'lasting city'; and of 'the one to come' they have no knowledge (cf. Heb. 13:14)]. They have divided among themselves Cithia [=Scythia], which extendeth from the Danube to the rising of the sun ; and every captain, according as he hath more or less men under him, knows the limits of his pasture land and where to graze in winter and summer, spring and autumn. For in winter they go down to warmer regions in the south: in summer they go up to cooler towards the

north. The pasture lands without water they graze over in winter when there is snow there, for the snow serveth them as water. They set up the dwelling in which they sleep on a circular frame of interlaced sticks converging into a little round hoop on the top, from which projects above a collar as a chimney, and this (framework) they cover over with white felt. Frequently they coat the felt with chalk, or white clay, or powdered bone, to make it appear whiter, and sometimes also (they make the felt) black. The felt around this collar on top they decorate with various pretty designs. Before the entry they also suspend felt ornamented with various embroidered designs in color [J: they hang up in front of the entrance felt patchwork in various patterns] . For they embroider the felt, colored or otherwise, making vines and trees, birds and beasts.

And they make these houses so large that they are sometimes thirty feet in width. I myself once measured the width between the wheel-tracks of a cart twenty feet, and when the house was on the cart it projected beyond the wheels on either side five feet at least. I have myself counted to one cart twenty-two oxen drawing one house, eleven abreast across the width of the cart, and the other eleven before them. The axle of the cart was as large as the mast of a ship, and one man stood in the entry of the house on the cart driving the oxen.

Furthermore they weave light twigs into squares of the size of a large chest, and over it from one end to the other they put a turtle-back [J: carapace] also of twigs, and in the front end they make a little doorway; and then they cover this coffer or little house with black felt coated with tallow or ewe's milk, so that the rain cannot penetrate it, and they decorate it likewise with embroidery work. And in such coffers they put all their bedding and valuables, and they tie them tightly on high carts drawn by camels, so that they can cross rivers (without getting wet). Such coffers they never take off the cart.

When they set down their dwelling-houses, they always turn the door to the south' and after that they place the carts with coffers on either side near the house at a half stone's throw, so that the dwelling stands between two rows of carts as between two walls. The matrons make for themselves most beautiful (luggage) carts, which I would not know how to describe to you unless by a drawing, and I would depict them all to you if I knew how to paint. A single rich Mo'al or Tartar has quite one hundred or two hundred such carts with coffers. Baatu has twenty-six wives, each of whom has a large dwelling, exclusive of the other little ones which they set up after the big one, and which are like closets, in which the sewing girls live, and to each of these (large) dwellings are attached quite two hundred carts. And when they set up their houses, the first wife places her dwelling on the extreme west side, and after her the others according to their rank, so that the last wife will be in the extreme east ; and there will be the distance of a stone's throw between the *iurt* of one wife and that of another.

The *ordu* of a rich Mo'al seems like a large town, though there will be very few men in it. One girl will lead twenty or thirty carts, for the country is flat, and they tie the ox or camel carts the one after the other, and a girl will sit on the front one driving the ox, and all the others follow after with the same gait. Should it happen that they come to some bad piece of road, they untie them, and take them across one by one. So they go along slowly, as a sheep or an ox might walk.

When they have fixed their dwelling, the door turned to the south, they set up the couch of the master on the north side. The side for the women is always the east side, that is to say, on the left of the house of the master, he sitting on his couch his face turned to the south. The side for the men is the west side, that is, on the right. Men coming into the house would never hang up their bows on the side of the woman.

[The Mongols' social and religious customs; celebrations]

And over the head of the master is always an image of felt, like a doll or statuette, which they call the brother of the master: another similar one is above the head of the mistress, which they call the brother of the mistress, and they are attached to the wall: and higher up between the two of them is a little lank one (*macilenta*), who is, as it were, the guardian of the whole dwelling. The mistress places in her house on her right side, in a conspicuous place at the foot of her couch, a goat-skin full of wool or other stuff, and beside it a very little statuette looking in the direction of attendants and women. Beside the entry on the woman's side is yet another image, with a cow's tit for the women, who milk the cows: for it is part of the duty of the women to milk the cows. On the other side of the entry, toward the men, is another statue with a mare's tit for the men who milk the mares.

And when they have come together to drink, they first sprinkle with liquor this image which is over the master's head, then the other images in order. Then an attendant goes out of the dwelling with a cup and liquor, and sprinkles three times to the south, each time bending the knee, and that to do reverence to the fire; then to the east, and that to do reverence to the air; then to the west to do reverence to the water; to the north they sprinkle for the dead. When the master takes the cup in hand and is about to drink, he first pours a portion on the ground. If he were to drink seated on a horse, he first before he drinks pours a little on the neck or the mane of the horse. Then when the attendant has sprinkled toward the four quarters of the world he goes back into the house, where two attendants are ready, with two cups and platters to carry drink to the master and the wife seated near him upon the couch. And when he hath several wives [J: as he has more than one wife], she with whom he hath slept that night sits beside him in the day, and it becometh all the others to come to her dwelling that day to drink, and court is held there that day, and the gifts which are brought that day are

placed in the treasury of that lady. A bench with a skin of milk, or some other drink, and with cups, stands in the entry.

In winter they make a capital drink of rice, of millet, and of honey, ; it is clear as wine : and wine is carried to them from remote parts. In summer they care only for *cosmos*. There is always *cosmos* near the house, before the entry door, and beside it stands a guitar-player with his guitar. Lutes and vielles [i.e. guitars] such as we have I did not see there, but many other instruments which are unknown among us. And when the master begins to drink, then one of the attendants cries with a loud voice, "Ha!" and the guitarist strikes his guitar, and when they have a great feast they all clap their hands, and also dance about to the sound of the guitar, the men before the master, the women before the mistress. And when the master has drunken, then the attendant cries as before, and the guitarist stops. Then they drink all around, and sometimes they do drink right shamefully and gluttonly [J: Then they all drink in turn, men and women alike, and at times compete with one another in quaffing in a thoroughly distasteful and greedy fashion]. And when they want to challenge anyone to drink, they take hold of him by the ears, and pull so as to distend his throat, and they clan and dance before him. Likewise, when they want to make a great feasting and jollity with someone, one takes a full cup, and two others are on his right and left, and thus these three come singing and dancing towards him who is to take the cup, and they sing and dance before him ; and when he holds out his hand to take the cup, they quickly draw it back, and then again they come back as before, and so they elude him three or four times by drawing away the cup, till he hath become well excited and is in good appetite [J: has a good thirst], and then they give him the cup, and while he drinks they sing and clap their hands and strike with their feet [J: ...they give him the goblet, singing and clapping and stamping their feet until he is drunk].

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[More on food]

Of their food and victuals you must know that they eat all their dead animals without distinction, and with such flocks and herds it cannot be but that many animals die. Nevertheless, in summer, so long as lasts their *cosmos*, that is to say mare's milk, they care not for any other food. So then if it happens that an ox or a horse dies, they dry its flesh by cutting it into narrow strips and hanging it in the sun and the wind, where at once and without salt it becomes dry without any evidence of smell. With the intestines of horses they make sausages better than pork ones, and they eat them fresh. The rest of the flesh they keep for winter. With the hides of oxen they make big jars [J: bags], which they dry in admirable fashion in the smoke. With the hind part of the hide of horses they make most beautiful shoes. With the flesh of a single sheep they give to eat to fifty men or a hundred; for they cut it up very fine in a platter with salt

and water, for they make no other sauce; and then with the point of a knife or a fork which they make for the purpose, like that which we used to eat coddled pears or apples, they give to each of the bystanders a mouthful or two according to the number of the guests. Prior to this, before the flesh of the sheep is served, the master takes what pleases him; and furthermore if he gives to anyone a special piece, it is the custom, that he who receives it shall eat it himself, and he may not give it to another; but if he cannot eat it all he carries it off with him, or gives it to his servant if he be present, who keeps it; otherwise he puts it away in his *captargac*, which is a square bag which they carry to put such things in, in which they store away bones when they have not time to gnaw them well, so that they can gnaw them later and that nothing of the food be lost.

[*Kumiss (fermented mare's milk, called cosmos by Rubruck).*]

This *cosmos*, which is mare's milk, is made in this wise. They stretch a long rope on the ground fixed to two stakes stuck in the ground, and to this rope they tie toward the third hour the colts of the mares they want to milk. Then the mothers stand near their foal, and allow themselves to be quietly milked; and if one be too wild, then a man takes the colt and brings it to her, allowing it to suck a little; then he takes it away and the milker takes its place. When they have got together a great quantity of milk, which is as sweet as cow's as long as it is fresh, they pour it into a big skin or bottle, and they set to churning it with a stick prepared for that purpose, and which is as big as a man's head at its lower extremity and hollowed out; and when they have beaten it sharply it begins to boil up like new wine and to sour or ferment, and they continue to churn it until they have extracted the butter. Then they taste it, and when it is mildly pungent, they drink it. It is pungent on the tongue like *râpé* wine [i.e., a wine of inferior quality] when drunk, and when a man has finished drinking, it leaves a taste of milk of almonds on the tongue, and it makes the inner man most joyful and also intoxicates weak heads, and greatly provokes urine. They also make *cara cosmos* that is "black *cosmos*," for the use of the great lords. It is for the following reason that mare's milk curdles not. It is a fact that (the milk) of no animal will curdle in the stomach of whose fetus is not found curdled milk. In the stomach of mares' colts it is not found, so the milk of mares curdles not. They churn then the milk until all the thicker parts go straight to the bottom, like the dregs of wine, and the pure part remains on top, and it is like whey or white must. The dregs are very white, and they are given to the slaves, and they provoke much to sleep. This clear (liquor) the lords drink, and it is assuredly a most agreeable drink and most efficacious. Baatu has thirty men around his camp at a day's distance, each of whom sends him every day such milk of a hundred mares, that is to say every day the milk of three thousand mares, exclusive of the other white milk which they carry to others. As in Syria the peasants give a third of their produce, so it is these (Tartars) must bring to the *ordu* of their lords the milk

of every third day. As to cow's milk they first extract the butter, then they boil it down perfectly dry, after which they put it away in sheep paunches which they keep for that purpose; and they put no salt in the butter, for on account of the great boiling down it spoils not. And they keep this for the winter. What remains of the milk after the butter they let sour as much as can be, and they boil it, and it curdles in boiling, and the curd they dry in the sun, and it becomes as hard as iron slag, and they put it away in bags for the winter. In winter time, when milk fails them, they put this sour curd, which they call *gruit*, in a skin and pour water on it, and churn it vigorously till it dissolves in the water, which is made sour by it, and this water they drink instead of milk. They are most careful not to drink pure water.

[Animals in the Mongols' diet]

The great lords have villages in the south, from which millet and flour are brought to them for the winter. The poor procure (these things) by trading sheep and pelts. The slaves fill their bellies with dirty water, and with this they are content. They catch also rats, of which many kinds abound here. Rats with long tails they eat not, but give them to their birds. They eat mice and all kinds of rats which have short tails. There are also many marmots, which are called *sogur*, and which congregate in one hole in winter, twenty or thirty together, and sleep for six months; these they catch in great numbers. There are also conies, with a long tail like a cat's, and on the end of the tail they have black and white hairs. They have also many other kinds of small animals good to eat, which they know very well how to distinguish. I saw no deer there. I saw few hares, many gazelles. Wild asses I saw in great numbers, and these are like mules. I saw also another kind of animal which is called *arcali* [=a wild sheep], which has quite the body of a sheep, and horns bent like a ram's, but of such size that I could hardly lift the two horns with one hand, and they make of these horns big cups. They have hawks and peregrine falcons in great numbers, which they all carry on their right hand. And they always put a little thong around the hawk's neck, which hangs down to the middle of its breast, by which, when they cast it at its prey, they pull down with the left hand the head and breast of the hawk, so that it be not struck by the wind and carried upward. So it is that they procure a large part of their food by the chase. When they want to chase wild animals, they gather together in a great multitude and surround the district in which they know the game to be, and gradually they come closer to each other till they have shut up the game in among them as in an enclosure, and then they shoot them with their arrows.

[Clothing]

Of their clothing and customs [J: clothing and appearance] you must know, that from Cataia [=China], and other regions of the east, and also from Persia and other regions

of the south, are brought to them silken and golden stuffs and cloth of cotton, which they wear in summer. From Ruscia, Moxel, and from Greater Bulgaria [=a region in the middle Volga, not to be confused with minor Bulgaria mentioned above] and Pascatir [a region between the upper Volga and Ural R.], which is greater Hungary, and Kerkis [=Kerghiz], all of which are countries to the north and full of forests, and which obey them, are brought to them costly furs of many kinds, which I never saw in our parts, and which they wear in winter. And they always make in winter at least two fur gowns, one with the fur against the body, the other with the fur outside exposed to the wind and snow; these latter are usually of the skins of wolves or foxes or papions [J: lynx]; and while they sit in the dwelling they have another lighter one. The poor make their outside (gowns) of dog and kid (skins).

They make also breeches with furs. The rich furthermore wad their clothing with silk stuffing, which is extraordinarily soft, light and warm. The poor line their clothes with cotton cloth, or with the fine wool which they are able to pick out of the coarser. With this coarser they make felt to cover their houses and coffers, and also for bedding. With wool and a third of horse hair mixed with it they make their ropes. They also make with felt covers [both] saddle-cloths and rain cloaks; so they use a great deal of wool. You have seen the costume of the men.

The men shave a square on the tops of their heads, and from the front corners (of this square) they continue the shaving to the temples, passing along both sides of the head. They shave also the temples and the back of the neck to the top of the cervical cavity, and the forehead as far as the crown of the head, on which they leave a tuft of hair which falls down to the eyebrows. They leave the hair on the sides of the head, and with it they make tresses which they plait together to the ears.

And the dress of the girls differs not from the costume of the men, except that it is somewhat longer. But on the day following her marriage, (a woman) shaves the front half of her head, and puts on a tunic as wide as a nun's gown, but everyway larger and longer, open before, and tied on the right side. For in this the Tartars differ from the Turks; the Turks tie their gowns on the left, the Tartars always on the right. Furthermore they have a head-dress, which they call *bocca*, made of bark, or such other light material as they can find, and it is big and as much as two hands can span around, and is a cubit and more high, and square like the capital of a column. This *bocca* they cover with costly silk stuff, and it is hollow inside, and on top of the capital, or the square on it, they put a tuft of quills or light canes also a cubit or more in length. And this tuft they ornament at the top with peacock feathers, and round the edge (of the top) with feathers from the mallard's tail, and also with precious stones. The wealthy ladies wear such an ornament on their heads, and fasten it down tightly with an amess [J: a fur hood], for which there is an opening in the top for that purpose, and inside they stuff their hair, gathering it together on the back of the tops of their

heads in a kind of knot, and putting it in the *bocca*, which they afterwards tie down tightly under the chin. So it is that when several ladies are riding together, and one sees them from afar, they look like soldiers, helmets on head and lances erect. For this *bocca* looks like a helmet, and the tuft above it is like a lance. And all the women sit their horses astraddle like men. And they tie their gowns with a piece of blue silk stuff at the waist and they wrap another band at the breasts, and tie a piece of white stuff below the eyes which hangs down to the breast. And the women there are wonderfully [J: astonishingly] fat, and she who has the least nose is held the most beautiful. They disfigure themselves horribly by painting their faces. They never lie down in bed when having their children.

It is the duty of the women to drive the carts, get the dwellings on and off them, milk the cows, make butter and *gruit*, and to dress and sew skins, which they do with a thread made of tendons. They divide the tendons into fine shreds, and then twist them into one long thread. They also sew the boots, the socks and the clothing. They never wash clothes, for they say that God would be angered thereat, and that it would thunder if they hung them up to dry. They will even beat those they find washing them [J: they thrash anyone doing laundry and confiscate it]. Thunder they fear extraordinarily; and when it thunders they will turn out of their dwellings all strangers, wrap themselves in black felt, and thus hide themselves till it has passed away. Furthermore, they never wash their bowls, but when the meat is cooked they rinse out the dish in which they are about to put it with some of the boiling broth from the kettle, which they pour back into it. They also make the felt and cover the houses.

The men make bows and arrows, manufacture stirrups and bits, make saddles, do the carpentering on (the framework of) their dwellings and the carts; they take care of the horses, milk the mares, churn the *cosmos* or mare's milk, make the skins in which it is put; they also look after the camels and load them. Both sexes look after the sheep and goats, sometimes the men, other times the women, milking them.

They dress skins with a thick mixture of sour ewe's milk and salt. When they want to wash their hands or head, they fill their mouths with water, which they let trickle on to their hands, and in this way they also wet their hair and wash their heads.

As to their marriages, you must know that no one among them has a wife unless he buys her; so it sometimes happens that girls are well past marriageable age [J: are very mature] before they marry, for their parents always keep them until they sell them. They observe the first and second degrees of consanguinity, but no degree of affinity; thus (one person) will have at the same time or successively two sisters. Among them no widow marries, for the following reason: they believe that all who serve them in this life shall serve them in the next, so as regards a widow they believe that she will always return to her first husband after death. Hence this shameful custom prevails

among them, that sometimes a son takes to wife all his father's wives, except his own mother; for the *ordu* of the father and mother always belongs to the youngest son, so it is he who must provide for all his father's wives who come to him with the paternal household, and if he wishes it he uses them as wives, for he esteems not himself injured if they return to his father after death. When then anyone has made a bargain with another to take his daughter, the father of the girl gives a feast, and the girl flees to her relatives and hides there. Then the father says: "Here, my daughter is yours: take her wheresoever you find her." Then he searches for her with his friends till he finds her, and he must take her by force and carry her off with a semblance of violence to his house.

As to their justice you must know that when two men fight together no one dares interfere, even a father dare not aid a son ; but he who has the worse of it may appeal to the court of the lord, and if anyone touches him after the appeal, he is put to death. But action must be taken at once without any delay, and the injured one must lead him (who has offended) as a captive. They inflict capital punishment on no one unless he be taken in the act or confesses. When one is accused by a number of persons, they torture him so that he confesses. They punish homicide with capital punishment, and also co-habiting with a woman not one's own. By not one's own, [I] mean not his wife or bondwoman, for with one's slaves one may do as one pleases. They also punish with death grand larceny, but as for petty thefts, such as that of a sheep, so long as one has not repeatedly been taken in the act, they beat him cruelly, and if they administer a hundred blows they must use a hundred sticks: I speak of the case of those beaten under order of authority [J: those who have been sentenced to a beating by the court]. In like manner false envoys, that is to say persons who pass themselves off as ambassadors but who are not, are put to death. Likewise sorcerers, of whom I shall however tell you more, for such they consider to be witches.

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[Funeral Practices]

When anyone dies, they lament with loud wailing, then they are free, for they pay no taxes for the year. And if anyone is present at the death of an adult, he may not enter the dwelling even of Mangu Chan for the year. If it be a child who dies, he may not enter it for a month. Beside the tomb of the dead they always leave a tent if he be one of the nobles, that is of the family of Chingis, who was their first father and lord. Of him who is dead the burying place is not known. And always around these places where they bury their nobles there is a camp with men watching the tombs. I did not understand that they bury treasure with their dead. The Comans raise a great tumulus over the dead, and set up a statue to him, its face to the east, and holding a cup in its hand at the height of the navel. They make also pyramids to the rich, that is to say,

little pointed structures, and in some places I saw great tiled covered towers, and in others stone houses, though there were no stones thereabout. Over a person recently dead I saw hung on long poles the skins of sixteen horses, four facing each quarter of the world; and they had placed also *cosmos* for him to drink, and meat for him to eat, and for all that they said of him that he had been baptized. Farther east I saw other tombs in shape like great yards covered with big flat stones, some round, some square, and four high vertical stones at the corners facing the four quarters of the world. When anyone sickens he lies on his couch, and places a sign over his dwelling that there is a sick person therein, and that no one shall enter. So no one visits a sick person, save him who serves him. And when anyone from the great *ordu* [J: someone from one of the great house holds] is ill, they place guards all round the *ordu*, who permit no one to pass those bounds. For they fear lest an evil spirit or some wind should come with those who enter. They call, however, their priests, who are these same soothsayers.

[Rubruck resumes his travel narrative]

When therefore we found ourselves among these barbarians, it seemed to me, as I said before, that I had been transported into another world. They surrounded us on their horses, after having made us wait for a long while seated in the shade under our carts. The first question was whether we had ever been among them before. Having answered that we had not, they began to beg most impudently for some of our provisions. We gave them some of the biscuit and wine that we had brought with us from the city, and when they had drunk one flagon they asked for another, saying that a man enters not a house with one foot only; but we gave it not, excusing ourselves on the score of the smallness of our stock. Then they asked whence we came and where we wanted to go. I told them what I have already said: that we had heard that Sartach was a Christian, and that I wanted to go to him, for I had your letters [J: letter] to deliver to him [*The Rockhill edition consistently renders the plural while Jackson renders singular. I have changed the number to singular throughout the remainder of the narrative]. They made most diligent inquiry whether I was going of my own free will, or whether I was sent. I answered that no one forced me to go, nor would I go if I did not want to, so I was going of my own free will, and also of the will of my superior. I was most careful never to say that I was your ambassador. Then they asked me what was in the carts, whether it was gold or silver or costly clothing that I was taking to Sartach. I answered that Sartach would see for himself what we were bringing to him when we reached him, but that it was none of their business to ask: they should have me shown to their captain, and that he, if it so pleased him, should have me taken to Sartach, otherwise I would go back.

Now there was in that province a relative of Baatu, a captain by the name of Scatay [=Scacatai], to whom the lord emperor of Constantinople was sending (by me) letters

that I be allowed to pass. So they agreed (to do as I asked), supplying us with horses and oxen, and two men to guide us ; and those who had brought us went back. Before, however, giving us all this, they kept us waiting for along time, begging of our bread for their little ones, admiring everything they saw on our servants, knives, gloves, purses and belts, and wanting everything. I excused myself [J: I refused] on the plea that we had a long journey before us, and that we could not at the start deprive ourselves of necessary things. Then they called me an impostor. It is true that they took nothing by force; but they beg in the most importunate and impudent way for whatever they see, and if a person gives to them, it is so much lost, for they are ungrateful. They consider themselves the masters of the world, and it seems to them that there is nothing that anyone has the right to refuse them: if he refuses to give, and after that has need of their service, they serve him badly. They gave us to drink of their cow's milk, from which the butter had been taken ; it was very sour, and is what they call *aira*. And thus we left them, and it seemed to me that we had escaped from the midst of devils [J: clutches of demons]. On the next day we came to their captain.

For two months, from the time we left Soldaia to when we came to Sartach, we never slept in a house or tent, but always in the open air or under our carts; and we never saw a city, but only Comans' tombs in very great numbers.

That evening the man who was guiding us gave us *cosmos* to drink, and at the taste of it I broke out in a sweat with horror and surprise, for I had never drunk of it. It seemed to me, however, very palatable, as it really is.

In the morning then we came across the carts of Scatay carrying the dwellings, and it seemed to me that a city was coming towards me. I was also astonished at the size of the herds of oxen and horses and flocks of sheep, though I saw but few men to manage them. So I asked how many men (Scatay) had under him, and I was told that there were not over five hundred, of whom we had passed half at another camp. Then the man who guided us began telling me that I must give something to Scatay [J: that he ought to give something to Scatay], and he made us stop while he went ahead to announce our coming. It was already past the third hour, so they set down their dwellings near some water, and (Scatay's) interpreter came to us, and as soon as he learnt that we had never been among them before he begged of our provisions, and we gave him some. He wanted also a gown, for he was to act as translator of our words in the presence of his master. We excused ourselves. He asked what we were bringing to his master, so we got a flagon of wine and filled a small basket with biscuits and a plate with apples and other fruit, but he was not pleased because we were not taking some costly tissue [J: cloth]. However we went with this in fear and trembling. (Scatay) was seated on his couch, with a little guitar in his hand, and his wife was beside him; and in truth it seemed to me that her whole nose had been cut off, for she was so snub-nosed that she seemed to have no nose at all; and she had greased this

part of her face with some black unguent, and also her eyebrows, so that she appeared most hideous to us. Then I spoke to him in the terms previously used, for it was essential that we should everywhere say the same thing; out this we had been well cautioned by those who had been among them, never to change what we said. Then I begged him to be pleased to accept these trifles of us, excusing myself, being a monk and not allowed by my Order [i.e. the Franciscans] to own gold or silver or costly robes: so I had nothing of the sort to give him, only of our food to offer him for a blessing. Then he had the things accepted, and once distributed among his men who had gathered there to drink. I also gave him the letter from the emperor of Constantinople. This was on the octave of Ascension (5th June [1253]). He at once sent them to Soldaia, to be translated there, for they were in Greek, and had no one with him who knew the Greek language. He asked us if we would drink *cosmos*, or mare's milk; for the Christians, Ruthenians, Greeks and Alans who live among them, and who wish to follow strictly their religion, drink it not ; for of a truth they consider themselves to be no longer Christians if they drink it, and the priests have to bring them back into the fold as if they had denied the faith of Christ. Then I made answer that we had had enough of our own to drink so far, but that if that liquor should give out, we should have to drink what he gave us. He asked about the contents of the letter we were sending [J: the letter you were sending] to Sartach. I told him that the sealed ones were our bulls [J: I said that your letter was sealed] but that there was naught in them but good and friendly words. He then asked what we would say to Sartach. I answered: "Words of the Christian faith." He asked which, for he would be pleased to hear them [J: 'What are they?' he inquired, since he was eager to hear them]. Then I expounded to him as well as I could through my interpreter, who was neither over intelligent nor fluent, the symbol [J: creed] of the faith. When he had heard it, he remained silent, but wagged his head. Then, having made choice of two men to watch over us, and over the horses and oxen, he made us drive about with him until the return of the messenger whom he had sent to have the letter of the emperor translated, and we went about with him until the day after Pentecost (8th June [J: June 9th]).

On Pentecost eve (6th June [J: June 7th]) there came to us certain Alans, who are there called Aas, and they are Christians according to the Greek rite, and use the Greek writing and have Greek priests. They are not however schismatics like the Greeks, for without any respect to persons they honor all Christians. And they brought us cooked meats, begging us to eat of their food, and to pray for one of theirs who had died. Then I told them that it was the eve of a great festival, and that on that day we did not eat meat, and I told them of the festival, at which they were much pleased, for they were in ignorance of what concerned the Christian rite, the name of Christ alone excepted. And they and many other Christians, Ruthenians and Hungarians asked whether they could be saved, for they had to drink *cosmos* and eat carrion and beasts slaughtered by Saracens and infidels, which those Greek and Ruthenian priests

consider about the same as carrion, or sacrifices to idols; and because they did not know the facts, neither could they keep them if they did know. Then I explained to them as well as I could, teaching them and comforting [J: strengthening] them in the faith. The meat which they had brought we kept for the feast day, for we could find nothing to buy with gold and silver, but only with linen or other tissues, and of those we had none. When our servants showed the *yperpera* [=a Byzantine gold coin], they rubbed them with their fingers, and put them to their noses to smell if they were copper. Neither did they (i.e., the Mongols) give us food, but only cow's milk, very sour and bad-smelling. Our wine was about exhausted [J: Our wine had by now run out], and the water was so muddy from the horses that it was not drinkable; had it not been for the biscuits we had, and God's mercy, we should probably have perished.

On the day of Pentecost (7th June [J: June 8th]) a certain Saracen came to us, and while in conversation with us, we began expounding the faith, and when he heard of the blessings of God to man in the incarnation, the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment, the washing away of sins in baptism, he said he wished to be baptized; but while we were making ready to baptize him he suddenly jumped on his horse saying he had to go home to consult with his wife. And the next day talking with us he said he could not possibly venture to receive baptism, for then he could not drink *cosmos*. For the Christians of these parts say that no true Christian should drink, but that without this drink it were impossible to live in these deserts. From this opinion I could not possibly turn him. So you will see how far they are astray from the true faith through this opinion, which has been implanted among them by the Ruthenians, of whom there are great numbers there.

On this same day this captain (Scatay) gave us a man to guide us to Sartach, and two to take us to a camp which was five days off, as oxen travel. And they gave us also a goat for food, and several skins of cows, milk, but only a little *cosmos*, for it is held very precious among them. And so we set out due north, and it seemed to me that we had passed through one of the gates of hell. The men who conducted us began robbing us in the most audacious manner, for they saw that we took but little care. Finally, after losing a number of things, vexation made us wise.

We came finally to the end of this province (of Gazaria), which is closed by a ditch (running) from one sea to the other, and outside of it was the camp of these (Mongols); and when we came among them they were such horrible looking creatures that they seemed like lepers. They were stationed there to collect the tax from those who get sail from the salt lakes [J: salt springs] of which I have already spoken. From this point we should have to travel fifteen days, they said without seeing anyone. We drank *cosmos* with them, and gave them a basket full of biscuits; and they gave the eight of us a goat for the whole long journey, and I know not how many skins of cow's milk. So having changed horses and oxen we set out, and in ten days covered the

distance to the next camp; and along whole route we only found water in holes made in hollows with the exception of two small streams. And we were traveling due east from the time we left this province of Gazaria, having the sea to the south and a vast wilderness to the north, which extends in places over thirty days in breadth; and in it is neither forest, nor hill, nor stone, but only the finest pasturage. Here the Comans, who are called Capchat, used to pasture their flocks; the Teutons, however, call them Valans, and the province Valania. It is stated however by Isidorus [=Isidore (d. ca. CE 636): bishop of Seville who's varied works included histories of the Goths, Vandals and Sueves] that Alania extends from the river Tanais to the Palus Maeotis and the Danube; and this country which extends from the Danube to the Tanais (which is the boundary between Asia and Europe), and which it takes two months hard riding, as ride the Tartars, to cross, was all inhabited by the Capchat Comans, as was also that beyond the Tanais [=Don R.] to the Etilia [=Volga R.], between which two rivers are ten good days. To the north of province lies Ruscia, which is everywhere covered with forests, and extends from Poland and Hungary to the Tanais, and it was all ravaged by the Tartars, and is still being ravaged every day. For the Tartars prefer the Saracens to the Ruthenians, who are Christians, and when the latter can give no more gold or silver they drive them off to the wilds, them and their little ones, like flocks of sheep, there to herd their cattle. Beyond Ruscia to the north is Pruscia, which has all been recently conquered by the Teutonic knights; and of a truth they might readily acquire Ruscia, if they would put their hand to it, for should the Tartars hear that the great priest, that is the Pope, was about to make a crusade against them, they would all flee to their deserts.

We traveled eastward, seeing nothing but the sky and the earth, only now and then to our right the sea which is called Sea of Tanais, and tombs of Comans visible two leagues off, on account of the custom of burying the whole of a family in one spot. As long as we were in the desert; it fared well with us, but such misery as I had to suffer when we came to inhabited places, words fail me to express. For our guide wanted me to meet every captain with a present, but our supplies sufficed not for that, for daily we were eight persons eating our bread, without counting those who came by hazard, who all wanted to eat with us. There were five of us, and the three who were conducting us, two driving the carts and one going with us to Sartach. The meat they had given us was insufficient, and we could find nothing to buy with money. To add to this, when we were seated in the shade under our carts, for the heat was intense at that season, they pushed in most importunately among us, to the point of crushing us, in their eagerness to see all our things. If they were seized with a desire to void their stomachs, they did not go away from us farther than one can throw a bean: they did their filthiness right beside us while talking together, and much more they did which was vexatious beyond measure. Above all this, however, I was distressed because I could do no preaching to them; the interpreter would say to me: "You cannot make me

preach, I do not know the proper words to use." And he spoke the truth; for after awhile, when I had learned something of the language, I saw that when I said one thing, he said a totally different one, according to what came uppermost in his mind. So, seeing the danger of speaking through him, I made up my mind to keep silence.

We traveled along then in great distress from stage to stage [J: camp to camp] till a few days before the feast of blessed Mary Magdalen (22nd June) we came to the great river Tanais, which separates Asia from Europe, just as the river of Egypt divides Asia from Africa. At the place where we came to it Baatu and Sartach had established a village of Ruthenians on the east bank, who ferried envoys and merchants across on small boats. They first passed us across, then the carts; putting one wheel in one boat and the other in another and tying the boats together they rowed them across. At this place our guide did a most foolish thing; thinking that the people had to supply us with horses, he sent back to their owners from the near bank the animals which had brought us; but when we asked for animals they replied that they were exempted by Baatu from any other service than ferrying across those who came and went. From merchants even they collect much money. So we remained there on the river bank for three days. The first day they gave us a big barbell [J: eel-pout] just out of the water, the second day some rye bread and a little meat which the headman of the village collected from the different houses; the third day we got dried fish, of which they have great quantities here. That river at this point was as broad as the Seine at Paris. And before we came there, we passed many fine sheets of water full of fish, but the Tartars do not know how to catch them, nor do they care for fish unless they can eat it as they would mutton. This river is the eastern boundary of Ruscia, and takes its rise in the Moeotide fens, which extend to the ocean in the north. The river, however, flows southward, forming a big sea of seven hundred miles before it reaches the Sea of Pontus, and all the streams we passed flow also in that direction. This same river has a forest on its west bank. Beyond this point the Tartars go no farther north, for at that season, about the beginning of August, they commence going back southward ; so there is another village lower down (the river), where envoys pass over in winter. We found ourselves here in great straits, for we could procure neither horses nor oxen for money. Finally when I had proved to them that we were working for the common good of all Christendom, they obliged us with oxen and horses; but we ourselves had to go on foot.

It was the season when they were cutting the rye. Wheat thrives not there; but they have great abundance of millet.. The Ruthenian women arrange their heads as among us, but their outside gowns they trim from the feet to the knee with vaire or minever. The men wear capes like the Germans; on their heads they wear felt caps, pointed and very high.

We trudged along for three days without seeing anyone, and just as we and the oxen were well worn out, and unable to find any Tartars [J: we had no idea in what direction we might meet up with the Tartars], two horses came running towards us; we took them with great delight, and our guide and the interpreter got on them, in the hope of being able to find some people. Finally on the fourth day we found some people, and we were as happy as shipwrecked mariners on reaching port. Then we got horses and oxen and went along from stage to stage till we reached the camp of Sartach on the second day of the Calends of August (July 31st).

The country beyond the Tanais is most beautiful, with rivers and forests. To the north are great forests, inhabited by two races of men: to wit, the Moxel, who are without any religion, a race of pure pagans [J: have no law and are exclusively heathen]. They have no towns, but only little hamlets in the forest. Their chief and the greater part of them were killed in Germany; for the Tartars took them with them to the borders of Germany, and so they have formed a high opinion of the Germans, and they hope that through them they may finally be freed of the Tartar yoke. If a trader comes among this people, he with whom he first puts up must provide for him as long as he sees fit to stay among them. If one sleeps with another's wife the husband cares not, unless he sees it with his own eyes; so they are not jealous. They have swine, honey and wax, precious furs and hawks.

After them are the others called Merdas, whom the Latins call Merdinis, and they are Saracens. Beyond them is the Etilia, the largest river I have ever seen, and it comes from the north, from Greater Bulgaria and flows south, and it falls into a certain lake which has a circumference of four months journey, and of it I shall tell you later. So these two rivers, the Tanais and the Etilia, in the north where we crossed them, are only distant the one from the other ten days; but to the south they are far remote from one another. For the Tanais flows down into the Sea of Pontus, while the Etilia forms with many other rivers which flow into it from Persia, this sea or lake [=Caspian Sea]. To the south we had very high mountains, inhabited, on the side facing this desert, by the Kerkis and the Alans or Aas, who are Christians and still fight the Tartars. Beyond them, along the sea or lake of Etilia, live certain Saracens called Lesgi, who likewise owe them no allegiance. Beyond them are the Iron Gates, which Alexander made to keep the barbarous nations out of Persia; of these I shall tell you later, for I passed through this place on my way back, and between these two rivers in this country through which we were traveling used to live Comans Capchac before the Tartars occupied it.

So we found Sartach three days from the Etilia, and his *ordu* seemed to us very big, for he has six wives, and his eldest son who was beside him had two or three, and every one of them had a big dwelling and perhaps two hundred carts. Our guide went to a certain Nestorian, Coiac by name, who is one of the most important men of

his *ordu*. This latter made us go a long way to an officer who is called the Jamiam [J (correcting Rockhill's reading): *iam*], for thus they call him whose duty it is to receive envoys [*The *iam* or *yam* was the Mongol postal service. Here Rubruck erroneously applies the term to the official himself]. In the evening this Coiac had us told to come to him. Then our guide asked us what we were going to take to him, and he was greatly scandalized when he saw that we were getting nothing ready to take to him. We stood in front of him seated in all his glory, striking a guitar and making people dance before him [J: while he had a guitar played and people dancing in front of him]. Then I repeated what I had previously said elsewhere as to the reason for which we had come to his master, begging him to assist us that his lord might see your letter. I also excused myself, being a monk, for neither having, receiving nor carrying with me gold or silver or any precious thing, but only books and the chapel [J: liturgical items], with which we served God, so we were not offering presents to either him or his lord, for having put away all worldly goods I could not be the bearer of those of others. Then he replied right pleasantly that I did well, being a monk, to keep my vows; that he did not want of our things, but would rather give us of his own if we were in want; and he caused us to sit down and drink of his milk, and after awhile he besought us to say a blessing for him, which we did. He also asked us who was the greatest lord among the Franks. I said, "The Emperor, if his land were in peace" [J: "if he held his territory unchallenged" (*Emperor Fredrick had been deposed and excommunicated by the pope and was vying for power with his competitors)]. "No," he said, "it is the King of France." For he had heard of you from Messire Baldwin of Hainaut. I also found there one of the companions of David, who had been in Cyprus (with him), and who had told him of all he had seen. Then we went back to our lodgings.

The next day (1st August) I sent him (Coiac) a flagon of muscadel wine, which had kept perfectly good during the whole long journey, and a hamper of biscuits which pleased him very much; and that evening he kept our servants with him. The next day he sent me word to come to the court, bringing with me the king's letter, the vestments and the church ornaments and the books, for his master wished to see them. We did accordingly, putting in one cart the books and the chapel, and in another bread, wine and fruit. Then he caused us to explain all about the books and vestments, and many Tartars and Christians and Saracens looked on seated on their horses. When he had finished examining them, he asked if I would give all these things to his master. When I heard this I was shocked, and his words displeased me. Dissimulating, however, I replied: "My lord, we beg that your lord will deign receive this bread, wine and fruit, not as a present, for it is too trifling, but for a blessing, and so that we appear not before him with empty hands. He shall see the letter of the lord King, and by them he shall know why we come to him, and then we will await his pleasure, we and all our belongings. As to these vestments they are holy, and may not be touched except by Friar priests." Then he told us to put them on to go in unto his lord, and this we did. I

put on the most costly of the vestments, with a most beautiful cushion (*pulvinar*) against my breast, and took the Bible which you had given me, and the beautiful Psalter which my lady the Queen had presented me with, and in which were right beautiful pictures. My companion took the missal and the cross, while the clerk (Gosset) put on a surplice and took the censer. And so we came before his (i.e. , Sartach's) dwelling, and they raised the felt which hung before the entry, so that he could see us. Then they made the clerk and the interpreter to bow the knee (three times): of us they did not demand it. Then they enjoined us earnestly to be most careful in going in and coming out not to touch the threshold of the dwelling, and also to chant some blessing for him. So we went in chanting, "*Salve, regina!*" [J: went in singing the *Salve Regina*] In the entry of the dwelling there was a bench with *cosmos* and cups, and all Sartach's wives had come thither and the Mo'al came crowding in around us.

Then this Coiac handed him the censer with the incense, and he examined it, holding it in his hand most carefully. After that he handed him the Psalter, at which he took a good look, as did the wife who was seated beside him. Then he handed him the Bible, and he asked if the Gospels [J: Gospel] were in it. I said that it contained all the Sacred writings. He also took in his hand the cross, and asked if the image on it were that of Christ. I replied that it was. Those Nestorians and Hermenians [=Armenians] never make the figure of Christ on their crosses; they would thus appear to entertain some doubt of the Passion, or to be ashamed of it. Then he caused the bystanders to withdraw [J: draw back] so that he could better see our ornaments. Then I presented to him your letter, with translations in Arabic and Syriac, for I had had them both translated and written in these languages at Acon [=Acre in Palestine]. And there were there (at Sartach's camp) Hermenian priests who knew Turkish and Arabic, and that companion of David who knew Syriac, Turkish, and Arabic. Then we went out and took off our vestments, and some scribes and this Coiac came, and they translated the letters (into Mongol). When he (Sartach) had heard them, he caused our bread and wine and fruit to be accepted, and our vestments and books to be carried back to our lodgings. All this took place on the Feast of Saint Peter in Chains (1st August).

The next morning (2nd August) came to us a priest, the brother of that Coiac, who begged for a little vase with holy oil, for Sartach wanted to see it, he said, and we gave it to him. Toward vespers Coiac called us, and said to us: "The lord King hath written good words to my lord; but they contain certain difficulties, concerning which he would not venture to do anything without the advice of his father: so you must go to his father. And the two carts which you brought here, with the vestments and books, leave them to me, for my lord wishes to examine them carefully." I at once suspected evil of his greed, and said to him: "My lord, not only these, but the two other carts which we have, will we leave under your care." "No," he said; "leave these,

but do what you wish with the others." I told him this was quite impossible, but that we would give everything over to him. Then he asked us if we wished to remain in the country. I said: "If you have well understood the letter of the lord King, you can see that that is the case." Then he said that we must be very patient and humble; and with this we left him that evening.

The next morning he (Coiac) sent a Nestorian priest for the carts, and we brought all four of them. Then the brother of this Coiac came up, and separated all our belongings from the things which we had taken the day before to the court, and these, to wit the books and the vestments, he took for himself; notwithstanding that Coiac had ordered us to take with us the vestments we had worn before Sartach, so that, should occasion arise, we might put them on before Baatu; but the priest took them from us by force, saying: "What, you have brought these to Sartach, and now you want to take them to Baatu!" And when I sought to reason with him, he answered me: "Say no more, and be off with you." So I had to bear it in patience, for we were not allowed to go in unto Sartach, nor was there anyone to do us justice. I was afraid also of the interpreter, lest he say something differently from what I should speak, for he used to be eager for us to make presents to everyone [J: as he would have quite liked us to make a gift of everything]. I had one comfort; as soon as I discerned their greed, I abstracted the Bible from among the books, also the sentences [*Jackson suggests Peter Lombard's 12th c. book on Theology, the *Libri Sententiarum IV*] and the other books of which I was specially fond. I did not dare abstract the Psalter of my lady the Queen, for it had been too much noticed on account of the gilded pictures in it. And so we were sent back with the two remaining carts to our lodgings. Then came he who was to guide us to Baatu, and he wanted to start at once. I told him that on no account would I take the carts, and this he reported to Coiac, who ordered that we should leave them and our servant with him [J: leave them with the *iam*], and this we did.

Traveling then due east toward Baatu, we came on the third day (5th August) to the Etilia, and when I saw its waters, I wondered from where away up in the north so much water could come down.

Before we left Sartach, the above mentioned Coiac and a number of scribes of the court said to us: "You must not say that our lord is a Christian. He is not a Christian, but a Mo'al." For the name of Christian seems to them that of a nation [J: for they regard the name Christendom as the name of a people]. They have risen so much in their pride, that though they may believe somewhat in the Christ, yet will they not be called Christians, wishing to exalt their own name of Mo'al above all others, nor will they be called Tartars. The Tartars were another people of whom I have heard as follows.

[Nestorians]

At the time when the Franks took Antioch the sovereignty of these northern regions belonged to a certain Con *cham* [J: Coir Chan]. Con was his proper name, *cham* his title, which means the same as soothsayer. All soothsayers are called *cham* and so all their princes are called *cham*, because their government of the people [J: control over the people] depends on divination. Now we read in the history of Antioch, that the Turks sent for succor against the Franks to King Con*cham*; for from these parts came all the Turks. That Con was of Caracatay. Now *Cara* means black, and *Catay* is the name of a people, so Caracatay is the same as "Black Catay." And they are so called to distinguish them from the Cathayans [=Chinese] who dwell by the ocean in the east, and of whom I shall tell you hereafter. Those Caracatayans lived in highlands (*alpihus*) through which I passed, and at a certain place amidst these alps dwelt a certain Nestorian, a mighty shepherd and lord over a people called Nayman, who were Nestorian Christians. When Con *cham* died, that Nestorian raised himself to be king (in his stead) and the Nestorians used to call him King John, and to say things of him ten times more than was true. For this is the way of the Nestorians who come from these parts: out of nothing they will make a great story, just as they have spread abroad that Sartach is a Christian, and so of Mangu Chan and Keu Chan [=Chingis's grandson Güyük Khan (d.1248)], because they show more respect to Christians than to other people; though of a truth they are not Christians. So great reports went out concerning this King John; though when I passed through his pasture lands, no one knew anything of him save a few Nestorians. On those pasture lands lived Keu Chan, to whose court went Friar Andrew, and I also passed through them on my way back. This John had a brother, also a mighty shepherd, whose name was Unc [=Ong Khan]; and he lived beyond the alps of the Caracatayans, some three weeks journey from his brother, and he was lord of a little town called Caracarum [=Qaraqorum], and the people he had under his rule were called Crit and Merkit, and they were Nestorian Christians. But that lord of theirs had abandoned the worship of Christ, and had taken to idolatry, having about him priests of the idols, who are all invokers of demons and sorcerers. Beyond those pasture lands, some ten or fifteen days, were the pasture lands of the Mo'al, who were very poor people, without a chief and without religion except sorcery and soothsaying, such as all follow in those parts. And next to the Mo'al were other poor people, who were called Tartars. Now King John being dead without an heir, his brother Unc was brought in (*ditatus est*), and caused himself to be proclaimed Chan, and his flocks and herds were driven about as far as the borders of the Mo'al. At that tune there was a certain Chingis, a blacksmith, among the people of Mo'al, and he took to lifting the cattle of Unc Chan whenever he could, so that the herdsmen complained to their lord Unc Chan. So he got together an army, and made a raid into the land of the Mo'al, seeking for this Chingis, but he fled among the Tartars and hid himself there. Then this Unc Chan having got great booty from the Mo'al and the

Tartars went back. Then that Chingis spoke to those Tartars and to those Mo'al, saying, " 'Tis because we are without a chief, that our neighbors oppress us." And they made him chief and captain of the Tartars and the Mo'al. Then he secretly got together an army and fell upon Unc Chan and defeated him, so that he fled to Cathay. And it was there that his daughter was captured, and Chingis gave her to wife to one of his sons, who by her had Mangu [=Mönke Khan (d.1259)] who now reigneth.

Now this Chingis used to dispatch the Tartars in every direction, and so their name spread abroad, for everywhere was heard the cry: "The Tartars are coming!" But through the many wars they have been nearly all killed off, and now these Mo'al would like to extinguish even the name and raise their own in its stead. The country in which they first lived, and where is still the *ordu* of Chingis Chan, is called Onankerule. But because Caracarum is the district where their power first began to spread, they hold it their royal city, and near there they elect their Chan.

Of Sartach I know not whether he believes in the Christ or not. This I do know, that he will not be called a Christian, and it even seemed to me that he mocked the Christians. For he is on the road of the Christians, to wit, of the Ruthenians [=Russians], Blacs [=Vlachs], Bulgarians of Minor Bulgaria, Soldaians, Kerkis [=Circassians] and Alans, all of whom pass by him hen going to his father's *ordu* carrying presents to him, so he shows himself most attentive to them. Should, however, Saracens come along carrying more presents than they, they are sent along more expeditiously. He has Nestorian priests around him who strike a board and chant their offices.

And there is another one called Berka [=Berke Khan (d.1267)], a brother of Baatu, who has his pasture lands toward the Iron Gate, where passes the road followed by all the Saracens coming from Persia and Turkia, and going to Baatu, and who when passing through bring him presents; and he has made himself a Saracen, and he does not allow pork to be eaten in his *ordu*. When we came back Baatu had ordered him to move from that place to beyond the Etilia to the east, not wanting Saracens to pass by where he was, it appearing to him harmful [J: since he (Batu) viewed it as detrimental to his own interests]. During the four days we were at Sartach's *ordu*, we were not once furnished with food, and only once with a little *cosmos*.

On the road between him and his father we were in great fear, for the Ruthenians, Hungarians and Alans, their [the Mongols'] slaves, of whom there are very great numbers among them, are in the habit of banding together twenty or thirty in number, and run off at night (armed) with arrows and bows, and whomsoever they find at night they kill. During the day they hide, and when their horses are tired, they come by night to the herds of horses in the pastures and change their horses, and take one or two with them to eat when necessary. Our guide greatly feared some adventure with

them. On this part of the road we should have died of hunger, had we not carried with us a small supply of biscuit.

[Crossing the Volga]

So we came to the Etilia, the greatest of rivers, for it is four times greater than the Seine, very deep, coming from Greater Bulgaria, which is in the north, flowing southward, and emptying into a certain lake, or sea, which is now called Sea of Sirsan [=Shirwan: a city in NW Persia], from a certain city on its coast in Persia. Isidorus, however, calls it the Caspian sea, for it has the Caspian mountains and Persia to the south, the Mulihec mountains, that is the mountains of the Axasins [=Assassins: a Muslim sect based in Northern Iran] to the east, which touch the Caspian mountains; to the north is this wilderness in which are now the Tartars, though at first there were here certain Comans called Cangle [=Qangli]. And on that side (i.e., the north) it receives the Etilia, which rises [J: floods] in summer as does the Nile of Egypt. To the west of it are the mountains of the Alans, the Lesgians, the Iron Gate and the mountains of the Georgians. So this sea has mountains on three sides, but on the north it has this plain. Friar Andrew went himself along two sides of it, the southern and the eastern, and I along the other two, the northern in going from Baatu to Mangu Chan, and again in coming back; and along the western side in coming back from Baatu to Syria. One can go around it in four months, and it is not true, as stated by Isidorus, that it is a gulf of the Ocean. It nowhere reaches the Ocean, but is everywhere surrounded by land.

All this country on the west side of this sea, from where are the Iron Gates of Alexander and the mountains of the Alans, to the northern Maeotide marshes where rises the Tanais, used to be called Albania. Isidorus says of it that it has dogs in it so big and fierce that "they seize bulls and kill lions": the truth is, as I have heard tell, that toward the Northern ocean they make dogs to drag carts like oxen, so great is their size and strength.

At this place where we reached Etilia, the Tartars have made a new village with a mixed population of Ruthenians and Saracens, and they ferry across the envoys going to and coming from the *ordu* of Baatu; for Baatu is on the farther bank to the east, neither does he go beyond this point we had reached when he comes north in summer, and he had begun moving southward (when we arrived). From January to August he goes up to the cool country, as do all of them, and in August they begin moving back.

[At Khan Batu's court]

So we went down the river in a boat from this village to his (Baatu's) *ordu*, and from that place to the cities of Greater Bulgaria to the north there are five days. I wonder

what devil carried this religion of Machomet [=Muhammad] thither. From the Iron Gate, which is the door out of Persia, there are more than thirty days through the desert, going up along the Etilia, to this Bulgaria, along which route there is no city, only some villages near where the Etilia falls into the sea; and these Bulgarians are the worst kind of Saracens, keeping the law of Machomet as no others [J: and adhere more strictly ... than do any of the others].

When I saw the *ordu* of Baatu, I was astonished, for it seemed like a great city stretched out about his dwelling, with people scattered all about for three or four leagues. And as among the people of Israel, where each one knew in which quarter from the tabernacle he had to pitch his tents, so these know on which side of the *ordu* they must place themselves when they set down their dwellings. A court (*curia*) is *orda* in their language, and it means "middle," for it is always in the middle of the people, with the exception, however, that no one places himself right to the south, for in that direction the doors of the court open. But to the right and left they may spread out as they wish, according to the lay of the land, so long as they do not bring the line of tents down right before or behind the court.

We were first taken to a certain Saracen, who gave us no food. The next day we were taken to the court, and they had a great awning spread, for the dwelling could not hold all the men and women who had come thither. Our guide cautioned us to say nothing until Baatu should have bid us speak, and then to speak briefly. He asked also whether you had already sent ambassadors to the Tartars. I said that you had sent to Keu Chan, but that you would not even have sent envoys to him and [a] letter to Sartach if you had not believed that they were Christians. Then they led us before the pavilion, and we were warned not to touch the ropes of the tent, for they are held to represent the threshold of the door. So we stood there in our robes and barefooted, with uncovered heads, and we were a great spectacle unto ourselves [J: presented quite a spectacle for them]. Friar John of Policarp had been there; but he had changed his gown, fearing lest he should be slighted, being the envoy of the lord Pope. Then we were led into the middle of the tent, and they did not require us to make any reverence by bending the knee, as they are used to do of envoys. We stood before him the time to say: "*Miserere mei, Deus*," [J: the *Miserere mei Deus* (i.e., Psalm 50, or 51 in the authorized version)] and all kept profound silence. He was seated on a long seat as broad as a couch, all gilded, and with three steps leading up to it, and a lady was beside him. Men were seated about on his right, and ladies on his left: and where the room on the women's side was not taken up by them, for there were only present the wives of Baatu, men occupied it. A bench with *cosmos* and big cups of gold and silver, ornamented with precious stones, was in the entry of the tent. He looked at us intently, and we at him, and he seemed to me to be about the height of my lord John de Beaumont, may his soul rest in peace. And his face was all covered at that time

with reddish spots. Finally he bid me speak, and our guide told us to bend the knee and speak. I bent one knee as to a man, but he made sign to me to bend both, which I did, not wishing to dispute over it. Then he bid me speak, and I, thinking I was praying God, having both knees bent, began my speech by saying [J: reflecting to myself that I could be at prayer, seeing I was on both knees, I took my first words from a collect, saying...]: "Oh lord, we pray God from whom proceedeth all good things, and who gave you these worldly goods, to give you hereafter celestial ones, for the former without the latter are vain." And as he listened attentively, I added : "You must know for certain that you shall not have the celestial goods unless you have been a Christian ; for God saith: 'He who shall have believed and have been baptized, shall be saved, but he who shall not have believed shall be condemned'." At this he quietly smiled, and the other Mo'als began clapping their hands, laughing at us, and my interpreter stood dumbfounded, and I had to reassure him that he be not afraid. Then silence being reestablished, I said: "I came to your son, because we had heard that he was a Christian, and I brought him [a] letter from the lord King of the French. He (i.e., Sartach) it is who has sent me here to you. You must know the reason why." Then he caused me to rise, and he asked your name and mine, and that of my companion and of the interpreter, and he had it all written down, and he also asked against whom you were waging war, for he had heard that you had left your country with an army. I replied: "Against the Saracens who are profaning Jerusalem, the house of God." He also asked whether you had ever sent envoys to him. "To you," I said, "never." Then he made us sit down, and had us given of his milk to drink, and they hold it to be a great honor when anyone drinks *cosmos* with him in his dwelling. While sitting there I was looking down, but he bid me turn my face up, either wishing to see me better, or on account of their sorcery, for they hold it to be a bad omen or sign, or as portending evil, if one sits before them with face turned down as if in sorrow, and especially so if he rest his chin or his cheek in his hand. Then we went out, and after a little while our guide came to us, and while conducting us to our lodging said to me: "The lord King requests that you remain in this country, but Baatu may not do this without the permission of Mangu Chan. So you and your interpreter must go to Mangu Chan. As to your companion and the other man, they will go back to Sartach, where they will await your return." Then the interpreter Homo Dei began to lament, deeming himself lost, and my companion to declare that they might sooner cut off his head than separate him from me; and I said that without a companion I could not go, and moreover that we really required two servants, for should one happen to fall ill, I could not be left alone. So he went back to the court and told Baatu what I had said. Then he commanded; "Let the two priests and the interpreter go, and the clerk return to Sartach." He came back and told us the decision; but when I wanted to speak about the clerk, that he might come with us, he said: "Say no more about it, for Baatu has settled it, and I dare not go again to the court." The clerk Gosset had twenty-six *yperpera* of your alms and no more; of these he kept ten for himself and the boy,

and he gave the sixteen others to Homo Dei for us; and so we parted from each other with tears, he going back to Sartach, and we remaining there.

On the eve of the Assumption (14th August [1253]) he (Gosset) reached the *ordu* of Sartach, and the next day the Nestorian priests were dressed in our vestments in the presence of Sartach. As for us, we were taken to another host who was to provide us with lodgings, food and horses, but as we had nothing to give him he did it all meanly. We drove about with Baatu for five weeks, following the Etilia down its course. Sometimes my companion was so hungry that he would say to me, almost with tears in his eyes: "It seems to me I shall never get anything to eat [J: I feel as if I have never eaten]." The market always follows the *ordu* of Baatu, but it was so far away from us that we could not get there, for from lack of horses we had to travel afoot. Finally some Hungarians who had been clerks found us out, and one of them still knew how to sing with much expression [J: to chant many things by heart], and was looked upon by the other Hungarians almost as a priest, and was called to the burial of their dead; and another of them was well versed in grammar [J: had received a competent training in grammar], for he understood accurately all we said to him, though he could not reply. These men were a great consolation to us, bringing us *cosmos* to drink and sometimes meat to eat. I was greatly distressed when they asked me for some books, as I had none to give them, having only a Bible and a breviary. So I said to them: "Bring us tablets (*cartas*), and I will write for you as long as we are here." And this they did, and I wrote on both sides of them the hours of the Blessed Virgin and the office for the dead. One day a Coman joined us, who saluted us in Latin, saying: "*Salvite, domine!*" Much astonished, I returned his salutation, and asked him who had taught it him. He said that he had been baptized in Hungary by the brethren of our order, who had taught it to him. He said, furthermore, that Baatu had asked him a great deal about us, and that he had told him of the condition [J: rules] of our Order.

I saw Baatu riding with all his horde (*turba*); and all the heads of families were riding with him, but according to my estimate there were not over five hundred men. At last, about the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (14th September), there came a rich Mo'al to us, whose father was a chief of a thousand, which is a high rank among them, and he said: "I am to take you to Mangu Chan. The journey is a four months one, and it is so cold on it that stones and trees are split by the cold. Think it over whether you can bear it." I answered him: "I trust that, by the grace of God, we may be able to bear what other men can bear." Then he said: "If you cannot bear it, I shall abandon you on the road." I replied: "That is not right; we are not going of ourselves, but are sent by your lord, so, being entrusted to your care, you should not abandon us." Then he said: "All will be well." After that he made us show him all our clothing, and what seemed to him of little use he made us leave with our host. The next day they brought each of us a sheepskin gown, breeches of the same material, boots according to their

fashion, felt stockings, and hoods such as they use. The day after the Elevation of the Holy Cross (15th September) we started on our ride, with two pack horses for the three of us, and we rode constantly eastward until the feast of All Saints [=November 1st]. And through all that country and beyond, the Cangle used to live, and they were a branch (*parentela*) of the Comans. To the north of us was Greater Bulgaria, and to the south the Caspian Sea.

After traveling twelve days from the Etilia, we found a great river which they call Jagac [=Iagac, the modern Ural R.], and it comes from the country of Pascatir in the north, and falls into this previously-mentioned sea (i.e., the Caspian). The language of Pascatir is the same as that of the Hungarians, and they are shepherds without any towns whatever, and on the west this country confines on Greater Bulgaria. From this country eastward, and on that side to the north, there are no more towns; so Greater Bulgaria is the last country with towns. 'Twas from this country of Pascatir that went forth the Huns, who were afterward the Hungarians; hence it is the same as Greater Bulgaria. Isidorus says that with their fleet horses they crossed the barriers which Alexander had built among the rocks of the Caucasus to confine the savage tribes, and that as far as Egypt all the country paid them tribute. They ravaged all the world as far as France, so that they were a greater power than are now the Tartars. With them also came the Blacs, the Bulgars and the Vandals. For from that Greater Bulgaria come the Bulgars, who are beyond the Danube near Constantinople. And beside Pascatir are the Illac, which is the same word as Blac, but the Tartars do not know how to pronounce (the letter) B, and from them come those who are in the land of Assan. They call both of them Illac, the former and the latter. The language of the Ruthenians, Poles, Bohemians and Sclavons is the same as that of the Vandals, and the hand of all of them was with the Huns, as now is that of the greater part of them with the Tartars, whom God has raised up out of the remote parts of the earth, a mighty people but a stupid race, according to what the Lord saith: "I will move them to jealousy (that is, those who do not keep his law) with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." This is fulfilled to the letter as to all the nations who do not keep the law of the Christ. That which I have told of and of Pascatir I know from the preaching friars who went there before the advent of the Tartars, but since then it has been subjugated by the neighboring Saracen Bulgars, and some of the people have become Saracens. The rest may be learned from the chronicles, for it is a well established fact that those provinces from Constantinople (westward) and which were called Bulgaria, Blackia and Sclavonia were provinces of the Greeks, and that Hungary was Pannonia.

So we rode through the country of the Cangle from the feast of the Holy Cross (15th September [J: Sept. 14th]) to the feast of All Saints (1st November), and nearly every day we went, as well as I could estimate, about the distance from Paris to Orleans, and

sometimes more, according to the supply of horses. For sometimes we changed horses two three times in a day, while at others we went for two or three days without finding anyone, so we had to go slower. Out of twenty or thirty horses we, as foreigners, always got the worst, for they invariably took their pick of horses before us. They always gave me a strong horse, on account of my great weight; but I dared not inquire whether he rode easily or not, nor did I venture to complain if he proved hard, but I had to bear it all with equal good grace. Consequently we used to have to endure extreme hardships. Oft times the horses were tired out before we had reached the stage, and we had to beat and whip them, put our clothing on other pack horses, change our saddle horses for pack horses, and sometimes even the two of us ride one horse.

Sometimes out of number [J: There is no counting the times] we were hungered and athirst, cold and wearied. They only gave us food in the evening; in the morning we had something to drink or millet gruel while in the evening they gave us meat, a shoulder and ribs of mutton, and some pot liquor. When we had our fill of such meat broth, we felt greatly invigorated; it seemed to me a most delicious drink and most nourishing. On Fridays I fasted without drinking anything till evening, when I was obliged, though it distressed me sorely, to eat meat. Sometimes we had to eat half-cooked or nearly raw meat, not having fuel to cook it; this happened when we reached camp after dark, and we could not see to pick up ox or horse dung. We rarely found any other fuel, save occasionally a few briars. In a few spots along the banks of some of the streams were woods, but such spots were rare. At first our guide showed profound contempt for us, and was disgusted at having to guide such poor folk; but after awhile, when he began to know us better, he would take us to the yurts (*curia*) of rich Mo'al, where we had to pray for them, and if I had had a good interpreter, I [would of] had opportunities for bringing about much good. This Chingis, the first Chan, had four sons, whose descendants are very numerous; and these all have big *ordus*, and they multiply daily and are scattered all over this vast sea-like desert. Our guide took us to many of these, and they would wonder greatly at our not receiving gold, silver, or costly clothing. They inquired also of the great pope, if he were as old as they had heard, for they had heard that he was five hundred years old. They asked about our countries, if there were many sheep, cattle and horses there. As to the Ocean sea, they were quite unable to understand that it was endless, without bounds.

The eve of All Saints (31st October) we left the road to the east, for the people had already moved a good deal to the south, and we made our way by some alps due south continually for eight days. In that desert I saw many asses called *culam*, and they greatly resemble mules; our guide and his companion chased them a great deal, but without getting one, on account of their great fleetness. The seventh day we began to

see to the south some very high mountains, and we entered a plain irrigated like a garden, and here we found cultivated land. On the octave of All Saints (8th November) we entered a certain town of Saracens called Kinchat [=Kenjek], and its captain [i.e., governor] came out of the town to meet our guide, bearing mead (*cervisia*) [J: ale] and cups. For it is their custom that in all towns subject to them, they come out to meet the messengers of Baatu and Mangu chap with food and drink. At that season of the year there was ice on the roads in those parts, and even earlier, from the date of the feast of Saint Michel (29th September) we had had frost in the desert. I inquired the name of this province; but as we had already passed into another territory, they were unable to tell me anything beyond the name of the town, which was a very small one. And there came a big river down from the mountains, which irrigated the whole country wherever they wanted to lead the water, and it flowed not into any sea, but was absorbed in the ground, forming many marshes. There (at Kinchat) I saw vines, and twice did I drink wine.

The next day we came to another village nearer the mountains, and I inquired concerning these mountains, which I understood to be those of the Caucasus [*actually the Kirgizskii range], which confine at either extremity on the sea, from the west to the east, and which we had already crossed at the sea previously mentioned into which the Etilia flows. I asked also concerning the town of Talas in which were Teuton [=German] slaves of Buri, of whom Friar Andrew had spoken (to me), and concerning whom I had made much inquiry at the *ordus* of Sartach and Baatu. I was unable to learn anything concerning them, only the following circumstances of the death of their master Buri. Not finding his pasture lands good, one day while drunk he spoke to his men, saying: "Am I not of the race of Chingis Chan as well as Baatu? (for he was the nephew or brother of Baatu) Why should I not go to the banks of the Etilia like Baatu, to graze there?" Now these words were reported to Baatu, and he wrote to Buri's men, telling them to bring him their lord in chains, and this they did. Then Baatu asked if he had spoken such words, and he confessed that he had, though he sought to excuse himself as being drunk, for they usually condone the offences of drunken men. But Baatu replied: "How dare you mention my name in your drunkenness!" and he had his head cut off.

As to those Teutons I was unable to learn anything concerning them all the way to [J: until I reached] Mangu Chan's *ordu*, but in the village just referred to I gathered that Talas was beyond us in the direction of the mountains, vi days' travel. When I reached the *ordu* of Mangu Chan I gathered that Mangu had transported these Teutons, with Baatu's permission, the distance of a month's travel to the east of Talas, to a certain town called Bolat, where they are digging for gold and manufacturing arms, so I could neither go nor come back their way. However, in going I passed quite near that town

(of Bolat), perhaps three days from it, but I was unaware of it, nor could I have turned from my route if I had known it.

From the village I have mentioned we went eastward, close to the mountains above referred to, and from that point we entered among the subjects of Mangu Chan, who everywhere sang and clapped their hands before our guide, because he was an envoy of Baatu. For they show each other this mark of honor; the subjects of Mangu receive in this fashion the envoys of Baatu, and those of Baatu the envoys of Mangu. The subjects of Baatu, however, are the stronger, so they do not observe the custom so carefully [J: Baatu's people, however, give themselves rather more airs and are not as careful to observe the practice]. A few days later we entered the alps in which the Caracatai used to live, and there we found a great river which we had to pass in a boat. After that we entered a valley, where we saw a ruined camp [J: fort], whose walls were nothing but mud, and the soil was cultivated there. And after that we found a goodly town, called Equius, in which were Saracens speaking Persian, though they were a very long way off from Persia. The next day, having crossed these alps which project from the high mountains in the south, we entered a beautiful plain with high mountains to the right, and a sea or lake which is twenty-five days [J: fifteen days (*according to Rockhill, the MSS. differ on this point)] in circumference to the left. And all this plain is well watered by the streams which come down from the mountains, and all of which flow into this sea. In the summer time we came back along the north shore of this sea, and there likewise were great mountains. In this plain there used to be many towns, but most of them were destroyed, so that the Tartars might graze there, for there were most excellent pasturages in that country. We found there a big town called Cailac [=Qayaligh], where there was a market, and many traders frequented it. Here we rested twelve days, waiting for a certain secretary of Baatu, who was to be associated with our guide in the matters to be settled at Mangu's *ordu*. This country used to be called Organum [=Urgench, the region's capitol city], and the people used to have a language and letters of their own [=Sogdian]; but now it is all occupied by Turcomans. Moreover, the Nestorians of those parts used to perform their services in that language, and write books in those letters, and perhaps it was by them that those people were called Organa on account, as was told me, of their having been excellent guitar players (or *organiste*). 'Twas here I first saw idolaters [=Buddhists], of whom you must know there are many sects in the east.

[Buddhists and Buddhism]

The first are the Iugurs, whose country confines on this said country of Organum, being situated among the mountains to the east of it; and in all their towns is found to mixture of Nestorians and Saracens, and they are also scattered about towards Persia

in the towns of the Saracens. In the said city of Cailac they had three idol temples, two of which I entered to see their foolishness. In the first one I found a person who had a little cross in ink on his hand, whence I concluded he was a Christian, and to all that I asked him he replied that he was a Christian. So I asked him: "Why have you not here the Cross and the figure of Jesus Christ?" And he replied: "It is not our custom." So I concluded that they were Christians, but had omitted this through some doctrinal error. I noticed there behind a chest which served in the place of altar and on which they put lamps and offerings, a winged image like Saint Michel, and other images like bishops holding their fingers as if blessing. That evening I could find out nothing more, for the Saracens shun these (idolaters) so much that they will not even speak of them, and when I asked Saracens concerning the rites of these people, they were scandalized. The day following was the first of the month and the Easter of the Saracens, and I changed my host and was lodged near another idol temple, for the people entertain envoys each as he may and according to his ability. Going into this idol temple I found the priests of the idols there, for on the first of the month they throw open the temples and put on their sacerdotal vestments, offer (incense, hang up lamps and offer) the oblations of bread and fruit of the people. Now, in the first place, I will tell you of the rites common to all idolaters, and after that of those of the Iugurs, who form as it were a sect distinct from the others. They all worship to the north, with joined hands, prostrate themselves to the ground with bended knees, placing their foreheads on their hands. As a result of this, the Nestorians in those parts never join their hands in praying, but pray with their hands held extended before the breast.

They (the idolaters) place their temples east and west; on the north side they make an alcove projecting out like a choir, or sometimes, if the building is square, it is in the middle of the building. So they shut off on the north side an alcove in place of a choir [J: if the building is square, they partition off an alcove inside, in the middle of the north side, corresponding to the choir], and there they put a coffer as long and as broad as a table, and after [i.e., behind] that coffer to the south they place the chief idol, and that which I saw at Caracorum was as large as we paint Saint Christopher. And a Nestorian who had come from Cathay told me that in that country there is an idol so big that it can be seen from two days off. And they place other idols around about (the principal one), all most beautifully gilt. And on that coffer, which is like a table, they put lamps and offerings. Contrary to the custom of the Saracens, all the doors of the temples open to the south. They also have big bells like ours: 'tis for this reason, I think, that the eastern Christians do not have any. The Ruthenians, however, have them, and so do the Greeks in Gazaria.

All the priests (of the idolaters) shave their heads [J: shave the head and beard completely], and are dressed in saffron color, and they observe chastity from the time they shave their heads, and they live in congregations of one or two hundred. On the

days when they go into the temple, they place two benches, and they sit in the region of the choir but opposite the choir [J: they put down two benches and sit on the ground opposite one another in facing rows like choirs], with books in their hands, which they sometimes put down on these benches; and they keep their heads uncovered as long as they are in the temple, reading in silence and keeping silence. And when I went into one of their temples at Caracarum, and found them thus seated, I tried every means of inducing them to talk, but was unable to do so. Wherever they go they have in their hands a string of one or two hundred beads, like our rosaries, and they always repeat these words, *on mani baccam*, which is, "God, thou knowest," as one of them interpreted it to me, and they expect as many rewards from God as they remember God in saying this. Around their temple they make a fine courtyard well surrounded by a wall, and in the side of this facing the south, they make the main gate where they sit and talk. And over this gate they set up a long pole, which, if it be possible, rises above the whole city, and by this pole it may be known that this building is an idol temple. This practice is common to all idolaters. When I went into the idol temple I was speaking of, I found the priests seated in the outer gate, and when I saw them with their shaved faces they seemed to me to be Franks, but they had barbarian miters on their heads [J: but the mitres they were wearing on their heads were of paper]. These Iugur priests have the following dress: wherever they go they are always dressed in rather tight saffron-colored tunics, over which is a girdle like the Franks, and they have a stole (*pallium*) over their left shoulder, passed round the chest and the back to the right side, like the chasuble (*casula*) worn by a deacon in Lent.

The Tartars have adopted their (i.e., the Uigurs') letters [J: Their alphabet has been adopted by the Tartars]. They begin writing at the top, and run the line downward; and in like manner they read it, and they make the lines to follow each other from left to right. They make great use of drawings and letters for their sorcery [J: they make frequent use of characters written on paper in their witchcraft], so their temples are full of short sentences (*brevibus*) hung up there. The letter with [which] Mangu Chan sends us is in the Mo'al language, but in their script.

They burn their dead according to the custom of the ancients [J: following a long established custom], and put the ashes in the top of pyramids.

When then I had sat down beside these priests, after having been in the temple and seen their many idols, great and small, I asked them what they believed concerning God. They answered: "We only believe that there is one God." Then I asked: "Do you believe he is a spirit, or something corporeal?" "We believe that he is a spirit," they said. "Do you believe that he has never taken upon him human nature?" They said: "Never." "Then," said I, "if you believe that he is one and a spirit, why do you make him bodily images, and so many? Furthermore, if you do not believe that he became man, why do you make him in human shape rather than in that of some animal?" Then

they replied: "We do not make these images to (of) God [J: for God], but when some rich person among us dies, his son, or wife, or someone dear to him, has made an image of the deceased, and puts it here, and we revere it in memory of him." Then I said: "Then you only make these out of flattery for man." "Only," they said, "in remembrance." Then they asked me, as if in derision: "Where is God ?" "To which I said: "Where is your soul?" "In our body," they said. I replied: "Is it not everywhere in your body, and does it not direct the whole of it, and, nevertheless, is invisible? So God is everywhere, and governs all things, though invisible, for He is intelligence and wisdom." Then, just as I wanted to continue reasoning with them, my interpreter got tired, and would no longer express my words, so he made me stop talking [J: my interpreter, who was tired and incapable of finding the right words, made me stop talking].

The Mo'al or Tartars who are of this sect, though they believe in one God, make nevertheless images of their dead in felt, and dress them in the richest stuffs, and put them in one or two carts, and no one dare touch these carts, which are under the care of their soothsayers, who are their priests, and of whom I shall tell you further on. These soothsayers are always before the *ordu* of Mangu and of other rich people, for the poor have none, but only those of the family of Chingis. And when they are on the march, these (soothsayers) precede them as the pillar of a cloud did the children of Israel, and they decide where to pitch the camp, and when they have set down their dwellings, all the *ordu* follows them. And when a feast day comes about, or the first of the month, they take their images and arrange them in a circle in their house. Then the Mo'al come, enter the house, and bow before the images and do them reverence. And no stranger may enter that house. I tried to force my way into one hut, but was most rudely treated [J: was given a very sharp reprimand].

Those Iugurs who live interspersed with the Christians and Saracens, through frequent disputations, as I believe, have reached the point of having no belief but that in a single God. These Iugurs used to inhabit the cities which first obeyed Chingis Chan, who therefore gave his daughter to their king. And Caracarum is as it were in their territory, and all the land of the king of the Prester John and of Unc his brother, was round about this country, though they occupied the pasture lands to the north, while the Iugurs lived amidst the mountains to the south. So it happened that the Mo'al adopted their letters, and they are their best scribes, and nearly all the Nestorians know their letters. Beyond them to the east among those mountains are the Tanguts, most valiant men, who captured Chingis in war; and he, peace being made, and once freed by them, subdued them. These people have very strong cattle, with very hairy tails like horses, and with bellies and backs covered with hair. They are lower on their legs than other oxen, but much stronger. They draw the big dwellings of the Mo'al, and have slender, long, curved horns, so sharp that it is always necessary to cut off

their points. The cows will not let themselves be milked unless sung to. They have also the temper of the bull, for if they see a man dressed in red they throw themselves on him to kill him.

Beyond these are the Tebet, a people in the habit of eating their dead parents, so that for piety's sake they should not give their parents any other sepulcher than their bowels. They have given this practice up, however, as they were held an abomination among all nations. They still, however, make handsome cups out of the heads of their parents, so that when drinking out of them they may have them in mind in the midst of their merry-making. This was told me by one who had seen it. These people have much gold in their country, so that when one lacks gold he digs till he finds it, and he only takes so much as he requires and puts the rest back in the ground; for if he put it in a treasury or a coffer, he believes that God would take away from him that which is in the ground. I saw many misshapen individuals of this people. Of the Tanguts I have seen big men, but swarthy. The Iugurs are of medium size, like us. Among the Iugurs the Turkie Coman language has its source and root. After Tebet are Longa and Solanga [=possibly NE Manchuria and Korea], whose envoys I saw at court, and they had brought with them more than ten big carts, each of which was drawn by six oxen. They are little men and swarthy like Spaniards, and they wear tunics like the chasuble (*supertunicale*) of a deacon, except with narrower sleeves. On their heads they wear a miter like a bishop's, except that in front it is slightly lower than behind, and it does not terminate in a point, but is square on top, and is of stiff black buckram, and so polished that it shines in the sun's rays like a mirror or a well-burnished helmet. And at the temples are long strips of the same stuff, which are fastened to the miter, and which stand out in the wind like two horns projecting from the temples. When the wind strikes it too violently, they fold them up across the miter over the temples, where they remain like a hoop across the head; and a right handsome ornament it is. And whenever the principal envoy came to court he carried a highly-polished tablet of ivory about a cubit long and half a palm wide. Every time he spoke to the Chan or some great personage, he always looked at that tablet as if he found there that he had to say, nor did he look to the right or the left, nor in the face of him with whom he was talking. Likewise, when coming into the presence of the lord, and when leaving it, he never looked at anything but his tablet.

Besides these people there is another, as I was assured, called Muc, who have towns, but who take no animals for themselves. There are, however, many herds and flocks in their country, but no one herds them; when anyone wants some, he goes to a hill and calls, and all the animals hearing the call come around him, and let him treat them as if they were tame. If an ambassador or any foreigner come to that country, they put him in a house, and give him all he requires, until his business has been settled; for

should a foreigner go about the country, his odor would cause the animals to run away and they would become wild.

There is also great Cathay, whose people were anciently I believe, called Seres. From among them come the best silk stuffs (which are called seric by that people), and the people get the name of Seres from one of their cities. I was given to understand that in that region there is a city with walls of silver and towers of gold. In that land are many provinces, the greater number of which do not yet obey the Mo'al, and between them and India there is a sea. These Cathayans are small men, who in speaking aspirate strongly through the nose, and in common with all Orientals, have small openings for the eyes. They are most excellent artisans in all manners of crafts, and their doctors know full well the virtues of herbs, and diagnose very skillfully the pulse; but they do not use diuretics, nor do they know anything about the urine [J: but they do not employ urine samples, not knowing anything about urine]: this I have seen myself. There are a great many of them at Caracarum, and it is their custom for all sons to follow the same trade as their fathers. 'Tis for this reason that they pay such a great tribute; for they give the Mo'al daily a thousand five hundred *iascots* or *cosmos* [J lacks "or *cosmos*"; an *iascot* is a piece of silver weighing ten marks; so this is fifteen thousand marks, exclusive of the silk tissues and the provisions which they receive from them, and the other servitudes which are put on them.

All these nations are in the mountains of the Caucasus, but on the north side of these mountains, and (they extend) as far as the eastern Ocean, and (this is) also to the south of that Sithia which the pastoral Mo'als inhabit, and whose tributaries they all are. And all of them are given to idolatry, and tell fables of a host of gods, and of deified human beings, and of the genealogy of the gods, as do our poets.

[*More Nestorians*]

Living mixed among them, though of alien race [J: alien status] (*tanquam advene*), are Nestorians and Saracens all the way to Cathay. In fifteen cities of Cathay there are Nestorians, and they have an episcopal see in a city called Segin [=Hsi-king], but for the rest they are purely idolaters. The priests of idols of the nations spoken of all wear wide saffron-colored cowls. There are also among them, as I gathered, some hermits who live in forests and mountains and who are wonderful by their lives and austerity [J: leading lives that are extraordinarily ascetic]. The Nestorians there know nothing. They say their offices, and have sacred books in Syrian, but they do not know the language, so they chant like those monks among us who do not know grammar, and they are absolutely depraved. In the first place they are usurers and drunkards; some even among them who live with the Tartars have several wives like them. When they enter church, they wash their lower parts like Saracens; they eat meat on Friday, and have their feasts on that day in Saracen fashion. The bishop rarely visits these parts,

hardly once in fifty years. When he does, they have all the male children, even those in the cradle, ordained priests, so nearly all the males among them are priests. Then they marry, which is clearly against the statutes of the Fathers, and they are bigamists, for when the first wife dies these priests take another. They are all simoniacs, for they administer no sacrament gratis. They are solicitous for their wives and children, and are consequently more intent on the increase of their wealth than of the faith. And so those of them who educate some of the sons of the noble Mo'al, though they teach them the Gospel and the articles of the faith, through their evil lives and their cupidity estrange them from the Christian faith, for the lives that the Mo'al themselves and the Tuins [=Buddhists, from Chinese *T'ao-yen*: "man of the path." The term properly refers only to priests but Rubruck applies it here to all Buddhists] or idolaters lead are more innocent than theirs.

On the feast of Saint Andrew (30th November) we left this city (of Cailac), and at about three leagues from it we found a village entirely of Nestorians. We entered their church, singing joyfully and at the tops of our voices: "*Salve, regina!*" [J: the *Salve Regina*] for it had been a long time since we had seen a church. Proceeding thence three days we came to the head of that province, at the head of the said sea [=probably L. Ala Köl, east of L. Balkhash], which seemed to us as tempestuous as the ocean. And we saw a big island in it. My companion approached its shore and moistened a cloth in it, and tasted the water, which was brackish, though drinkable. There opened a valley which came from out high mountains in the south-east, and there amidst the mountains was visible another big sea, and a river came through that valley from that sea into the first one, and there blows nearly continuously such a wind through that valley, that persons cross it with great danger, lest the wind should carry them into the sea. So we crossed this valley, following a northerly direction towards great mountains covered with deep snow, which then covered the ground. On the feast of Saint Nicholas (6th December) we began greatly accelerating our speed, for we already found no one, only those *iams*, that is to say those men who are stationed a day apart to look after ambassadors, for in many places in the mountains the road is narrow and the grazing bad, so that from dawn to night we would cover the distance of two *iams*, thus making of two days one, and we traveled more by night than by day. It was extremely cold, so we turned our sheepskins with the wool outside [J: so they lent us goatskins with the wool turned outside].

On the second Sunday [J: Saturday] in Advent (13th December) in the evening, while we were passing through a certain place amidst most terrible rocks, our guide sent me word begging me to say some prayers (*bona verba*), by which the devils could be put to flight, for in this gorge devils were wont suddenly to bear men off, and no one could tell what they might do. Sometimes they seized the horse, and left the rider; sometimes they tore out the man's bowels and left the body on the horse, and many

such things happened there frequently. So we chanted in a loud voice "*Credo in unum Deum*," when by the mercy of God the whole of our company passed thorough. From that time they began asking me to write cards (*cartas*) for them, to carry on their heads, and I would say to them: "I will teach you a phrase to carry in your hearts, which will save your souls and your bodies for all eternity." But always when I wanted to teach them, my interpreter failed me. I used to write for them, however, the "*Credo in Deum*" and the "Pater noster," saying: "What is here written is what one must believe of God, and the prayer by which one asks of God whatever is needful for man; so believe firmly that this writing is so, though you cannot understand it, and pray God to do for you what is written in this prayer, which He taught from His own mouth to His friends, and I hope that He will save you." I could do no more, for it was very dangerous, not to say impossible, to speak on questions of the faith through such an interpreter, for he did not know how.

After that we entered the plain in which was the *ordu* of Keu Chan, and which used to be the country of the Naiman, who were the real subjects of that Prester John. I did not at that time see this *ordu*, but on my way back. I will tell you, however, what befell his family, his son, and his wives. When Keu Chan died, Baatu wanted Mangu to be Chan. As to the death of this Keu I could learn nothing definite. Friar Andrew says that he died from some medicine which was given him, and that it was supposed that Baatu had had this done. I, however, heard another story. He had called upon Baatu to come and do him homage, and Baatu had started in great state. He was in great fear, however, he and his men, so he sent ahead one of his brothers, Stican [=Shiban, son of Jochi Khan] by name, and when he came to Keu, and had to present him the cup, a quarrel arose, and they killed each other. The widow of this Stican detained us a whole day, to go to her dwelling and bless it; that is, that we might pray for her. So this Keu being dead, Mangu was elected by the will of Baatu, and had already been elected when Friar Andrew was there.

Keu had a brother called Siremon [=Shiremün, Güyük's nephew], who on the advice of the wife of Keu and her vassals, went in great state toward Mangu as if to do him homage. In truth, however, he intended to kill him, and to exterminate all his *ordu*. And when he had already got to within a day or two of Mangu, he had to leave on the road one of his carts which broke down; and while the carter was fixing it, there came along one of Mangu's men who helped him; and he asked so much about their journey that the carter revealed to him what Siremon proposed doing. Then the other, leaving him as if he did not care about it, went to a herd of horses, and taking the strongest horse he could pick in it, rode day and night in great haste till he came to Mangu's *ordu*, and told him what he had heard. Then Mangu promptly called all his men, and caused to be made three [J: four] circles of men-at-arms around his *ordu*, so that no one could come in. The rest he sent against this Siremon, and they captured

him, for he did not suspect that his designs had become known, and led him with all his men to the *ordu*. When Mangu charged him with the crime, he at once confessed. Then he was put to death, he and the elder son of Keu Chan, and with them three hundred of the greatest men among the Tartars. And they sent also for their ladies, that they all might be whipped with burning brands to make them confess. And when they had confessed, they were put to death. A young son of Keu, too small to take part in or to know of the plot, was alone left alive, and to him reverted his father's *ordu* with all that belonged thereto in men and animals. And on our way back we passed by it, but my guides did not dare, either when going or when coming back, to turn off to it, for "the mistress of nations sat in sorrow, and there was no one to console her."

Again we ascended mountains, going always in a northerly direction. Finally, on the day of the Blessed Stephen (December 26th) we entered a plain vast as a sea, in which there was seen no hillock, and the following day, on the feast of St. John the Evangelist (December 27th), we arrived at the *ordu* of the great lord. When we were five days from it, an *iam* at whose (station) we were sleeping, wanted to send us by a round about road, over which we should have had to plod for more than fifteen days. And this, as I learnt, so that we might pass by Onankerule, which is at it were their original home, and in which is the *ordu* of Chingis Chan. Others, however, said that they had wanted to make the journey longer, so as to magnify their importance; and they are in the habit of doing this to persons who come from countries not subject to them. And it was with great difficulty that our guide obtained that we should travel the direct road, after they had detained us over this matter from dawn to the third hour. It was on this part of the journey that that secretary, the one we had waited for at Cailac, told me that in the letter that Baatu was sending to Mangu, it was stated that you asked for troops and aid from Sartach against the Saracens. At this I was much astonished and also annoyed, for I knew the tenor of your letter, and that there was no such request in them, only that you advised him to be the friend of all Christians, to exalt the Cross, and to be the enemy of all the enemies of the Cross. (I feared) that as those who had interpreted (your letters) were Hermenians from Greater Hermenia--great haters of the Saracens--they had perhaps through hatred and for the discomfiture of the Saracens, gratuitously translated as had suited their fancy [J: they had given a more forceful rendering]. I remained silent, saying nothing for or against this, for I feared to contradict Baatu's words lest I should be accused of trickery without reasonable cause. So we came on the day I have mentioned to the said *ordu*. To our guide was assigned a big dwelling, but to us [J: to the three of us] there was given a very small hut in which we could barely store our things, make our beds, and a little fire. Many came to see our guide, and there was brought him rice wine in long narrow-necked flagons, and I could not discern any difference between it and the best Auxerre wine, save that it had not the perfume of wine. We were called and closely

questioned as to the business which had brought us. I replied : "We have heard that Sartach was a Christian: we came to him. The King of the French sent him a sealed letter by us; he sent us to his father, his father sent us here. He must have written the reason why." They asked if you wanted to make peace with them. I replied "He sent to Sartach letters as to a Christian, and if he had known that he was not a Christian, he would never have sent him letters. As to making peace, I tell you that he never did you any harm. If he had done something for which you had to make war on him or his people, he would willingly, as a just man, make apology and ask for peace. If you without motive should want to wage war against him, or his people, we trust that God, who is just, would aid them." And they always wondered, repeating: "But why did you come, if you did not come to make peace?" For they are already so puffed up in their pride, that they believe that the whole world must want to make peace with them. Of a truth, if it were allowed me, I would, to the utmost of my power, preach throughout the world war against them. I did not, however, wish to clearly explain the reason of my coming, lest I should say something contrary to what Baatu had stated ; and so I gave as the only reason for my coming there that he (Baatu) had sent me.

[Christians at the court of the Khan]

The next day we were conducted to court, and I thought I could go barefooted, as in our own countries, so I left my shoes. Now, those who come to the court get off their horses about an arrow's flight from the dwelling of the Chan, and there the horses and the servants keeping the horses remain. So when we had alighted there, and while our guide went to the dwelling of the Chan, there came an Hungarian servant, who recognized us--that is our Order, and as they surrounded us and gazed at us as if we were monsters, especially because we were barefooted, and they asked us if we had no use for our feet, because they supposed that we would at once lose them, this Hungarian gave them the reason, telling them of the rules of our Order. Then came the grand secretary, who was a Nestorian Christian, and whose advice they nearly always follow, to look at us: and he examined us carefully, and called that Hungarian, of whom he made many inquiries. Then we were told to go back to our lodgings; and, as we were going back, I saw before the east end of the *ordu*, the distance of two crossbow shots from it, a dwelling with a little cross over it. Greatly pleased, and imagining there was something Christian there, I boldly went in, and found an altar right beautifully decked. For there was embroidered on a cloth of gold an image of the Savior, of the Blessed Virgin, of John the Baptist and of two angels, and the lines of the body and of the garments were marked out with pearls, and there was a great silver cross with gems in the angles and the middle, and many, other church ornaments, and an oil lamp having eight lights was burning before the altar ; and there was seated there an Hermenian monk, swarthy and lank, and he was dressed in a tunic of the roughest hair-cloth reaching halfway down to his shins, and over it he had a

stole of black silk lined with vaire, and under his hair-cloth garment he wore an iron girdle. As soon as we entered, and even before saluting the monk, we sang on our knees: "*Ave regina coelorum*," [J: the *Ave regina coelorum*] and he arose and prayed with us. Then, having saluted him, we sat down beside him, and he had a dish with some fire in it before him. We told him the cause of our coming, and he began encouraging us greatly, telling us to speak boldly, for we were the envoys of God, who is greater than any man. After that he told us of his coming there, saying that he had preceded us by a month, and that he had been a hermit in the country of Jerusalem, and that God had appeared to him three times, enjoining on him to go to the Prince of the Tartars. But as he neglected going, God threatened him the third time, striking him down to the ground, and saying that he should die if he did not go; and that he should say to Mangu Chan that if he would become a Christian, all the world would come under his rule, and that the Franks and the great Pope would obey him; and then he admonished me to speak in a like way. Then I answered "Brother, I will willingly advise him to become a Christian; for I have come to preach that to all men. I will promise him also that the French and the Pope will rejoice greatly, and will have him for a brother and a friend. But that they would become his slaves, and pay him tribute as these other nations, that will I never promise, for I should be speaking against my conviction." At this he remained silent. When we went to our lodgings, we found it cold and we had eaten nothing that day. We cooked a little meat, and a little millet with the broth of the meat to drink. Our guide and his companions had got drunk at the court and had little care of us. [At that time there were near to us] envoys of Vastacius [=John III Ducas Vatatzes, Emperor of Nicaea] but we did not know it. At dawn (the next day) some men from the court made us get up in all haste. I went with them bare-footed a little way to the dwelling of these envoys, and they asked them if they knew us. Then a Greek knight, recognizing our Order, and also my companion, whom he had seen at the court of Vastacius with Friar Thomas our provincial, he and all the envoys bore great testimony of us. Then they asked if you were at peace or at war with Vastacius. "Neither at peace," I answered, "nor at war," and they enquired how that could be. "Because," I said, "their countries are remote from each other, and they have nothing to do with each other." Then the envoy of Vastacius said that there was peace, and this made me cautious, and I kept silence.

That morning the tips of my toes were frozen, so that I could not thereafter go bare-footed. The cold in these regions is most intense, and from the time it begins freezing it never ceases till May; even in the month of May there was frost every morning, though during the day the sun's rays melted it. But in winter it never thawed, but with every wind it continued to freeze. And if there were wind there in winter as with us, nothing could live; but the atmosphere is always calm till April, then the wind arises. And when we were there, the cold that came on with the wind about Easter killed an infinite number of animals. But little snow fell there during the winter, but about

Easter, which was at the end of April, there fell so much that all the streets of Caracarum were full, and they had to carry it off in carts. They brought us from the *ordu* of the first (wife) sheepskin gowns and breeches and shoes, which my companion and the dragoman took; for my part I did not think I was in need of them, for it seemed to me that the fur gown I had brought with me from Baatu's sufficed me.

On the Octave of the Innocents (3rd January [J: Jan. 4th], 1254) we were taken to court; and there came certain Nestorian priests, whom I did not know to be Christians, and they asked me in what direction I prayed. I said "to the east." And they asked that because we had shaved our beards, at the suggestion of our guide, so as to appear before the Chan according to the fashion of our country. 'Twas for this that they took us for Tuins, that is idolaters. They also made us explain the Bible. Then they asked us what kind of reverence we wanted to make the Chan, according to our fashion, or according to theirs. I replied to them: "We are priests given to the service of God. Noblemen in our country do not, for the glory of God, allow priests to bend the knee before them. Nevertheless, we want to humble ourselves to every man for the love of God. We come from afar: so in the first place then, if it please you, we will sing praises to God who has brought us here in safety from so far, and after that we will do as it shall please your lord, this only excepted, that nothing be required of us contrary to the worship and glory of God." Then they went into the house, and repeated what I had said. It pleased the lord, and so they placed us before the door of the dwelling, holding up the felt which hung before it; and, as it was the Nativity, we began to sing:

"A solis ortus cardine Et usque terre limitem Christian canamus principem Natum
Maria virgine"

When we had sung this hymn, they searched our legs and breasts and arms to see if we had knives upon us. They had the interpreter examined, and made him leave his belt and knife in the custody of a door-keeper. Then we entered, and there was a bench in the entry with *cosmos*, and near by it they made the interpreter stand. They made us, however, sit down on a bench near the ladies. The house was all covered inside with cloth of gold, and there was a fire of briars and wormwood roots--which grow here to great size--and of cattle dung, in a grate in the center of the dwelling. He (Mangu) was seated on a couch, and was dressed in a skin spotted and glossy, like a seal's skin. He is a little man, of medium height, aged forty-five years, and a young wife sat beside him; and a very ugly, full-grown girl called Cirina, with other children sat on a couch after them. This dwelling had belonged to a certain Christian lady, whom he had much loved, and of whom he had had this girl. Afterwards he had taken this young wife, but the girl was the mistress of all this *ordu*, which had been her mother's.

He had us asked what we wanted to drink, wine or *terraccina*, which is rice wine (cervisia), or *caracosmos*, which is clarified mare's milk, or *bal*, which is honey mead. For in winter they make use of these four kinds of drinks. I replied : "My lord, we are not men who seek to satisfy our fancies about drinks; whatever pleases you will suit us." So he had us given of the rice drink, which was clear and flavored like white wine, and of which I tasted a little out of respect for him, but for our misfortune our interpreter was standing by the butlers, who gave him so much to drink, that he was drunk in a short time. After this the Chan had brought some falcons and other birds, which he took on his hand and looked at, and after a long while he bade us speak. Then we had to bend our knees. He had his interpreter, a certain Nestorian, who I did not know was a Christian, and we had our interpreter, such as he was, and already drunk. Then I said: "In the first place we render thanks and praise to God, who has brought us from so far to see Mangu Chan, to whom God has given so much power on earth. And we pray Christ, by whose will we all live and die, to grant him a happy and long life." For it is their desire, that one shall pray for their lives. Then I told him: "My lord, we have heard of Sartach that he was a Christian, and the Christians who heard it rejoiced greatly, and principally my lord the king of the French. So we came to him, and my lord the king sent him a letter by us in which were words of peace, and among other things he bore witness to him as to the kind of men we were, and he begged him to allow us to remain in his country, for it is our office to teach men to live according to the law of God. He sent us, however, to his father Baatu, and Baatu sent us to you. You it is to whom God has given great power in the world. We pray then your mightiness to give us permission to remain in your dominion, to perform the service of God for you, for your wives and your children. We have neither gold, nor silver nor precious stones to present to you, but only ourselves to offer to you to serve God, and to pray to God for you. At all events give us leave to remain here till this cold has passed away, for my companion is so feeble that he cannot with safety to his life stand any more the fatigue of traveling on horse-back."

My companion had told me of his infirm condition, and had adjured me to ask for permission to stay, for we supposed that we would have to go back to Baatu, unless by special grace he gave us permission to stay. Then he began his reply: "As the sun sends its rays everywhere, likewise my sway and that of Baatu reach everywhere, so we do not want your gold or silver." So far I understood my interpreter, but after that I could not understand the whole of any one sentence: 'twas by this that I found out he was drunk, and Mangu himself appeared to me tipsy. His speech, it seemed to me, however, showed that he was not pleased that we had come to Sartach in the first place rather than to him. Then I, seeing that I was without interpreter, said nothing, save to beg him not to be displeased with what I had said of gold and silver, for I had not said that he needed or wanted such things, but only that we would gladly honor him with things temporal as well as spiritual. Then he made us arise and sit down

again, and after awhile we saluted him and went out, and with us his secretaries and his interpreter, who was bringing up [J: foster-father to] one of his daughters. And they began to question us greatly about the kingdom of France, whether, there were many sheep and cattle and horses there, and whether they had not better go there at once and take it all. And I had to use all my strength to conceal my indignation and anger; but I answered: "There are many good things there, which you would see if it befell you to go there."

Then they appointed someone to take care of us, and we went to the monk. And as we were coming out of there to go to our lodgings, the interpreter I have mentioned came to me and said: "Mangu Chan takes compassion on you and allows you to stay here for the space of two months: then the great cold will be over. And he informs you that ten days hence there is a goodly city called Caracarum. If you wish to go there, he will have you given all you may require; if, however, you wish to remain here, you may do so, and you shall have what you need. It will, however, be fatiguing for you to ride with the court." I answered: " May the Lord keep Mangu Chan and give him a happy and long life! We have found this monk here, whom we believe to be a holy man and come here by the will of God. So we would willingly remain here with him, for we are monks, and we would say our prayers with him for the life of the Chan." Then he left us without a word. And we went to a big house, which we found cold and without a supply of fuel, and we were still without food, and it was night. Then he to whom we had been entrusted gave us fuel and a little food.

Our guide being about to return to Baatu, begged of us a carpet or rug which we had left by his order in Baatu's *ordu*. We gave it him, and he left us in the most friendly manner, asking our hand, and saying that it was his fault if he had let us suffer from hunger or thirst on the journey. We pardoned him, and in like manner we asked pardon of him and all his suite if we had shown them an evil example in anything.

A certain woman from Metz in Lorraine, Paquette [or Pascha] by name, and who had been made a prisoner in Hungary, found us out, and she gave us the best food she could. She belonged to the *ordu* of the Christian lady of whom I have spoken, and she told me of the unheard-of misery she had endured before coming to the *ordu*. But now she was fairly well off. She had a young Ruthenian husband, of whom she had had three right fine looking boys, and he knew how to make houses, a very good trade among them. Furthermore, she told us that there was in Caracarum a certain master goldsmith, William by name, a native of Paris: and his family name was Buchier, and the name of his father was Laurent Buchier.

She believed that he had still a brother living on the Grand Pont, called Roger Buchier. She also told me that he supported a young man whom he considered as his son, and who was a most excellent interpreter. But as Mangu Chan had given this said

master three hundred *iascot*, that is three thousand marks, and fifty workmen to do a certain work, she feared he would not be able to send his son to me. She had heard people in the *ordu* saying: "The men who have come from your country are good men, and Mangu Chan would be pleased to speak with them, but their interpreter is worth nothing." 'Twas for this that she was solicitous about an interpreter. So I wrote to this master of my coming, asking him if he could send me his son; and he replied that in that month [J: during that moon] he could not, but the following he would have finished his task and then he would send him to me.

We were stopping then with the other envoys [J: So, then, we were quartered with the other envoys]; for they do differently as regards envoys at the court of Baatu and the court of Mangu. At Baatu's court there is an *Iam* on the west side who receives all those who come from the west; and it is arranged in like fashion for the other quarters of the world. But at the court of Mangu all are under one *Iam*, and may visit and see each other. At the court of Baatu they do not know each other, and one knows not whether another is an envoy, for they know not each other's lodgings, and only see each other at court. And when one is summoned, another perhaps is not: for they only go to court when summoned.

We found there a certain Christian from Damascus, who said he had come for the Soldan of Mont Real and of Crac [=Karak], who wished to become the tributary and friend of the Tartars. Furthermore, the year before I arrived there, a certain clerk had come there from Acon, who called himself Raymond, but whose name was in truth Theodolus. He had started out from Cyprus with Friar Andrew, and had gone with him as far as Persia, and he brought certain instruments from Ammoritic there in Persia, and he remained there after Friar Andrew. When Friar Andrew had gone back, he went on with his instruments and came to Mangu Chan, who asked him why he had come; and he said that he was with a certain holy bishop to whom God had sent a letter from heaven written in letters of gold, and had ordered to send it to the lord of the Tartars, for he would become the lord of the whole world, and he must persuade men to make peace with him. Then Mangu said to him: "If thou hast brought these letters which have come from heaven and letters of your lord, then thou art welcome." He replied that he had been bringing letters, but that they and his other things being on an unbroken pack-horse, it had run away through forests and over hills, and he had lost everything. Now it is a truth that such accidents frequently do occur, so one must be very careful to hold one's horse when obliged to get off it.

Then Mangu asked the name of the bishop. He said that he was called Oto. And he went on to tell him of Damascus and of master William, who was clerk of the lord legate [J: and thus it was that he told the man from Damascus and Master William that he had been a clerk of the lord Legate]. Then the Chan asked him in whose kingdom he dwelt. And he answered that he was under a certain king of the Franks, who was

called King Moles. For he had before that heard of what happened at Mensura, and he wanted to say that he was one of your subjects. Furthermore, he said to the Chan that the Saracens were between the Franks and him blocking the way: that if the road were open they would send envoys and would gladly make a peace with him. Then Mangu Chan asked if he would take envoys to that king and that bishop. He replied that he would, and also to the Pope. Then Mangu had made a very strong bow that two men could hardly string, and two arrows with silver heads full of holes, which whistled like a pipe when they were shot. And he told the Mo'al whom he was to send with this Theodulus: "Go to the king of the Franks, to whom this man shall take you, and offer him these from me. And if he will have peace with us, and we conquer the land of the Saracens as far as his country, we will leave him all the rest of the earth to the west. If not, bring back the bow and the arrows to us, and tell him that with such bows we shoot far and hit hard."

Then he made this Theodulus leave his presence, and his interpreter was the son of master William, and he heard (the Chan) saying to the Mo'al : "Go with this man; examine well the roads, the country, the towns, the men and their arms." Then this young man upbraided Theodulus, saying that he did wrong to take envoys of the Tartars with him, who only went to spy. Then he answered that he would put them to sea, so that they would not be able to know whence they came nor how they had come back.

Mangu also gave the Mo'al his bull, which is like a plate of gold a palm broad and a half cubit long, and on it is written his order. He who bears it can command what he pleases, and it shall be done without delay. So when this Theodulus had come as far as Vastacius, and was wishing to pass on to the Pope, to deceive the Pope as he had deceived Mangu Chan, Vastacius asked him if he had letters of the Pope, since he was an ambassador and had to lead envoys of the Tartars. And when he was unable to show any letters, he seized him and took away from him all that he had got together, and threw him into prison. As to the Mo'al, he fell ill and died there. Vastacius, however, sent back to Mangu Chan by the attendants of the Mo'al the bull of gold, and I passed them on the road at Arseron (Erzerum) on the border of Turkie, and they told me what had befallen this Theodulus. Such adventurers wandering through the world, the Mo'al put to death when they can lay hands on them.

Then the feast of the Epiphany (6th January [1254]) was nigh, that Hermenian monk called Sergius told me that he would baptize Mangu Chan on that feast. And I begged him to do all in his power that I might be present, and be an eye-witness to it. And this he promised me. The feast came, but the monk did not call me; however, at the sixth hour [=Noon] I was called to court, and I saw the monk with the priests coming back from the court bearing his cross, and the priests had a censer and the Gospels [J: and a gospel]. Now on that same day Mangu Chan had had a feast, and it is his custom on

such days as his diviners tell him are holy, or the Nestorian priests say for some reason are sacred, for him to hold court, and on such days first come the Christian priests with their apparel, and they pray for him and bless his cup. When they have left, the Saracen priests come and do likewise. After them come the priests of idols, doing the same thing. The monk told me that (Mangu) believed only in the Christians but he wanted all to pray for him. But he lied for he believes in none, as you shall learn hereafter, and they all follow his court as flies do honey, and he gives to all, and they all believe that they are his favorites, and they all prophesy blessings to him.

So we sat for a long time before his *ordu* and they brought us meat to eat, but I told them that we would not eat there, but that if they wished to provide us with food they should give it to us in our dwelling. Then they said: "Go then to your dwelling, for you have only been called to eat." So we went back by way of the monk's, ashamed of the lie he had told us, and to whom I would not therefore speak of that matter. Some of the Nestorians, however, wanted to assure me that he (Mangu) had been baptized; I told them that I would never believe it, nor say so to others, for I had not seen it.

We came to our cold and empty dwelling. They had supplied us with couches and bed covering, and brought us fuel, and given to the three of us the flesh of one poor, thin sheep for food for six days. Daily they gave us a bowl full of millet and a quart of millet mead, and they borrowed for us a kettle and a tripod to cook our meat; and when it was cooked we boiled the millet in the pot liquor. This was our diet; and it would have been quite sufficient, if they had let us eat in peace. But there were so many suffering from want of food, who as soon as they saw us getting our meal ready, would push in on us, and who had to be given to eat with us. Then I experienced what martyrdom it is to give in charity when in poverty.

At that time the cold began to grow intense, and Mangu Chan sent us three gowns of papion skins, which they wear with the fur outside, and these we received in thankfulness. They inquired also whether we had all the food we required. I told them that a little food sufficed us, but that we had no house in which we could pray for Mangu Chan; for our hut was so small that we could not stand up in it, nor open our books as soon as we lit the fire. So they reported these words to him, and he sent to the monk to know whether he would like our company, and he replied cheerfully that he would. From then on we had a better dwelling, living with the monk before the *ordu*, where no one lodged except ourselves and their diviners; but these latter were nearer and in front of the *ordu* of the first lady, while we were on the extreme eastern end, before the *ordu* of the last lady. This was on the day before the octave of the Epiphany (12th January). The next day, that is on the octave of the Epiphany, all the Nestorian priests assembled before dawn in the chapel, beat the board, and solemnly sang Matins; then they put on their church vestments, and prepared a censer and incense. And as they thus waited in the court of the church, the first wife, called

Cotota Cater (*cater* is the same as "lady," Cotota is a proper name), entered the chapel with several other ladies, and her first-born son called Baltu, and some others of her children; and they prostrated themselves, the forehead to the ground, according to the fashion of the Nestorians, and after that they touched all the images with their right hand, always kissing their hand after touching them; and after this they gave their right hands to all the bystanders in the church. This is the custom of the Nestorians on entering church. Then the priests sang a great deal, putting incense in the lady's hand; and she put it on the fire, and then they incensed her. After that when it was already bright day, she began taking off her headdress, called *bocca*, and I saw her bare head, and then she told us to leave, and as I was leaving, I saw a silver bowl brought in. Whether they baptized here or not, I know not: but I do know that they do not celebrate mass in a tent, but in a substantial [J: permanent] church. And at Easter (12th April), I saw them baptize and consecrate fonts with great ceremony, which they did not do then.

And as we were going back to our dwelling, Mangu Chan came, and entered the church or oratory, and they brought him a gilded couch, on which he sat beside his lady, facing the altar. Then they summoned us, who did not know of the arrival of Mangu, and the door-keeper searched us, lest we had knives on us. I entered the oratory, with my Bible and breviary in my bosom. First I bowed to the altar, and then to the Chan, and passing to the other side, we stood between the monk and the altar. Then they made us intone a psalm according to our fashion and chant. "We chanted this prose: "*Veni, Sancte, Spiritus.*"

The Chan had brought him our books, the Bible and the breviary, and made careful inquiry about the pictures, and what they meant. The Nestorians answered as they saw fit, for our interpreter had not come with us. The first time I had been before him, I had also the Bible in my bosom, and he had it handed him, and looked at it a great deal. Then he went away, but the lady remained there and distributed presents to all the Christians who were there. To the monk she gave one *iascot*, and to the archdeacon of the priests another. Before us she had placed a *nasic*, which is a piece of stuff as broad as a coverlid and about as long, and a *buccaran* [=an expensive cotton cloth]; but as I would not accept them, they were sent to the interpreter, who took them for himself. The *nasic* he carried all the way to Cyprus, where he sold it for eighty bezants of Cyprus, though it had been greatly damaged on the journey. Then drink was brought, rice mead and red wine, like wine of La Rochelle, and *cosmos*. Then the lady, holding a full cup in her hand, knelt and asked a blessing, and the priests all sang with a loud voice, and she drank it all. Likewise, I and my companion had to sing when she wanted to drink another time. When they were all nearly drunk, food was brought consisting of mutton, which was at once devoured, and after that large fish which are called carp, but without salt or bread; of these I ate [J: of this I

partook sparingly]. And so they passed the day till evening. And when the lady was already tipsy, she got on her cart; the priests singing and howling, and she went her way. The next Sunday, when we read [J: the ...]: "*Nuptie facte sunt in Chana,*" [=There was a marriage in Cana (cf. John 2)] came the daughter of the Chan, whose mother was a Christian, and she did likewise, though with not so much ceremony; for she made no presents, but only gave the priests to drink till they were drunk, and also parched millet to eat.

Before Septuagesima Sunday, the Nestorians fast three days, which they call the fast of Jonah, that he preached to the Ninivites; and then also the Hermenians fast for five days, which they call the fast of Saint Serkis, who is one of the greater saints among them, and who the Greeks say was a canon [J: model for saints]. The Nestorians begin the fast on the third day of the week, and end it on the fifth, so that on the sixth day they eat meat. And at that time I saw that the chancellor, that is the grand secretary of the court, Bulgai by name, gave them a present of meat on the sixth day; and they blessed it with great pomp, as the Pascal lamb is blessed. He himself, however, did not eat (meat on Friday), and this is also the principle of master William the Parisian, who is a great friend of his. The monk directed Mangu to fast during the week, and this he did, as I heard say. So on the Sunday of Septuagesima (8th February), which is as it were the Easter of the Hermenians [J: Septuagesima Saturday (Feb. 8th), which for the Armenians is on a level with Easter], we went in procession to the dwelling of Mangu, and the monk and we two, after having been searched for knives, entered into his presence with the priests. And as we were entering a servant came out carrying some sheep's shoulder-blades, burnt to coals, and I wondered greatly what he could do with them. When later on I enquired about it, I learnt that he [the Chan] does nothing in the world without first consulting these bones; he does not even allow a person to enter his dwelling without first consulting them. This kind of divination is done as follows. When he wishes to do anything, he has brought him three of these bones not previously charred, and holding one, he thinks of the thing about which he wishes to consult it, whether he shall do it or not; and then he hands it to a servant to burn. And there are two little buildings beside the dwelling in which he lives, in which they burn these bones, and these bones are looked for diligently every day through-out the whole camp. When they have been charred black, they are brought back to him, and then he examines whether the bones have been split by the heat throughout their length. In that case the way is open for him to act. If, however, the bones have been cracked crosswise, or round bits have been started out of them, then he may not act. For this bone always splits in the fire, or there appear some cracks spreading over it. And if out of the three he finds one satisfactory, he acts [J: and should one out of the three be split cleanly he acts].

When then we were going into his presence, we were cautioned not to touch the threshold. The Nestorian priests carried incense to him, and he put it in the censer and they incensed him. They then chanted, blessing his drink ; and after them the monk said his benison, and finally we had to say ours. And seeing us carrying Bibles before our breasts, he had them handed him to look at, and he examined them very carefully. When he had drunk, and the highest of the priests had served him his cup, they gave the priests to drink. After this we went out, and my companion who had turned his face toward the Chan bowing to him, and following us in this fashion hit the threshold of the dwelling; and as we were proceeding in all haste to the house of Baltu, his son, those who were guarding the threshold laid hands on my companion, stopped him, and would not allow him to follow us; and calling someone, they told him to take him to Bulgai, who is the grand secretary of the court, and who condemns persons to death. But I was in ignorance of all this. When I looked back and did not see him coming, I thought they had detained him to give him lighter clothing, for he was feeble, and so loaded down with furs that he could scarcely walk. Then they called our interpreter, and made him stay [J: sit] with him.

We on our side [J: We for our part] went to the house of the eldest son of the Chan, who has already two wives, and who lodges on the right side of his father's *ordu*; and as soon as he saw us coming, he got up from the couch on which he was seated, and prostrated himself to the ground, striking the ground with his forehead, and worshipping the cross. Then getting up, he had it placed on high in the most honored place beside him. He had as a master a certain Nestorian priest, David by name, a great drunkard, who was teaching him. Then he made us sit down, and had given the priests to drink. And he also drank, after having been blessed by them.

Then we went to the *ordu* of the second lady, who is called Cota [=Qotai], and who is an idol follower, and we found her lying ill in bed. The monk obliged her to get up from her bed, and made her worship the cross with bended knees and prostrations, the forehead on the ground, he standing with the cross on the west side of the dwelling, and she on the east side. When this was done, they changed places, and the monk went with the cross to the east side, and she to the west; and he commanded her boldly, though she was so feeble she could scarcely stand on her feet, to prostrate herself three times, worshipping the cross facing the east, in Christian fashion: and this she did. And he showed her how to make the sign of the cross before her face. After that, when she had lain down again on her bed, prayers having been said for her, we went to a third house in which the Christian lady used to live. On her death she was succeeded by a young girl who, together with the daughter of the lord (Mangu?), received us joyfully, and all they in this house worshipped the cross most devoutly; and she had it placed in a high place on a silk cloth, and had food brought, to wit, mutton, and it was placed before the master (mistress?), who caused her to distribute it

to the priest. I and the monk, however, took neither food nor drink. When the meat had been devoured and a great deal of liquor drunk, we had to go to the apartment of that damsel Cherina, which was behind the big *ordu* which had been her mother's; and when the cross was brought in she prostrated herself to the ground, and worshipped it right devoutly, for she had been well instructed in that, and she placed it in a high place on a piece of silk ; and all these pieces of stuff on which the cross was put belonged to the monk.

A certain Hermenian who had come with the monk had brought this said cross from Jerusalem, as he said. It was of silver, weighing perhaps four marks, and had four gems in the angles and one in the center; and it did not have the image of the Savior, for the Hermenians and Nestorians are ashamed to show the Christ fixed to the Cross. And they had presented it to Mangu Chan, and Mangu asked him what he wanted. Then he said he was the son of an Hermenian priest, whose church had been destroyed by the Saracens, and he asked his help to restore this church. Then (Mangu) asked him with how much it could be rebuilt, and he said two hundred *iascot*-that is two thousand marks. And he ordered that he should be given letters to him who receives the tribute in Persia and Greater Hermenia, to pay him this sum of silver. The monk carried this cross with him everywhere, and the priests seeing how he profited thereby began to envy him.

So we were in the dwelling of this damsel, and she gave the priests much to drink. Thence we went to a fourth house, which was the last as to its position and its importance. For he (i.e., Mangu) did not frequent that lady, and her dwelling was old, and she herself little pleasing; but after Easter the Chan made her a new house and new carts. She, like the second, knew little or nothing of Christianity, but followed the diviners and idolaters. However, when we went in she worshipped the Cross, just as the monk and priests had taught her. There again the priests drank; and thence we went back to our oratory, which was near by, the priests singing with great howling in their drunkenness, which in those parts is not reprehensible in man or in woman.

Then my companion was brought in and the monk chided him most harshly, because he had touched the threshold. The next day came Bulgai, who was the judge, and he closely inquired whether anyone had warned us to be careful about touching the threshold, and I answered "My lord, we had no interpreter with us; how could we have understood?" Then he pardoned him, but never thereafter was he allowed to enter any dwelling of the Chan.

It happened after this that the lady Cota, who had fallen ill about the Sunday of Sexagesima (15th February), fell sick even unto death, and the sorcerers of the idolaters could do nothing to drive it out. Then Mangu sent to the monk, asking him what could be done for her, and the monk rashly replied that if she did not get well he

could cut off his head. Having made this promise the monk called us, telling us of the affair with tears, and begging us to keep vigils with him that night in the oratory; this we did. And he had a certain root called rhubarb, and he chopped it up till it was nearly powder, and put it in water with a little cross which he had, and on which was a raised image of the Savior [J: on which had been set in relief an effigy of the savior], and by which he said he could find out whether a sick person would recover or die. If he was to escape, it stuck on the sick person's breast as if glued there; if not, it did not stick. And I thought that this rhubarb was something holy which he had brought from Jerusalem in the Holy Land. And he was in the habit of giving this water to drink to all sick persons, and it could not be but their bowels were stirred up by such a bitter draught. But they considered this movement in their bodies something miraculous.

Then I said to him, as he was preparing it, to make the potion with holy water as is done in the Church of Rome, for it has great virtue in expelling devils, for we supposed that she was beset of a devil; and at his request we made him holy water, and he mixed rhubarb in it, and put the cross to soak in it the whole night. I told him also that if he was a priest, the sacerdotal order had great power in expelling devils. And he said he was; but he lied, for he had taken no orders, and did not know a single letter, but was a cloth weaver, as I found out in his own country, which I went through on my way back.

The next day then we went to this lady, the monk, I, and two Nestorian priests, and she was in a little (tent) behind her larger dwelling. When we went in, she got up from her couch, worshipped the Cross, put it reverently beside her on a silk cloth, drank some holy water and rhubarb, and washed her breast (with it); and the monk requested me to read the Gospel over her. I read the Passion of the Lord according to John. Finally she revived and felt better, and she caused to be brought four *iascot* of silver, which she first put at the foot of the Cross, and then gave one to the monk, and she held out one to me, which I would not receive. Then the monk held out his hand and took it. And to either of the priests she gave one; so she gave that time forty marks. Then she had wine brought, and gave the priests to drink, and I also had to drink three times at her hand in honor of the Trinity. She also began to teach me the language, joking with me because I was silent, not having an interpreter with me [J: making fun of me because my lack of an interpreter made me dumb].

The next day we again went back to her, and Mangu Chan, hearing that we had passed that way, made us come in unto him, because he had heard that the lady was better; and we found him with a few of his attendants, and he was drinking what looked like liquid mud, a dish made of paste [J: sipping liquid *tam*, which is a food made from dough] for the comforting of the head, and charred sheep's shoulder-blades lay before him, and he took the Cross in his hand; but whether he kissed it or worshipped it I did not notice, but he looked at it, asking I know not what [J: seeking something or other].

Then the monk asked permission to carry the Cross on high on a lance, for he had previously spoken to the monk about this, and Mangu replied: "Carry it as you like best." Then, having saluted him, we went to the said lady, and we found her well and bright, and she drank again of the holy water, and we read the Passion over her. But these miserable priests had never taught her the faith, nor advised her to be baptized. I sat there, however, silent, unable to say a word, so she again taught me some of the language.

The priests do not condemn any form of sorcery; for I saw there four swords half way out of their scabbards, one at the head of the lady's couch, another at the foot, and one of the other two on either side of the entry. I also saw there a silver chalice, of the kind we use, which had perhaps been stolen in some church in Hungary, and it was hung on the wall full of ashes, and on the ashes was a black stone; and these priests never teach that such things are evil. Even more, they themselves do and teach such things.

We visited her (i.e., Cota) on three days, so that she was completely restored to health. After that the monk made a banner covered with crosses, and got a reed as long as a spear, and we used to carry the Cross on high. I showed him the respect I would to my bishop [J: I showed him the deference due to a superior], because he knew the language. He did, however, many things which did not please me. Thus he had made for himself a folding-chair, such as bishops are wont to have, and gloves and a cap of (with) peacock feathers, and on it a little gold cross, which, so far as the cross went, pleased me well. He had rough claws, which he tried to improve with unguents. He showed himself most presumptuous in his speech. Furthermore these Nestorians used to recite I know not what verses, of a psalm according to them, over two twigs which were joined together while held by two men. The monk stood by during the operation; and other vanities appeared in him which displeased me. Nevertheless, we kept to his company for the honor of the Cross; for we used to carry the cross on high throughout the whole camp, singing [J: the ...] "*Vexilla regis prodeunt*," at which the Saracens were greatly astonished.

From the time when we reached the court of Mangu, he never moved his carts (*bigavit*) but twice toward the south; and then he began going back northward, which was toward Caracarum. One thing I remarked throughout the whole journey, which agreed with what I had been told by Messire Baldwin of Hainaut in Constantinople, who had been there, that the one thing that seemed extraordinary was that he ascended the whole way in going, without ever descending. For all the rivers flowed from east to west, either directly, or indirectly--that is to say, deflecting north or south. And I questioned priests, who had come from Cathay, who bore witness to it, that from the place where I had found Mangu Chan to Cathay was twenty days journey between south and east; while to Onan Kerule, which is the true country of the Mo'al, and

where is the *ordu* of Chingis, was ten days due east, and that all the way to these eastern parts there was no city. There were, however (they said), people called Su-Mo'al, which is "Mo'al of the waters;" for su is the same as "water." They live on fish and by the chase, for they have no flocks, no herds. Likewise to the north there is no city, but a people raising flocks, and called Kerkis [=Kirghiz]. There are also the Oengai [=Uriyangqai], who tie polished bones under their feet, and propel themselves over the frozen snow and on the ice, with such speed that they catch birds and beasts. And there is a number of other poor peoples to the north as far as they can extend on account of the cold, and they confine to the west on the land of Pascatir, which is Greater Hungary, of which I have spoken to you previously. The northern end of the angle is unknown, on account of the great cold. For there is eternal snow and ice there.

I asked (these same priests) about the monsters, or human monstrosities, of which Isidorus and Solinus speak. They told me they had never seen such, which astonished me greatly, if it be true [J: but (I) was told that such things had never been sighted, which makes us very much doubt whether (the story) is true]. All of these said nations, no matter how miserable they may be, must serve (the Mo'al) in some manner. For it was a commandment of Chingis, that no one man should be free from service, until he be so old that he cannot possibly work any more.

One day a priest from Cathay was seated with me, and he was dressed in a red stuff of the finest hue, and I asked whence came such a color; and he told me that in the countries east of Cathay there are high rocks, among which dwell creatures who have in all respects human forms, except that their knees do not bend, so that they get along by some kind of jumping motion; and they are not over a cubit in length, and all their little body is covered with hair, and they live in inaccessible caverns. And the hunters (of Cathay) go carrying with them mead, with which they can bring on great drunkenness, and they make cup-like holes in the rocks, and fill them with this mead. (For Cathay has no grape wine, though they have begun planting vines, but they make a drink of rice.) So the hunters hide themselves, and these animals come out of their caverns and taste this liquor, and cry "*Chin, chin,*" so they have been given a name from this cry, and are called *Chinchin*. Then they come in great numbers, and drink this mead, and get drunk, and fall asleep. Then come the hunters, who bind the sleeper's feet and hands. After that they open a vein in their necks, and take out three or four drops of blood, and let them go free; and this blood, he told me was most precious for coloring purples. They also told me as a fact (which I do not, however, believe), that there is a province beyond Cathay, and at whatever age a man enters it, that age he keeps which he had on entering.

Cathay is on the ocean. And master William told me that he had himself seen the envoys of certain people called Caule [=Kao-li: Korea] and Manse [=Man-tze:

southern China, still ruled by the Song], who live on islands the sea around which freezes in winter, so that at that time the Tartars can make raids thither; and they had offered (them) thirty-two thousand *tumen* of *iascot* a year, if they would only leave them in peace. A *tumen* is a number containing ten thousand.

The common money of Cathay is a paper of cotton [J lacks "of cotton"], in length and breadth a palm, and on it they stamp lines like those on the seal of Mangu. They (i.e., the Cathayans) write with a brush such as painters paint with, and they make in one figure the several letters containing a whole word. The Tebet write as we do, and have characters [J: figures] quite like ours. The Tanguts write from right to left like the Arabs, but they repeat the lines running upwards; the Iugur, as previously said (write) up and down. The ordinary money of the Ruthenians are skins of vaire and minever.

When we came (to live) with the monk, he advised us, in all kindness, to abstain from meat; that our servant would get meat with his servants; and that he would provide us with flour and oil or butter. This we did, though it greatly incommoded my companion on account of his weakness. Consequently, our diet consisted of millet with butter, or dough cooked in water with butter, or sour milk and unleavened bread, cooked in a fire of cattle- or horse-dung.

When came Quinquagesima (23rd February [J: Feb. 22nd]), which is the Carnival of all Eastern (Christians) [J: when all Eastern Christians abstain from meat], the great lady Cotata and her company fasted that week and she came every day to our oratory, and gave food to the priests and to the other Christians, of whom a great multitude gathered there that first week to hear the services; and she gave me and my companion each of us a tunic and trousers of grey samite, lined with silk wadding, for my companion had complained greatly of the weight of his fur gown. These I received for the sake of my companion, though I excused myself for not wearing such clothes. I gave what belonged to me to my interpreter.

The gate-keepers of the court seeing such a crowd pressing toward the church, which was just beyond the bounds of the court, the warders of the court sent one of their number to the monk, to tell him they would not have such a great multitude congregating there just beyond the court limits. Then the monk replied roughly that he wanted to know if they gave this as the order of Mangu, adding also some threats, as if he would make complaint of them to Mangu. So they forestalled him and accused him to Mangu, saying that he talked too much, and that too great a multitude met together at his talks.

After that, on Quadragesima Sunday (1st March) we were called to court, and when the monk had been so shamefully searched to see whether he had a knife that he of his own accord took off his shoes, we entered into the Chan's presence, and he had a

charred sheep's shoulder-blade in his hand, and was inspecting it; and then, as if reading on it, he began to reprimand the monk, asking why, since he was a man who ought to pray to God, he talked so much to men. I was standing behind with uncovered head, and the Chan said to him: "Why do you not uncover your head, when you come into my presence, as this Frank does?" [J adds: And he had me called nearer.] Then the monk in great confusion took off his hat, against the custom of the Greeks and Hermenians; and when the Chan had said many harsh things to him, we went out. And then the monk handed me the Cross to carry to the oratory, for such was his confusion that he did not want to carry it.

After a few days he made his peace with the Chan, promising that he would go to the Pope, and that he would bring all the nations of the west to owe him obedience. When he came back to the oratory after this conversation with the Chan, he began inquiring about the Pope, whether I believed he would see him, if he came to him on the part of Mangu, and if he would furnish him with horses as far as Saint James [=Santiago in N. Spain, a major pilgrimage site]. He inquired also concerning you, if I believed that you would send your son to Mangu. Then I warned him to be careful not to make lying promises to Mangu, for he would be making a new mistake more serious than the first, and that God did not want lies from us, or that we should speak deceitfully.

At this time there arose a controversy between the monk and a certain priest called Jonas, a well-read man, whose father had been archdeacon, and whom the other priests looked upon as a teacher and archdeacon. For the monk said that man had been made before paradise, and that the Gospel said so. Then I was called upon to decide this question. I, without knowing that they were arguing on the subject, replied that the paradise had been made the third day, when also all the trees were; and that man had been made on the sixth day. Then the monk began to say: "Did not the devil on the first day bring earth from the four parts of the world, and having made mud of it, did he not make the human body, and did not God breathe a soul into it?" Hearing the Manichean heresy, and he thus publicly and impudently proclaiming it, I upbraided him sharply, telling him to put his finger on his mouth, since he did not know the Scriptures, and to be careful not to tell the reason of his fault. But he began to scoff at me, because I did not know the language. So I left him and went to our dwelling.

After that it happened that he and the priests went in procession to the court, without telling me, for the monk was not speaking to me on account of this scolding, and he did not want to take me with him as he used to do. So when they came into the presence of Mangu, and he did not see me among them, he inquired where I was, and why I had not come with them. But the priests were afraid, and excused themselves [J: the priests were alarmed and offered excuses]. When they came back they told me what Mangu had said, and complained of the monk. After that the monk made his peace with me, and I with him, begging him to help me with the language, and that I

would help him with the Sacred Scriptures. For "the brother who is aided by the brother is like a strong city."

After the first week of the fast, the lady ceased to come to the oratory and to give the food and mead we were accustomed to get. The monk did not allow (any food) to be brought, saying that mutton tallow was used in preparing it. He only very rarely gave us oil. Consequently, we had nothing save bread cooked on the ashes, and dough boiled in water, so that we could have soup to drink, as the only water we had was melted snow or ice, and was very bad. Then my companion began to complain greatly; so I told our necessity to that David, who was the teacher of the eldest son of the Chan, and he reported my words to the Chan, who had us given wine and flour and oil. The Nestorians will not eat fish during Lent, neither will the Hermenians; so they gave us a skin of wine. The monk said he only ate on Sunday, when this lady sent him a meal of cooked dough with vinegar to drink. But he had beside him, under the altar, a box with almonds and raisins and prunes, and many other fruits, which he ate all through the day whenever he was alone. We ate once a day, and then in great misery; for it was known that Mangu Chan had given us wine, so they pushed their way in on us like dogs in the most impudent manner, both the Nestorian priests, who were getting drunk all day at court, and the Mo'al, and the servants of the monk. Even the monk himself, when someone came to him to whom he wished to give drink, would send to us for wine. So it was that that wine brought us more vexation than comfort, for we could not refuse to give of it without causing scandal; if we should give it, we would want it; nor would we dare ask for more from the court, when that was done.

Toward the middle of Lent [March 22nd], the son of master William arrived bringing a beautiful crucifix, made in French style, with a silver image of the Christ fixed on it. Seeing it, the monks and priests stole it [J (correcting Rockhill): though when they saw this (i.e., the effigy), the monks and the priests removed it], though he was to have presented it from his master to Bulgai, the grand secretary of the court; when I heard of this I was greatly scandalized. This young man also informed Mangu Chan that the work he had ordered to be done was finished; and this work I shall here describe to you.

[The Khan's palace at Karakorum]

Mangu had at Caracarum a great palace, situated next to the city walls, enclosed within a high wall like those which enclose monks' priories among us. Here is a great palace, where he has his drinkings twice a year: once about Easter, when he passes there, and once in summer, when he goes back (westward). And the latter is the greater (feast), for then come to his court all the nobles, even though distant two months journey; and then he makes them largess of robes and presents, and shows his

great glory. There are there many buildings as long as barns, in which are stored his provisions and his treasures. In the entry of this great palace, it being unseemly to bring in there skins of milk and other drinks, master William the Parisian had made for him a great silver tree, and at its roots are four lions of silver, each with a conduit through it, and all belching forth white milk of mares. And four conduits are led inside the tree to its tops, which are bent downward, and on each of these is also a gilded serpent, whose tail twines round the tree. And from one of these pipes flows wine, from another *cara cosmos*, or clarified mare's milk, from another *bal*, a drink made with honey, and from another rice mead, which is called *terraccina*; and for each liquor there is a special silver bowl at the foot of the tree to receive it. Between these four conduits in the top, he made an angel holding a trumpet, and underneath the tree he made a vault in which a man can be hid. And pipes go up through the heart of the tree to the angel. In the first place he made bellows, but they did not give enough wind. Outside the palace is a cellar in which the liquors are stored, and there are servants all ready to pour them out when they hear the angel trumpeting. And there are branches of silver on the tree, and leaves and fruit. When then drink is wanted, the head butler cries to the angel to blow his trumpet. Then he who is concealed in the vault, hearing this blows with all his might in the pipe leading to the angel, and the angel places the trumpet to his mouth, and blows the trumpet right loudly. Then the servants who are in the cellar, hearing this, pour the different liquors into the proper conduits, and the conduits lead them down into the bowls prepared for that, and then the butlers draw it and carry it to the palace to the men and women.

And the palace is like a church, with a middle nave, and two sides beyond two rows of pillars, and with three doors to the south, and beyond the middle door on the inside stands the tree, and the Chan sits in a high place to the north, so that he can be seen by all; and two rows of steps go up to him: by one he who carries his cup goes up, and by the other he comes down. The space which is in the middle between the tree and these steps by which they go up to him is empty; for here stands his cup-bearer, and also envoys bearing presents; and he himself sits up there like a divinity. On (his) right side, that is to the west, are the men, to the left the women. The palace extends from the north (southward). To the south, beside the pillars on the right side, are rows of seats raised like a platform, on which his son and brothers sit. On the left side it is arranged in like fashion, and there sit his wives and daughters. Only one woman sits up there beside him, though not so high as he.

When then he heard that the work was finished, he ordered the master to put it in place and fix it well [J: to install it in position and to assemble it properly], and then toward Passion Sunday (29th March [1254]) he started out with his light tents, leaving the big ones behind him. And the monk and we followed him, and he sent us another skin of wine. And on the way we passed between mountains where there was

excessive wind and cold and much snow fell. So toward the middle of the night he sent to the monk and us, asking us to pray God to temper this cold and wind, for all the animals in the caravan were in danger, particularly as they were then heavy with young and bringing forth. Then the monk sent him incense, telling him that he himself should put it on coals and offer it to God. I know not whether he did this, but the tempest, which had already lasted two days, abated when the third day of it was already beginning.

On Palm Sunday (5th April) we were near Caracarum. At early dawn we blessed some boughs, on which no signs of budding had yet appeared. And toward the ninth hour we entered the city, with raised Cross and banner, and passed through the Saracen quarter, where there is a square and a market, to the church. And the Nestorians came to meet us in a procession. Going into the church, we found them ready to celebrate mass; and when it was celebrated they all communicated and inquired of me whether I wished to communicate [i.e., take the Eucharist]. I replied that I had already drunk, and could not receive the sacrament except fasting. When the mass had been said it was already after noon, so master William took us with great rejoicing to his house to dine with him; and he had a wife who was a daughter of Lorraine [J: of a Lorrainer], but born in Hungary, and she spoke French and Coman well. We found there also another person, Basil by name, the son of an Englishman, and who was born in Hungary, and who also knew these languages. We dined with great rejoicing, and then they led us to our hut, which the Tartars had set up in an open space near the church, with the oratory of the monk.

The next day the Chan entered his palace, and the monk and I and the priests went to him, but they did not allow my companion to go because he had trod upon the threshold. I had pondered much within myself what I should do, whether I should go or not; but I feared the scandal if I withdrew from the other Christians, and it pleased the Chan, and I feared it might interfere with the good I hoped to do; so I decided to go, though I saw that their sect was full of sorceries and idolatries [J: superstition and idolatry]. But I did nothing else while there but pray with a loud voice for the whole church, and also for the Chan, that God might guide him in the way of everlasting salvation.

So we entered the court, which is right well arranged; and in summer little streams are led all through it by which it is watered. After that we entered a palace all full of men and women, and we stood in the Chan's presence, with the tree of which I have spoken behind us, and it and the bowls (at its base) took up a large part of the palace. The priests had brought two little loaves of blessed bread, and fruit in a platter, which they presented to him, after saying grace. And a butler took it to him where he was seated on a right high and raised place; and he forthwith began to eat one of the loaves, and the other he sent to his son and to one of his younger brothers, who was

being brought up by a certain Nestorian, and he knows the gospel, and had also sent for my Bible to look at it.

After the priests, the monk spoke his orison, and I mine after the monk. Then he (Mangu) promised that he would come the next day to the church, which is rather large and fine, and the whole ceiling is covered with a silken stuff interwoven with gold. The next day, however, he went his way, telling the priests in excuse that he did not dare come to the church, for he understood that they carried the dead there. We remained, however, with the monk at Caracarum, together with the other priests of the court, to celebrate Easter there.

Holy Thursday and Easter were nigh, and I did not have our vestments, and I was considering the manner of doing of the Nestorians [J: I was observing the way the Nestorians consecrated], and was greatly worried about what I should do, whether I should receive the sacrament from them, whether I should say mass in their vestments, with their chalice and on their altar, or whether I should wholly abstain from the sacrament. Then came a great number of Christians, Hungarians, Alans, Ruthenians, Georgians, Hermenians, all of whom had not seen the sacrament since their capture, for the Nestorians would not admit them into their church, so they said, unless they were re-baptized by them. However (the Nestorians) had not told us anything of all this; on the contrary, they confessed that the Roman Church was the head of all churches, and that they should receive their patriarch from the Pope, if the roads were open. And they offered us freely their sacrament, and made us stand in the entry of the choir to see their way of doing, and, on Easter eve (11th April), beside the font to see their mode of baptizing. They said that they had some of the ointment with which Mary Magdalen anointed the feet of the Lord, and they always pour in oil to the amount they take out, and they knead it into their bread. For all the Eastern (Christians) put grease into their bread instead of yeast, or else butter or sheep's tail fat or oil. They also say that they have some of the flour with which was made the bread that the Lord consecrated, and they put back in it as much as they take out; and they have a room beside the choir, and an oven where they bake the bread, which they must consecrate with great devotion.

So they make a loaf of bread a palm broad with this oil, and then they divide it first into twelve pieces according to the number of the Apostles, and after that they divide these portions according to the number of the people, and a priest gives to each the body of Christ in his hand, and the person takes it from his hand devoutly, and touches the top of his head with his hand.

Then I made them confess through the interpreter as well as I could, stating the ten commandments and the seven mortal sins, and the others which one should shun and publicly confess. They excused themselves for theft, saying that without thieving they

could not live, for their masters did not provide them with either clothing or victuals. So, considering that they and their belongings had been carried off without just cause [J: At this I reflected that they (the Mongols) had carried off goods and livestock without justification], I said that it was permissible for them to take of their master's things what was necessary for them, and I was ready to say so to Mangu Chan's face. Furthermore, certain among them were soldiers, who excused themselves for being obliged to go to wars, for otherwise they would be put to death. I strongly forbade them to go against Christians, or to injure them they should rather let themselves be killed, for then they would become martyrs; and I said that if anyone wished to charge me to Mangu Chan with this teaching, I was ready to preach this in his hearing. The Nestorians from the court had approached while I was teaching, and I suspected that they might inform against us.

Then master William had made for us an iron to make wafers, and he had some vestments which he had made for himself; for he had some little scholarship, and conducted himself like a clerk. He had made after the French fashion a sculptured image of the Blessed Virgin, and on the windows surrounding it he had sculptured the Gospel history right beautifully, and he made also a silver box to put the body of Christ in, with relics in little cavities made in the sides of the box. He had also made an oratory on a cart, finely decorated with sacred scenes. I accepted his vestments and blessed them, and we made right fine wafers after our fashion, and the Nestorians gave me the use of their baptistery, in which was an altar. Their patriarch had sent them from Baldach a quadrangular skin for an antimensium, and it had been anointed with chrism; and this they used instead of a consecrated stone. So I celebrated mass on Holy Thursday (9th April) with their silver chalice and paten, and these vases were very large; and likewise on Easter day. And we made the people communicate, with the blessing of God, as I hope. As for them [the Nestorians] they baptized on Easter eve (11th April) more than sixty persons in very good order, and there was great rejoicing generally among all the Christians.

Then it happened that master William fell grievously ill; and, as he was convalescing, the monk, while visiting him, gave him rhubarb to drink, so that he nearly killed him. So when I called on him I found him in this distressing condition, and I asked him what he had eaten or drunk. And he told me how the monk had given him this drink, and how he had drunk two bowls full, thinking it was holy water. Then I went to the monk and said to him: " Either go as an apostle doing real miracles by the grace of the Word [J: prayer] and the Holy Ghost, or do as a physician in accordance with medical art. You give to drink to men not in a condition for it, a strong medicinal potion, as if it were something holy; and in so doing you would incur great shame, should it become known among men." From this he began fearing me, and warding himself from me.

It happened also at this time that the priest who was a sort of archdeacon of the others fell ill, and his friends sent for a certain Saracen diviner, who said to them: "A certain lean man, who neither eats, nor drinks, nor sleeps in a bed, is angered with him. If he can get his blessing, he may get well." So they understood that this referred to the monk, and toward the middle of the night the wife of the priest and the sister and the son came to the monk, begging him to come and give him his blessing. They aroused us also to ask the monk. And as we asked him he said: "Let him alone, for he and three others who go also in evil ways, have formed the project to go to court, to obtain of Mangu Chan that you and I be driven out of these parts."

Now there had been a dispute among them, for Mangu and his wives had sent on Easter eve four *iascot* and pieces of silk to the monk and the priests to be distributed among them, and the monk had kept one *iascot* as his share, and of the remaining three one was counterfeit, for it was of copper; so it seemed to the priests that the monk had kept too large a share for himself; and it may therefore well have been that they had had some talk among themselves, which had been repeated to the monk.

When it was daylight I went to the priest, who had a very sharp pain in his side and was spitting blood, whence I imagined that it was an abscess. I advised him to recognize the Pope as the father of all Christians, which he at once did, vowing that if God should give him health he would go throw himself at the Pope's feet, and would ask in all good faith that the Pope should send his blessing to Mangu Chan. I advised him also to make restitution, if he had anything belonging to another. He said he had nothing. I spoke to him also of the sacrament of extreme unction. He replied: "We have not that custom, nor do our priests know how to do it; I beg that whatever you do for me, you do it according as you know how to do." I told him also of confession, which they do not make. He spoke a few words in the ear of a priest, one of his associates; after that he began to grow better, and he asked me to go to the monk. I went. At first the monk would not come; finally, on hearing that he was better, he went with his cross; and I went carrying the body of Christ in the box of master William, having kept it from Easter day at his request. Then the monk began to stamp upon him with his feet, and the other kissed his feet in all humility [J: The monk then began to trample on (the bed of) the priest, who meekly embraced his ankles]. Then I said to him: "It is a custom of the Roman Church that sick persons partake of the body of Christ, as a viatic and protection against all the toils of the enemy. Here is the body of Christ which I have kept from Easter day. You must confess and desire it." Then he said with great faith: "I desire it with all my heart." And as I was about to expose it, he said with great earnestness: "I believe that this is my Creator and Savior, who gave me life, and will give it me again after death at the general resurrection." And so he received the body of Christ made by me, after the fashion of the Church of Rome.

The monk remained with him after this, and gave him, while I was away, I know not what potion. The next day he began to suffer unto death. So taking some of their oil, which they say is holy, I anointed him according to the fashion of the Church, as he had asked me. I had not any of our oil, for the priests of Sartach had kept everything. And as we were about to repeat the prayers for the dying, and I wanted to be present at his death, the monk sent me word to go away, for if I should be present I could not enter Mangu Chan's house till the year was up. When I mentioned this to his friends, they told me it was true, and they besought me to leave, so as not to interfere with the good I could promote.

When he was dead, the monk said to me: "Care not about it; I have killed him with my prayers. He was the only scholar, and was opposed to us. The others know nothing. However, all of them, Mangu Chan included, will come to our feet." Then he told me the above related answer of the diviner, which I did not believe, so I asked priests, friends of the deceased, if it were true. They said that it was; but whether he had been told beforehand, or not, they did not know.

After this I discovered that the monk had called this said Saracen diviner into his chapel with his wife, and had had dust sifted and had them divine for him by it. He had also a Ruthenian deacon with him who divined for him. When I had learned this, I was horrified at his ignorance, and I told him: "Brother, a man who is full of the Holy Ghost, who teaches all things, should not seek answers or advice from diviners; all such things are forbidden, and those who are given to them are excommunicated." Then he began to excuse himself, saying that it was not true that he sought such things. I was not, however, able to leave him, for I had been lodged there by order of the Chan, and I could not go elsewhere without his special order.

[Description of Karakorum]

Of the city of Caracarum you must know that, exclusive of the palace of the Chan, it is not as big as the [J: not as fine as the] village of Saint Denis, and the monastery of Saint Denis is ten times larger than the palace [J: is worth ten of the palace]. There are two quarters in it; one of the Saracens in which are the markets, and where a great many Tartars gather on account of the court, which is always near this (city), and on account of the great number of ambassadors; the other is the quarter of the Cathayans, all of whom are artisans. Besides these quarters there are great palaces, which are for the secretaries of the court. There are there twelve idol temples of different nations, two mahummeries [mosques] in which is cried the law of Machomet, and one church of Christians in the extreme end of the city. The city is surrounded by a mud wall and has four gates. At the eastern is sold millet and other kinds of grain, which, however, is rarely brought there; at the western one, sheep and goats are sold; at the southern, oxen and carts are sold; at the northern, horses are sold.

We arrived there following the court on the Sunday before Ascension (7th May [J: May 17th]). The next day we, the monk and all his household, were summoned by Bulgai, who is the grand secretary and judge, and all the envoys and foreigners who were in the habit of frequenting the monk's house; and we were separately called into Bulgai's presence, first the monk, and we after him; and they inquired most minutely whence we were, why we had come, what was our business. And this inquiry was made because it had been reported to Mangu Chan that forty Hacsasins [J: four hundred Assassins (*the sect mentioned above)] had entered the city under various disguises to kill him. About this time the lady of whom I have spoken I had a relapse, and sent for the monk, but he was unwilling to go and said: "She has called back the idolaters around her; let them cure her if they can. I shall go there no more."

On the eve of the Lord's Ascension (20th May) we went into all the houses of Mangu Chan; and I noticed that when he was about to drink, they sprinkled *cosmoson* his felt idols. Then I said to the monk: "What is there in common between Christ and Belial? What share has our Cross with these idols?"

Furthermore, Mangu Chan has eight brothers; three uterine, and five by the father. One of the uterine ones he sent to the country of the Hacsasins, whom they call Mulidet [J: Mulihet], and he ordered him to put them all to death. Another came toward Persia and has already entered, it is believed, the land of Turkie, and will thence send an army against Baldach and against Vastacius. One of the others he sent into Cathay, against those who do not yet obey him. His youngest uterine brother, Arabuccha [=Arigh Böke (d.1264)] by name, he keeps near him, and he holds the *ordu* of their mother, who was a Christian, and William is his slave. For one of his own brothers by the father had captured him in Hungary, in a city called Belgrade, where was also a Norman Bishop from Belevile near Rouen, with the nephew of a bishop, whom I saw in Caracarum. And he gave master William to Mangu's mother, for she insisted greatly on having him; and when she died, master William became the property of this Arabuccha, together with all the other things belonging to the *ordu* of his mother, and through him he became known to Mangu Chan, who after the completion of the work of which I have spoken, gave this master one hundred *iascot*, that is a thousand marks.

The day before Ascension (20th May), Mangu Chan said he wanted to visit his mother's *ordu*, for it was quite near; and the monk said he wanted to go with him and bestow his blessing on the soul of his mother. The Chan gave his approval. In the evening of Ascension day (21st May) the before-mentioned lady (i.e., Cota) grew a great deal worse, so that the chief of the diviners sent to the monk ordering him not to beat his board. The next day, when we left with all the court, the *ordu* of this lady remained behind. When we came to the place for pitching camp, the monk received orders to go farther away from the court than he was wont, which he did. Then

Arabuccha came out to meet his brother the Chan, and the monk and we perceiving that he would have to pass beside us, advanced toward him with the cross. He recognized us, for he had been previously to our oratory, and held out his hand and made the sign of the cross at us like a bishop. Then the monk got on a horse and followed him, carrying some fruit with him. He (Arabuccha) alighted before the *ordu* of his brother, to wait for him until he should return from the chase. Then the monk got down too, and offered him his fruit, which he accepted. And there were seated beside him two men of high rank at the court of the Chan, and they were Saracens. Arabuccha, who knew of the enmity which exists between the Christians and Saracens, asked the monk if he knew these Saracens. He replied: "I know that they are dogs; why have you got them beside you?" "Why," the latter asked, "do you insult us, when we have said nothing to you?" The monk said to them: "It is true what I say, you and your Machomet are low hounds." Then they began to blaspheme against Christ, but Arabuccha stopped them saying: "You must not speak so, for we know that the Messiah is God." In that very same hour there suddenly arose such a violent wind throughout the whole country, that it seemed as if devils were running through it; and after a little while there came reports that that lady (Cota) was dead.

The next day (22nd May) the Chan went back to his court (at Caracarum) by another way than that by which he had come; for it is one of their superstitions never to come back by the same road by which they go. And furthermore, wherever he sets his camp, after his departure no one may pass through the place where he has been, neither on horseback nor on foot, so long as there are any traces of the fire which has been made there.

That day some Saracens joined the monk on the road, provoking and disputing with him; and they, having the better of him, and he not knowing how else to defend his arguments, wanted to strike them with the whip he had in his hand. He behaved so that his words and actions were reported to the court, and orders were given us to get down (to camp) with the other ambassadors, and not in front of the court as we were in the habit of doing.

I had been constantly hoping that the king of Hermenia would come. Moreover, there had arrived about Easter a person from Bolat, where are those Germans, whom I had nearly gone there to see, and he had told me that a German priest was about coming to court; for these reasons I did not make any inquiries of Mangu about our remaining or leaving, though he had only given us permission in the first place to stay there two months, and four months had already gone by, not to say five. For these things took place about the end of May, and we had been there during the whole of January, February, March, April, and May. Not hearing, however, any news of the king (of Hermenia) or of this priest, and fearing lest we be obliged to go back in winter, the severity of which we had experienced, I had inquiry made of Mangu Chan what he

wanted to do with us, for we would willingly remain there permanently, if it pleased him; if, however, we must go back, it would be less trying for us to do so in summer than in winter. He at once sent me word not to absent myself, for he wanted to speak to me; he would send for the son of master William [J: to speak with me the following day. I replied that if he wished to speak with me he should send for Master Williams' son], for my dragoman was not competent. He who was speaking with me was a Saracen, and had been an envoy to Vastacius. And he, having been bribed [J: dazzled] with presents, had advised Vastacius to send ambassadors to Mangu Chan, and that in the meanwhile time would pass; for Vastacius believed that they (i.e., the Mongols) were about to invade his country at once. He sent, and when he had come to know them, he heeded them little, nor did he make a peace with them, nor have they yet entered his country; nor could they do so, so long as he dares defend himself. For they have never conquered any country by force of arms, but only by deceit; and it is because men make peace with them, that they work their ruin under cover of this peace. Then (this Saracen) inquired a great deal about the Pope and the king of the French, and concerning the roads leading to them. The monk, hearing this, cautioned me, unobserved, not to answer him, for he wanted to get himself sent as ambassador; so I was silent, and would answer him nothing. And he spoke to me I know not what injurious terms, for which the Nestorian priests wished to bring a charge against him, and he would have been put to death or soundly beaten; but I would not have it.

[Religious Debate at the Khan's Court]

The next day, which was Sunday before Pentecost (24th May [1254]), they took me to court; and the grand secretaries of the court came to me, and one was the Mo'al who handed the Chan his cup, and the others were Saracens, and they inquired on the part of the Chan why I had come. Then I repeated what has previously been said; how I had come to Sartach, and from Sartach to Baatu, and how Baatu had sent me thither; then I said to him: "I have nothing to say from the part of any man. (This he must have known from what Baatu had written to him.) I have only to speak the words of God, if he wishes to hear them." They interrupted me, asking what words of God I wished to speak, thinking that I wanted to foretell some piece of good fortune to him, as many others do. I replied to them: "If you want me to speak the words of God to him, procure for me the interpreter." They said: "We have sent for him; but speak (now) through this one as well as you can; we understand you very well." And they urged me greatly that I should speak. So I said: "Of him unto whom much has been given much [J: more] shall be required. And furthermore, of him to whom much has been given much love is required [J: He to whom more hath been given must love the more]. By these words of God I teach Mangu, for God hath given him great power, and the riches which he has were not given him by the idols of the Tuins, but by Almighty God, who made heaven and earth, in whose hand are all kingdoms, and who

removes it (i.e., power) from one nation to another on account of the sins of men. So if he shall love Him, it shall be well with him; if otherwise, he must know that God will require all things of him to the last farthing." Then one of the Saracens said: "Is there anyone who does not love God?" I replied: "God says: 'If one love me, he keepeth my commandments; and he who loveth me not keepeth not my commandments.' So he who keepeth not the commandments of God loveth not God." Then he said: "Have you been to heaven, that you know the commandments of God?" "No," I replied, "but He has given them from heaven to holy men, and finally He descended from heaven to teach us, and we have them in the Scriptures, and we see by men's works when they keep them or not." Then he said: "Do you wish, then, to say that Mangu Chan does not keep the commandments of God?" I said to him: "Let the dragoman come, as you have said, and I will, in the presence of Mangu, if it pleases him, recite the commandments of God, and he shall judge for himself whether he keeps them or not." Then they went away, and told him that I had said that he was an idolater, or Tuin, and that he did not keep God's commandments.

The next day (25th May) (the Chan) sent his secretaries to me, who said: "Our lord sends us to you to say that you are here Christians, Saracens and Tuins. And each of you says that his doctrine is the best, and his writings--that is, books--the truest. So he wishes that you shall all meet together, and make a comparison [J: and hold a conference], each one writing down his precepts, so that he himself may be able to know the truth." Then I said: "Blessed be God, who put this in the Chan's heart. But our Scriptures tell us, the servant of God should not dispute, but should show mildness to all; so I am ready, without disputation or contention, to give reason for the faith and hope of the Christians, to the best of my ability." They wrote down my words, and carried them back to him. Then it was told the Nestorians that they should look to themselves, and write down what they wished to say, and likewise to the Saracens, and in the same way to the Tuins.

The next day (26th May) he again sent secretaries, who said: "Mangu Chan wishes to know why you have come to these parts." I replied to them: "He must know it by Baatu's letters." Then they said: "The letters of Baatu have been lost, and he has forgotten what Baatu wrote to him; so he would know from you." Then feeling safer I said: "It is the duty of our faith to preach the Gospel to all men. So when I heard of the fame of the Mo'al people, I was desirous of coming to them; and while this desire was on me, we heard that Sartach was a Christian. So I turned my footsteps toward him. And the lord king of the French sent him a letter containing kindly words, and among other things he bore witness to what kind of men we were, and requested that he would allow us to remain among the men of Mo'al. Then he (i.e., Sartach) sent us to Baatu, and Baatu sent us to Mangu Chan; so we have begged him, and do again beg

him, to permit us to remain." They wrote all these things down, and carried it back to him on the morrow.

Then he again sent them to me, saying: "The Chan knows well that you have no mission to him, but that you have come to pray for him, like other righteous priests; but he would know if ever any ambassadors from you have come to us, or any of ours gone to you." Then I told them all about David and Friar Andrew, and they, putting it all down in writing, reported it back to him.

Then he again sent them to me, saying: "You have stayed here a long while; (the Chan) wishes you to go back to your own country, and he has inquired whether you will take an ambassador of his with you." I replied to them: "I would not dare take his envoys outside his own dominions, for there is a hostile country between us and you, and seas and mountains; and I am but a poor monk; so I would not venture to take them under my leadership." And they, having written it all down, went back.

Pentecost eve came (30th May). The Nestorians had written a whole chronicle from the creation of the world to the Passion of Christ; and passing over the Passion [J: (correcting Rockhill): and they went beyond the passion], they had touched on the Ascension and the resurrection of the dead and on the coming to judgment, and in it there were some censurable statements, which I pointed out to them. As for us, we simply wrote out the symbol of the mass, "*Credo in unum Demn.*" Then I asked them how they wished to proceed. They said they would discuss in the first place with the Saracens. I showed them that that was not a good plan, for the Saracens agreed with us in saying that there is one God: "So you have (in them) a help against the Tuins." They agreed with this. Then I asked them if they knew how idolatry had arisen in the world, and they were in ignorance of it. Then I told them, and they said: "Tell them these things, then let us speak, for it is a difficult matter to talk through an interpreter." I said to them: "Try how you will manage against them; I will take the part of the Tuins, and you will maintain that of the Christians. We will suppose I belong to that sect, because they say that God is not; now prove that God is." For there is a sect there which says that whatever spirit (anima) and whatever virtue [J: whatever soul or any power] is in anything, is the God of that thing, and that God exists not otherwise. Then the Nestorians were unable to prove anything, but only to tell what the Scriptures tell. I said: "They do not believe in the Scriptures; you tell me one thing, and they tell another [J: if you tell them one story, they will quote you another]." Then I advised them to let me in the first place meet them, so that, if I should be confounded, they would still have a chance to speak; if they should be confounded, I should not be able to get a hearing after that. They agreed to this.

We were assembled then on Pentecost eve at our oratory, and Mangu Chan sent three secretaries who were to be umpires, one a Christian, one a Saracen, and one a Tuin;

and it was published aloud: "This is the order of Mangu, and let no one dare say that the commandment of God differs from it. And he orders that no one shall dare wrangle or insult any other, or make any noise by which this business shall be interfered with, on penalty of his head." Then all were silent. And there was a great concourse of people there; for each side had called thither the most learned of its people, and many others had also assembled.

Then the Christians put me in the middle, telling the Tuins to speak with me. Then they--and there was a great congregation of them--began to murmur against Mangu Chan, for no other Chan had ever attempted to pry into their secrets. Then they opposed to me one who had come from Cathay, and who had his interpreter; and I had the son of master William. He began by saying to me: "Friend, if you think you are going to be hushed up (*conclusus*), look for a more learned one than yourself." I remained silent. Then (the Tuin) inquired by what I wished to begin the discussion, by the subject how the world was made, or what becomes of the soul after death. I replied to him: "Friend, this should not be the beginning of our talk. All things proceed from God. He is the fountain-head of all things; so we must first speak of God, of whom you think differently from us, and Mangu Chan wishes to know who holds the better belief." The umpires decided that this was right.

He wished to begin with these questions, as they consider them to be the weightiest; for they all hold this heresy of the Manichaeans [J: they all belong to the Manichaean heresy], that one half of things is evil, and the other half good, and that there are two (elemental) principles; and, as to souls, they believe that all pass from one body into another. Thus a most learned priest among the Nestorians questioned me (once) concerning the souls of animals, whether they could escape to any place where, after death, they would not be forced to labor. In confirmation furthermore of this error, as I was told by master William, there had been brought from Cathay a boy who, from the size of his body, was not more than twelve years old [J: three years old], but who was capable of all forms of reasoning, and who said of himself that he had been incarnated three times; he knew how to read and write.

So I said to the Tuin: "We believe firmly in our hearts and we confess with our mouths that God is, and that there is only one God, one in perfect unity. What do you believe?" He said: "Fools say that there is only one God, but the wise say that there are many. Are there not great lords in your country, and is not this Mangu Chan a greater lord? So it is of them, for they are different in different regions."

I said to him: "You choose a poor example, in which there is no comparison between man and God; according to that, every mighty man can call himself god in his own country." And as I was about to destroy the comparison, he interrupted me, asking: "Of what nature is your God, of whom you say that there is none other?" I replied:

"Our God, besides whom there is none other, is omnipotent, and therefore requires the aid of none other, while all of us require His aid. It is not thus with man. No man can do everything, and so there must be several lords in the world, for no one can do all things. So likewise He knows all things, and therefore requires no councilor, for all wisdom comes of Him. Likewise, He is the supreme good, and wants not of our goods. But we live, move, and are in Him. Such is our God, and one must not consider Him otherwise."

"It is not so," he replied. "Though there is one (God) in the sky who is above all others, and of whose origin we are still ignorant, there are ten others under him, and under these latter is another lower one. On the earth they are in infinite number." And as he wanted to spin (*texere*) some other yarns, I asked him of this highest god, whether he believed he was omnipotent, or whether (he believed this) of some other god. Fearing to answer, he asked: "If your God is as you say, why does he make the half of things evil?" "That is not true," I said. "He who makes evil is not God. All things that are, are good."

At this all the Tuins were astonished, and they wrote it down as false or impossible. Then he asked: "Whence then comes evil?" "You put your question badly," I said. "You should in the first place inquire what is evil, before you ask whence it comes. But let us go back to the first question, whether you believe that any god is omnipotent; after that I will answer all you may wish to ask me."

He sat for a long time without replying, so that it became necessary for the secretaries who were listening on the part of the Chan to tell him to reply. Finally he answered that no god was omnipotent. With that the Saracens burst out into a loud laugh. When silence was restored, I said: "Then no one of your gods can save you from every peril, for occasions may arise in which he has no power. Furthermore, no one can serve two masters: how can you serve so many gods in heaven and earth?" The audience told him to answer, but he remained speechless. And as I wanted to explain the unity of the divine essence and the Trinity to the whole audience, the Nestorians of the country said to me that it sufficed, for they wanted to talk. I gave in to them, but when they wanted to argue with the Saracens, they [the Saracens] answered them: "We concede your religion is true, and that everything is true that is in the Gospel: so we do not want to argue any point with you." And they confessed that in all their prayers they besought God to grant them to die as Christians die.

There was present there an old priest of the Iugurs, who say there is one god, though they make idols; they (i.e., the Nestorians) spoke at great length with him, telling him of all things down to the coming of the Antichrist into the world [J: the coming of Christ in judgement], and by comparisons demonstrating the Trinity to him and the Saracens. They all listened without making any contradiction, but no one said: "I

believe; I want to become a Christian." When this was over, the Nestorians as well as the Saracens sang with a loud voice; while the Tuins kept silence, and after that they all [J: everyone] drank deeply.

[Final Audience with the Khan]

On Pentecost day (31st May) Mangu Chan called me before him, and also the Tuin with whom I had discussed; but before I went in, the interpreter, master William's son, said to me that we should have to go back to our country, and that I must not raise any objection, for he understood that it was a settled matter. When I came before the Chan I had to bend the knees, and so did the Tuin beside me, with his interpreter. Then (the Chan) said to me: "Tell me the truth, whether you said the other day, when I sent my secretaries to you, that I was a Tuin." I replied: "My lord, I did not say that; I will tell you what I said, if it pleases you." Then I repeated to him what I had said, and he replied: "I thought full well that you did not say it, for you should not have said it; but your interpreter translated badly." And he held out toward me the staff on which he leaned, saying: "Fear not." And I, smiling, said in an undertone: "If I had been afraid, I should not have come here." He asked the interpreter what I had said, and he repeated it to him. After that he began confiding to me his creed: "We Mo'al," he said, "believe that there is only one God, by whom we live and by whom we die, and for whom we have an upright heart." Then I said: "May it be so, for without His grace this cannot be." He asked what I had said; the interpreter told him. Then he added: "But as God gives us the different fingers of the hand, so he gives to men divers ways [J: several paths]. God gives you the Scriptures, and you Christians keep them not. You do not find (in them, for example) that one should find fault with another [J: abuse another], do you?" "No, my lord," I said; "but I told you from the first that I did not want to wrangle with anyone." "I do not intend to say it," he said, "for you [J: I am not referring to you]. Likewise you do not find that a man should depart from justice for money." "No, my lord," I said. "And truly I came not to these parts to obtain money; on the contrary I have refused what has been offered me." And there was a secretary present, who bore witness that I refused an *iascot* and silken cloths. "I dare not say it," he said, "for you. God gave you therefore the Scriptures, and you do not keep them; He gave us diviners, we do what they tell us, and we live in peace."

He drank four times, I believe, before he finished saying all this. And I was listening attentively for him to say something else of his creed, when he began talking of my return journey, saying: "You have stayed here a long while; I wish you to go back. You have said that you would not dare take my ambassadors with you; will you take my words, or my letter?" And from that time I never found the opportunity nor the time when I could show him the Catholic Faith. For no one can speak in his presence but so much as he wishes, unless he be an ambassador; for an ambassador can say

whatever he chooses, and they always ask if he wishes to say something more. As for me, it was not allowed me to speak more; I had only to listen to him, and reply to his questions. So I answered him that he should make me understand his words, and have them put down in writing, for I would willingly take them as best I could. Then he asked me if I wanted gold or silver or costly clothing. I said: "We take no such things; but we have no traveling money, and without your assistance we cannot get out of your country." He said: "I will have you given all you require while in my possessions; do you want anything more?" I replied; "That suffices us." Then he asked: "How far do you wish to be taken?" I said: "Our power extends to the country of the King of Hermania; if we were (escorted) that far, it would suffice me." He answered: "I will have you taken that far; after that look out for yourself." And he added: "There are two eyes in the head; but though there be two, they have but one sight, and when one turns its glance there goes the other. You came from Baatu, and so you must go back by way of him." When he had said this, I asked permission of him to speak. "Speak," he said. Then I said: "My lord, we are not men of war. We wish that those should have dominion over the world who rule it most justly, in accordance with the will of God. Our office is to teach men to live after the will of God. For that we have come here, and willingly would we remain here if it pleased you. Since it pleases you that we go back, that must then be. I will go back, and I will carry your letter as well as I can, as you have ordered. I would ask of your majesty that since I shall carry your letters, I may also come back to you with your consent; principally because you have poor slaves at Bolat, who are of our tongue, and who have no priest to teach them and their sons their religion, and willingly would I remain with them." Then he replied: "If your masters should send you back to me (you will be welcome)." I said: "My lord, I know not the will of my masters; but I have their permission to go wherever I wish, where it is needful to preach the word of God; and it seems to me that it is very needful in these parts; so whether he sends back envoys by us or not, if it pleases you I will come back."

Then he remained silent and sat for a long time as if thinking, and the interpreter told me to speak no more. So I waited anxiously for what he would reply. Finally he said: "You have along way to go, comfort yourself with food, so that you may reach your country in good health." And he had me given to drink, and then I went out from before him, and after that I went not back again. If I had had the power to work by signs and wonders like Moses, perhaps he would have humbled himself.

[Religious Customs]

Their diviners are, as (Mangu Chan) confessed to me, their priests; and whatever they say must be done is executed without delay. I will tell you of their office, as well as I could learn about it from master William and others who used to speak truthfully to

me. They are very numerous and always have a captain, like a pontiff, who always places his dwelling before the principal house of Mangu Chan, at about a stone's throw from it. Under his custody are, as I have previously said, the carts in which the idols are carried. The others come after the *ordu* in positions assigned to them; and there come to them from various parts of the world people who believe in their art. Some among them know something of astronomy, particularly the chief, and they predict to them the eclipses of the sun and moon; and when one is about to take place all the people [stockpile] their food, for they must not go out of the door of their dwelling. And while the eclipse is taking place, they sound drums and instruments, and make a great noise and clamor. After the eclipse is over, they give themselves to drinking and feasting, and make great jollity. They predict lucky and unlucky days for the undertaking of all affairs; and so it is that they never assemble an army nor begin a war without their assent, and long since (the Mo'al) would have gone back to Hungary, but the diviners will not allow it.

All things which are sent to the court they take between fires, and for this they retain a certain portion of them [J: and for this they keep the due share of it]. They also cleanse all the bedding of deceased persons by taking them between fires. For when anyone dies, they put aside all that belongs to him, and they are not allowed to the other people of the *ordu* until they have been purified by fires. This I saw in connection with the *ordu* of that lady who died while we were there. On account of this (custom) there was a double reason why Friar Andrew and his companion should have gone between fires; they bore presents, and they were destined for one who was already dead, Keu Chan. Nothing of the sort was required of me, because I brought nothing. If any animal or any other thing falls to the ground while passing between the fires, it is theirs [J: it is the property of the soothsayers]."

On the ninth day of the month of May, they get together all the white horses of the herds, and consecrate them. And the Christian priests are obliged to come to this with their censer. Then they sprinkle new *cosmos* on the ground and hold a great feast on that day, for they consider that they then first drink new *cosmos*, just as in some places among us is done with wine at the feast of Bartholomew or Syxtus, and with fruit at the feast of James and Christopher.

They (i.e., the *Kam*) are also called in when a child is born, to tell its fortune; and when anyone sickens they are called, and they repeat their incantations, and tell whether it is a natural malady or one resulting from witchcraft. And in this connection that woman of Metz, of whom I have spoken, told me a most remarkable thing.

Once some valuable furs were presented, which were to be deposited in the *ordu* of her mistress, who was a Christian, as I have previously said; and the diviners carried them between fires, and took of them more than they should have done. A certain

servant-woman who had charge of the treasure of this lady, accused them of this to her mistress; so the lady reproved them. Now it happened after this that this lady fell ill, and had shooting pains through her limbs. The diviners were called, and they, while seated at a distance, ordered one of the maids to put her hand on the painful spot, and to pull out whatever she should find. So she arose and did this, and she found they told her to put it on the ground; when it was put there it began to wriggle like some live animal. Then it was put into water, and it became like a leech, and they said: "Lady, some sorceress has done you this harm with her sorceries." And they accused her who had accused them about the furs. And she was taken outside the camp into the fields, and for seven days she was beaten and tried with other torments, so that she should confess. And in the meanwhile the lady died. When she heard of this she said to them: "I know that my mistress is dead; my kill me, that I may go after her, for I never did her wrong." And as she would confess nothing, Mangu commanded that she be allowed to live; and then those diviners accused the nurse of the daughter of the lady of whom I have spoken; and she was a Christian, and her husband was most [J: the most] respected among all the Nestorian priests. And she was taken to the place of execution with one of her maids, to make her confess; and the maid confessed that her mistress had sent her to speak to a horse, to get an answer from it. The woman (i.e., the nurse) also confessed that she had done something to make herself liked by her master (i.e., Mangu ?), so that he should show her favor, but she had never done anything which could have injured him. She was asked whether her husband knew what she had done. She made excuse for him, having burnt characters and letters she had made herself. So she was put to death; and Mangu sent her husband, this priest, to the bishop who was in Cathay, to try him, though he had not been found guilty.

In the meanwhile it happened that the first wife of Mangu Chan bore a son; and the diviners were called in to tell the child's fortune, and they all foretold it good luck, saying that it would live long and become a great lord. But after a few days it happened that the child died. Then the mother in a rage called the diviners, saying: "You told me that my son would live, and here he is dead." Then they replied: "Lady, here we see the witchcraft of the nurse of Chirina, who the other day was put to death. She killed your son, and now we see her carrying him off [J: we can see the witch, Chirina's nurse, who was put to death the other day: it is she who has killed your son, and look!--there she is, making off with him!]." There still lived a grown-up son and daughter of this woman in the camp, and the lady in a fury sent for them, and caused a man to kill the youth, and a woman the daughter, in revenge for her son, who the diviners had said had been killed by their mother. After this the Chan dreamed of these children, and on the morrow he asked what had been done with them. His servants were afraid to tell him; but he inquired the more solicitously where they were, for they had appeared to him in a vision of the night. Then they told him; and he

forthwith sent to his wife, and asked her where she had found out that a wife could pass a death sentence, leaving her husband in ignorance (of what she had done); and he had her shut up for seven days, with orders that no food be given her. As to the man who had killed the youth, he had him decapitated, and had his head hung around the neck of the woman who had killed the young girl, and he caused her to be beaten with burning brands through the camp, and then put to death. And he would have put his own wife to death had it not been for the children he had had of her; but he left her *ordu* [J: but he left his residence (*presumably to avoid any lingering evil from his dream of the dead)], and did not go back there for a month.

These same diviners disturb the atmosphere with their incantations; and when it is so cold from natural causes that they can bring no relief, they pick out some persons in the camps whom they accuse of having brought about the cold, and they are put to death at once.

A short time before I left there, there was one of the concubines who was ill, and she had languished for a long time; so they said incantations over a certain German female slave of hers, who went to sleep for three days. And when she came back to herself they asked her what she had seen; (and she said) she had seen a great many persons, all of whom they declared would soon die; but she had not seen her mistress among them, so they declared that she would not die of her complaint. I saw the girl, who had still a good deal of pain in her head from her sleep.

Some among them evoke devils, and assemble at night in their dwelling those who want to have answers from the devil, and they place cooked meat in the center of the dwelling; and the *cham* who does the invocation begins repeating his incantations, and strikes violently the ground with a drum [J: tambourine] he holds. Finally he enters into a fury, and causes himself to be bound. Then comes the devil in the dark, and gives him the meat to eat, and he gives answers.

Once, as I was told by master William, a certain Hungarian hid himself among them; and the devil who was on top of the dwelling [J: and the demon made his appearance on top of the dwelling and] cried that he could not come in, for there was a Christian among them. Hearing this, he fled in all haste, for they set about looking for him. This and many other things they do, which it would take too long to tell of.

[The Khan's Letter to the King of France]

With the feast of Pentecost (31st May [1254]) they began preparing the letter which he (the Chan) was to send you. In the meanwhile he came back to Caracorum, and held his great ceremony on the octave of Pentecost (7th June), and he wanted all the ambassadors to be present the last day of it. He sent also for me; but I had gone to the

church to baptize three children [J: sons] of a poor German I had found there. Master William was the chief butler at this feast, for he it was who had made the drink-flowing tree; and everyone poor and rich was singing and dancing and clapping hands before the Chan. Then he spoke to them, saying: "I have sent my brothers away, and have exposed them to danger among foreign nations. Now, let it be seen what you will do, when I shall want to send you to increase our realm." Each day during these four days, they changed their raiment, which was given them each day all of one color from their boots to their turbans (tyaram). At this time I saw there the envoy of the Caliph of Baldach, who used to be brought to court in a litter between two mules, and some said of him that he would make [J: he had made] a peace with them, in view of which he was to give him [J: he gave] ten thousand horse soldiers for his army. Others said that Mangu had said that he would not make a peace unless they destroyed all their fortresses, and that the envoy had replied: "When you bring [J: remove] all the hoofs of your horses, we will destroy all our fortresses." I saw also the envoy of a certain Soldan of India, who had brought eight leopards and ten greyhounds taught to sit on horses' backs, as leopards sit. When I asked them concerning India, in what direction it was from that place, they pointed to the west. And these envoys went back with me for nearly three weeks, always going westward. I saw there also envoys of the Soldan of Turkia, who had brought him rich presents; and he (i.e., Mangu) had answered them, as I heard, that he did not want gold or silver, but men; so he wanted to be given troops. On the feast of Saint John [=June 24th] he held a great drinking bout, and I counted an hundred and five carts and ninety horses loaded with mare's milk; and on the feast of the apostles Peter and Paul [=June 29th] likewise.

Finally, the letter he sends you being finished, they called me and interpreted it to me. I wrote down its tenor, as well as I could understand through an interpreter, and it is as follows: "The commandment of the eternal God is, in Heaven there is only one eternal God, and on Earth there is only one lord, Chingis Chan. This is word of the Son of God, Demugin, (or) Chingis 'sound of iron.' " (For they call him Chingis, 'sound of iron,' because he was a blacksmith; and puffed up in their pride they even say that he is the son of God). "This is what is told you. Wherever there be a Mo'al, or a Naiman [J: Whosoever we are, whether a Mo'al or a Naiman], or a Merkit or a Musteleman, wherever ears can hear, wherever horses can travel, there let it be heard and known; those who shall have heard my commandments and understood them, and who shall not believe and shall make war against us, shall hear and see that they have eyes and see not [J: For the moment they hear my order and understand it but place no credence in it and wish to make war against us, you shall see that though they have eyes they shall be without sight]; and when they shall want to hold anything they shall be without hands, and when they shall want to walk they shall be without feet: this is the eternal command of God.

"This, through the virtue of the eternal God, through the great world of the Mo'al, is the word of Mangu Chan to the lord of the French, King Louis, and to all the other lords and priests and to all the great realm of the French, that they may understand our words. For the word of the eternal God to Chingis Chan has not reached unto you, either through Chingis Chan or others who have come after him.

"A certain man by the name of David came to you as the ambassador of the Mo'al, but he was an impostor ; and you sent back with him your envoys to Keu Chan. After the death of Keu Chan your ambassadors reached this court. And Camus his wife sent you *nasic* stuffs and a letter. But as to affairs of war and of peace and the welfare and happiness of a great realm [J: (and) subduing the wide world and discerning how to act for the best], what could this woman, who was viler than a dog, know about them?" (For Mangu told me with his own lips that Camus was the worst kind of a witch, and that she had destroyed her whole family by her witchcraft.)

"These two monks, who have come from you to Sartach, Sartach sent to Baatu; but Baatu sent them to us, for Mangu Chan is the greatest lord of the Mo'al realm. Now then, to the end that the whole world and the priests and monks may be in peace and rejoice, and that the word of God be heard among you, we wanted to appoint Mo'al envoys (to go back) with these your priests. But they replied that between us and you there is a hostile country, and many wicked people, and bad roads; so they were afraid that they could not take our envoys in safety to you; but that if we would give them our letter containing our commandments, they would carry them to King Louis himself. So we do not send our envoys with them; but we send you in writing the commandments of the eternal God by these your priests: the commandments of the eternal God are what we impart to you. And when you shall have heard and believed, if you will obey us, send your ambassadors to us; and so we shall have proof whether you want peace or war with us. When, by the virtue of the eternal God, from the rising of the Sun to the setting, all the world shall be in universal joy and peace, then shall be manifested what we are to be. But if you hear the commandment of the eternal God, and understand it, and shall not give heed to it, nor believe it, saying to yourselves: 'Our country is far off, our mountains are strong, our sea is wide,' and in this belief you make war against us, you shall find out what we can do. He who makes easy what is difficult, and brings close what is far off, the eternal God He knows."

They had in the first place called us in the letter your ambassadors. So I told them: "Call us not ambassadors, for I explained thoroughly to the Chan that we were not the ambassadors of King Louis." They then went to him and told him. But they came back to me and said that (though) he had used it as a great compliment [J: he had taken it in a very good part], he had directed that they should write as I should tell them. I told them, nevertheless, to strike out the word 'ambassador,' and to call us monks or priests. While this was being done, my companion, hearing that we would have to go

back to Baatu by way of the desert, and that a Mo'al would guide us, ran, without my knowing it, to Bulgai, the grand secretary, and intimated to him by signs that he would die if he went that way; and so when the day arrived on which we were to take our leave, to wit, a fortnight after the feast of saint John, when we were called to court, the secretaries said to my companion: "Now Mangu Chan wants your companion to go back by way of Baatu, and you say that you are ill, as is evident you are. So Mangu says, if you want to go with your companion, go. But it rests with you; for perhaps you may be left in some *Iam*, and you will not be looked after, and you will be a burden on your companion. If you choose to stay here, he will provide you with everything necessary, till some other ambassadors come with whom you can go back leisurely and along a road on which towns are found." The friar replied: "God bless the Chan. I will stay." But I said to the friar: "Brother, see to it what you do. I will not leave you." "You," he said, "will not be leaving me; but I leave you; for should I go with you, I can see danger of death to my soul and body; for it cannot bear such terrible hardships."

Now they were holding in their hands three gowns or tunics, and they said to us: "You will not accept gold or silver, and you have stayed here a long time praying for the Chan. He begs that each of you will accept at least a plain gown, so that you go not away empty-handed." So we had to accept them through respect for him, for they hold it very bad that one should scorn their gifts. At first he used to make inquiries as to what we wanted, and we always replied in the same way, so that the Christians used to abuse the idolaters for wanting nothing else than gifts. And these made answer that we were foolish, for if he (i.e., the Chan) wanted to give them his whole *ordu*, they would take it with pleasure and do wisely. Having taken the gowns, they asked us to say an orison for the Chan, and this we did; and having been granted leave, we went back to Caracarum.

It happened, however, on a day (before that) when we were with the monk and the other ambassadors some distance from the court, that the monk beat the board so loudly that Mangu Chan heard it, and asked what it was. And they told him. Then he asked why he was so far from the court. They told him that it was troublesome to send him daily horses and oxen (to come) to court, and they added that it would be better if he remained in Caracarum beside the church and there did his praying. So the Chan sent to him to say that if he would go to Caracarum and remain there by the church, he would give him all he required. The monk, however, replied: "I came here from Jerusalem, in the Holy Land, by the command of God, and I left a city in which there were a thousand churches better than that in Caracarum. If he wants me to remain here and pray for him, as God commanded me, I will stay; otherwise I will go back whence I came." That very same evening oxen harnessed to carts were brought him, and the

next morning he went back to the place he had been in the habit of occupying in front of the *ordu*.

A little while before we left there, a certain Nestorian monk [*some MSS. lack "monk"] arrived, and he seemed to be a wise man. Bulgai, the grand secretary, established him in front of the *ordu*; and the Chan sent him his books to bless [J: and the Chan sent him his children to bless].

[Rubruck's Return Journey]

We returned then to Caracarum; and while we were in the house of master William, my guide came, bringing ten *iascot*, five of which he placed in the hand of master William, telling him to spend them on the part of the Chan for the wants of the friar; the other five he put in the hands of Homo Dei, my interpreter, with directions to spend them on the journey for my wants. Master William had told them to do this, without our knowing it. I at once caused one (*iascot*) to be sold, and distributed the change among the poor Christians who were there, all of them having their eyes fixed upon us [J: all of whom looked to us]; another we spent in buying what was necessary for us in clothing and in other things; with the third, Homo Dei bought a few things on which he could make a small profit, which he did. The balance we also expended, for from the time we entered Persia they never gave us enough of what we needed, nor did they ever even among the Tartars [J: since in no locality from the time we entered Persia were we given enough for our needs, nor for that matter among the Tartars]; but there we rarely found anything to buy.

Master William, once your subject, sends you a girdle ornamented with a precious stone, such as they wear against lightning and thunder; and he sends you endless salutations, praying always for you; and I cannot sufficiently express to God or to you the thanks I owe him. In all I baptized six persons there.

So we separated with tears, my companion remaining with master William, and I alone with my interpreter going back with my guide and one servant, who had an order by which we were to receive every four days one sheep for the four of us.

In two months and ten days we came to Baatu, and (on the way there) we never saw a town, nor the trace of any building save tombs, with the exception of one little village, in which we did not eat bread; neither did we ever take a rest in those two months and ten days, except for one day only, when we could not get horses. We came back for the most part of the way through the same peoples, though generally through different districts; for we went in winter and came back in summer by parts farther to the north, fifteen days excepted, when both in going and in coming back we had to keep along a river between mountains, where there is no grass except close to the river. We had to

go for two days-sometimes for three days-without taking any other nourishment than *cosmos*. Sometimes we were in great danger, not being able to find any people, at moments when we were short of food, and with worn-out horses.

When I had ridden twenty days I got news of the King of Armenia; he had passed there at the end of August, going to meet Sartach, who was on his way to Mangu Chan with his flocks and herds, his wives and children; though his big dwellings had been left behind between the Etilia and the Tanais.

I paid my respects (to Sartach) and told him that I would right willingly stay in his country, but that Mangu Chan wished me to go back and carry his letter. He replied that one must do the bidding of Mangu Chan. Then I asked Coiac about our servants. He replied that they were in Baatu's *ordu*, carefully looked after. I reminded him also of our vestments and books: he replied: "Did you not bring them to Sartach?" I brought them to Sartach, but I did not give them to him, as you know; " and I repeated to him what I had replied when he had asked whether I would give them to Sartach. Then he answered: "You speak the truth, and no one can resist the truth. I left your things at my father's, who stays near Sarai, the new town that Baatu is making on the Etilia; but our priests have some of your vestments here with them." "As to the vestments," I said, "keep what you want of them, so long as my books given back to me." Then he said that he would tell Sartach what I said." I must have," I said, "a letter for your father, so that he will give me back all my things." As they were then just on the point of starting, he said: "One of the *ordu* of the ladies is following us closely; stop there, and I will send you by this man here the answer of Sartach." I was anxious that he should not deceive me; but I could not wrangle with him. The man he had pointed out to me came in the evening, bringing with him two tunics, which I took for a whole piece of uncut silk stuff, and he said to me: "Here are two tunics: Sartach sends you one, and the other, if you see fit, you may present to the King from him." I replied: "I do not make use of such clothes; I will present both to the King for the honor of your lord." "No," he said, "do as you choose with them." Now it pleases me to send them both to you, and I do so by the bearer of these presents. He gave me also a letter to the father of Coiac, to return to me all that belonged to me, for he wanted nothing of mine.

We reached the *ordu* of Baatu the same day we had left it a year previously, the second day after the Elevation of the holy Cross (16th September [J: Sept. 15th, 1254]), and I found with pleasure our servants in safety, but suffering from great poverty, as Gosset told me; and had it not been for the King of Armenia, who had comforted them greatly and recommended them to Sartach, they would have been lost, for they thought that I was dead; and the Tartars were already inquiring of them if they knew how to herd cattle or milk horses. For had I not come back, they would have been made their slaves.

After that, Baatu caused me to come into his presence, and had interpreted to me the letter Mangu Chan sends you. For Mangu had written to him that if he wished to add, strike out, or alter anything in them, he was to do so. Then he said to me: "Take this letter and make it understood." He asked me also which road I wanted to take, by sea or by land. I told him the sea route was closed, for it was winter, so I would have to go by land. I still thought at that time that you were in Syria, and I took the road toward Persia. If I had imagined that you had crossed over into France, I should have gone to Hungary and should have come sooner to France; and by that road I should have traveled with less trouble than in Syria.

We drove about for a month with him (i.e., Baatu) before we could get a guide. Finally they appointed an Iugur, who, understanding that I would not give him anything, though I told him that I wanted to go straight to Hermenia, had letters given him to take me to the Soldan of Turkie, hoping to receive a present from the Soldan and make more [profit] along that road.

So we started fifteen days before the feast of All Saints (i.e., 16th October [J: Oct. 18th]) in the direction of Sarai, going due south, and descending along the Etilia, which divides below there into three great branches, each of which is nearly twice as large as the river of Damietta. The rest (of the river) forms four minor branches, so that we crossed that river in seven places by boat. On the middle branch is a town called Summerkeur, which is without walls; but when the river is in flood it is surrounded by water. For eight years the Tartars were around it before they got it. And there were Alans in it, and Saracens. We found there a German with his wife, and he was a right worthy man, with whom Gosset had stopped; for Sartach had sent him there to rid his *ordu* of him. Round about these parts Baatu is on one side of the river and Sartach on the other about Christmas time; and they go not down any farther. And it happens that the whole river freezes over, and then they pass across. About here there is very great plenty of pasturage, and (the Tartars) live among the reeds till the ice begins to thaw.

When the father of Coiac received the letter of Sartach, he gave me back my vestments, excepting three albs, an amice embroidered in silk, a stole, a girdle, a gold-fringed altar cloth and a surplice; he gave me back also the silver vases, excepting a censer and a little vase in which was holy oil, all of which latter things the priests who were with Sartach had kept. He gave me back the books, with the exception of the Psalter of my lady the queen, which he kept with my consent; I could not refuse it him, for he said it would please Sartach greatly [J: for he said that Sartach had been very much taken with it]. He also asked me, in case I should come back that way, to bring a man knowing how to make parchment. He was making, by order of Sartach, a big church and a new village on the west bank of the river, and wanted, he said, to make books for Sartach's use. I know, however, that Sartach cares not for such things

[J: though I myself am aware that Sartach has no time for such things]. Sarai and the palace of Baatu are on the eastern shore, and the valley through which flow these branches of the river is more than seven leagues wide, and there is a great quantity of fish there. The versified Bible and a book in Arabic, worth thirty bezants, and several other things, I did not get back.

Leaving it (i.e., Sarai) then on the feast of All Saints (1st November), and going constantly south, we reached by the feast of Saint Martin (15th December [J: Dec. 13th]) the mountains of the Alans. Between Baatu and Sarai, for fifteen days we found no one save one of his (i.e., Baatu's) sons preceding him (south) with his hawks and hawkers, who were very numerous. From the feast of All Saints for fifteen [J: five] days we found no one, and there were two days [J: a day and a night] on which we nearly died of thirst: for a whole day and a night, and a day following to the third hour, we did not find any water.

The Alans in these mountains still hold out against (the Tartars), so Sartach has had to send two out of every ten men to hold the mouths of the defiles [i.e., passes], lest they come out and lift their cattle in the plains. Between them, the Alans and the Iron Gate, which is two days thence, and where begins the plain of Arcacc. Between the sea and the mountains are Saracens called Lesgi, (who live) in the mountains and who also withstand (the Tartars) [J: Between these Alans and the Iron Gate, which lay two days journey away from there, at the point where the plan begins to narrow between the sea and the mountains, there are Saracens called the Lesgi living among the peaks]; so the Tartars at the foot of the mountains of the Alans had to give us twenty men to escort us beyond the Iron Gate. And this pleased me much, for I hoped to see them under arms; for I had never been able to see their arms, though most anxious to. When we came to a dangerous passage, out of the twenty (only) two had [breastplates]. I asked them how they came by them, and they said they had got them from the Alans, who are good makers of such things, and excellent artisans. So it seems to me that they have few arms except arrows and bows and fur gowns. I saw given to them iron plates and iron caps from Persia, and I also saw two who had come to present themselves before Mangu, armed with jackets of convex pieces of hard leather, which were most unfit and unwieldy.

Before we reached the Iron Gate, we came to a walled hamlet (*castellum*) of the Alans, which was Mangu Chan's, he having conquered that (part of the) country. Here we found grape-vines for the first time and drank wine. The next day we came to the Iron Gate, which Alexander the Macedonian made; and it is a town whose eastern end is on the sea-shore, and there is a small-sized plain between the sea and the mountains across which this town stretches to the top of the mountain adjoining it on the west; so it is that there is no road higher up, on account of the steepness of the mountain, nor

any lower down by the sea, but only straight through the town where is the iron gate from which the town takes its name.

The town is more than a mile long, and on the top of the mountain is a strong fort; its width, however, is but a stone's throw. It has very strong walls without moats, and towers of great dressed (*politis*) stones; but the Tartars have destroyed the tops of the towers and the parapets of the walls, making the towers even with the walls. Below this town the country used to be a real paradise.

Two days thence we found another town called Samaron, in which were many Jews; and when passing through it we noticed walls coming down from the mountains to the sea. Leaving the road by the sea at these walls, for at that point it turned eastward, we went uphill toward the south.

The next day we crossed a valley, where we saw the foundations of walls running from one mountain to another, and along the tops of the mountains there was no road. These were once the barriers of Alexander, shutting out the wild tribes, that is the desert nomads, so that they could not get in on the cultivated lands and the towns. There are other barriers within which are Jews [J: which shut out the Jews], but I could learn nothing precise concerning them; however, there are many Jews in all the towns of Persia.

The next day we came to a big city called Samag [=Shamakhi]; and the day after that we entered a vast plain called Mo'al, through which flows the Cur, from which the Curges, whom we call Georgians, take their name. It flows through the middle of Tefilis [=Tbilisi], which is the capital city of the Curges, coming straight from the west and flowing eastward into that sea, and it has most excellent salmon. In that plain we again found Tartars. The Araxes also flows through this plain, coming out of Greater Hermenia from due south-west, out of what is called the Ararat country, which is Hermenia; thus it is that in the book of Kings it is said of the sons of Senacherib, that their father having been killed they fled into the country of the Hermenians; while in Isaiah it is said that they fled into the country of Ararat.

To the west of this beautiful plain is Curgia, and the Crosminians [=Khwarazmians] used to be in this plain; and there at the base of the mountains is a great city called Ganges [=Ganja], which used to be their capital, and which prevented the Curges from coming down into the plain.

So we came to a bridge of boats held by great iron chains stretched across the river, there where the Cur and the Araxes fall into each other. Here the Araxes loses its name. From this point we ascended continually along the Araxes, of which it is said ...*pontem dedignatur Araxes*, leaving Persia on our left to the south, and the

Caspian mountains and Greater Curgia on our right to the north, and going toward Africa to the south-west.

We passed through the camp of Baachu, who is the chief of the army there on the Araxes, and who has conquered the Curges, the Turks and the Persians. There is another (chief) at Tauris in Persia, who superintends the tribute, and whose name is Argun; and Mangu has recalled both of them to give their places to his brother who is coming to these countries. This country I am describing to you is not Persia proper, but that which used to be called Hircania.

I was in the house of Baachu, and he gave me wine to drink; he himself drank *cosmos*, which I should have preferred to drink if he had given it to me. Though the wine was new and good, *cosmos* satisfies better a famished man.

So we ascended along the Araxes from the feast of saint Clement (23rd November) to the second Sunday of Quadragesima (15th February [J: Feb. 21st]) till we reached the head of the river. And beyond the mountain in which it rises is a goodly city, called Aarserum, which is the Soldan of Turkie's, and near these to the north, at the foot of the mountains of the Curges, rises the Euphrates. I would have gone to its source, but there was so much snow that no one could go outside the beaten path. On the other side, to the south of the mountains of the Caucasus, the Tigris takes its rise.

When we left Baachu, my guide went to Tauris to speak with Argun, taking my interpreter with him. But Baachu had me taken to a certain city called Naxua [=Nakhchavan], which used to be the capital of a great kingdom, and was a large and beautiful city; but the Tartars have reduced it to nearly a desert. And there used to be in it eighty Hermenian churches; but there are only two small ones now, for the Saracens have destroyed them. In one of these I kept the Christmas feast as well as I could, with our clerk. The next day the priest of the church died, and a bishop and twelve monks from the mountains came to his funeral. All the bishops of the Hermenians are monks, as are those of the Greeks for the most part. This bishop told me that near there was the church in which blessed Bartholomew and also blessed Judas Thaddeus were martyred; but the road was impassable on account of the snow.

He told me also that they have two prophets: the first is Methodius the martyr, who was of their race, and he prophesied concerning the Ysmaelites, which prophecy has been fulfilled in the Saracens. The other prophet is called Acatron, who on his death-bed prophesied concerning the race of Archers to come from the north, saying that they would acquire possession of all the countries of the Orient, and that (God) would spare the Eastern kingdom so as to deliver unto them the kingdom of the West; but our brethren, like the Catholic Franks, would not believe in them, and they (i.e., the Archers) would occupy the earth from the north even unto the south, and would come

to Constantinople, and would occupy the port of Constantinople; and one of them, who would be called a sage, would enter the city, and seeing the churches and the ceremonies of the Franks would be baptized, and he would tell the Franks how to kill the lord of the Tartars, and how to confound them. On learning this the Franks of the center of the world, that is Jerusalem, would fall upon the Tartars in their borders, and with the help of our people, that is the Hermenians, would pursue them, so that the King of the Franks would place his royal throne in Tauris in Persia, and then all the Orientals and all the infidels would be converted to the faith of Christ, and there would be such peace on earth that the living would say to the dead:

"Woe is you, unfortunate ones, why lived ye not to these times?"

I had read this prophecy in Constantinople, brought there by the Hermenians who live there, but had paid no particular attention to it; when I had had this conversation, however, with the bishop, it came back vividly to my memory; and throughout Hermenia they hold this prophecy as sure as the Gospel. They used also to say to me [He (the bishop) used to say to me]: "As the souls in limbo expect the coming of Christ for their liberation, so we look to your coming to deliver us from this bondage in which we have so long been."

Near this city are mountains in which they say that Noah's ark rests; and there are two mountains, the one greater than the other; and the Araxes flows at their base; and there is a town there called Cemanum [=Thamanin (*actually Arabic for eighty, not eight)], which interpreted means "eight," and they say that it was thus called from the eight persons who came out of the ark, and who built it on the greater mountain. Many have tried to climb it, but none has been able. This bishop told me that there had been a monk who was most desirous (of climbing it), but that an angel appeared to him bearing a piece of the wood of the ark, and told him to try no more. They had this piece of wood in his church, they told me. This mountain did not seem to me so very high, that men could not ascend it. An old man gave me quite a good reason why one ought not to try to climb it. They call the mountain Massis, and it is of the feminine gender in their language. "No one," he said, "ought to climb up Massis; it is the mother of the world."

In that city (of Naxua) Friar Bernard of Catalogna, of the Order of Preaching Friars [=Dominicans], found me; he had remained in Georgia with a certain prior of the Holy Sepulcher, who had large holdings in land there; and he had learned a little Tartar, and had been with a certain friar from Hungary to Argun at Tauris, to ask leave to go through to Sartach. When they came there they were refused entry, and the Hungarian friar went back by way of Tefilis with a servant; but Friar Bernard had remained at Tauris with a German lay brother, whose language he did not understand.

We only left this city (of Naxua) on the Octave of the Epiphany (13th January), for we were kept there a long while on account of the snow. In four days we came to the country of Sahensa [=Shanshé or ShahanShah: "king of kings"], once the most powerful Curgian prince, but now tributary to the Tartars, who have destroyed all its fortified places. His father, Zacharias by name, had got this country of the Hermenians, for delivering them from the hands of the Saracens. And there are very fine villages there, all of Christians and having churches, just like the French; and every Hermenian has in his home, in the most honored spot, a hand of wood holding a cross, and he places a burning lamp before it; and what we do with holy water to drive away the evil spirit, they do with incense. For every evening they burn incense, carrying it to every corner of the house to drive out every kind of evil.

I took a meal with this Sahensa; and he showed me great politeness, as did his wife and his son called Zacharias, a very fine and prudent young man, who asked me, whether if he should come to you, you would keep him with you; for so heavily does he bear the domination of the Tartars, that though he has abundance of all things, he would prefer to wander in foreign lands to bearing their domination. Moreover, they told me that they were sons of the Roman Church; and if the lord Pope would send them some assistance, they would themselves subject all the neighboring countries to the Church.

In fifteen days from that city (of Naxua?) we entered the country of the Soldan of Turkie on the (second) Sunday of Quadragesima (15th February [J: Feb. 14th]), and the first town we found was called Marsengen. All the people in the burg were Christians: Hermenians, Curses and Greeks. The Saracens had only the lordship. The castellan said that he had received orders not to give provisions to any Frank, or to ambassadors of the king of Hermenia or of Vastacius; so from this place, which we reached on the (second) Sunday of Quadragesima, all the way to Cyprus, which I entered eight days before the feast of saint John the Baptist (16th June) we had to buy our provisions. He who was guiding me procured us horses; he received also money for our provisions, but he put it in his purse. When we came to some field and saw a flock, he would carry off a sheep by force, and give it to his followers to eat, and was greatly astonished because I would not eat of his theft.

On the (feast of the) Purification (2nd February) I was in a town called Aini, belonging to Sahensa, the position of which is very strong; and there are in it a thousand churches of Hermenians and two synagogues of Saracens. The Tartars have placed a bailiff [J: commisioner] in it. Five preaching friars found me there. Four of them had come from the Province of France, and the fifth had joined them in Syria; and they had only one infirm servant, who knew Turkish and a little French; and they had letters from the lord Pope to Sartach, to Mangu Chan and to Buri, like those you gave me, requesting that they be allowed to stay in his country, and to preach the word

of God, etc. When I had told them what I had seen, and how they had received me, they took the road to Tefilis, where are some of their friars, to hold council with them as to what they should do. I told them that, thanks to those letters, they could get through if they chose, but that they must provide themselves well with patience and with reasons for their coming, for having no other mission than preaching, they would show them scant courtesy, especially as they had no interpreter. What they did after this, I know not.

So on the second Sunday after Quadragesima (15th February [J: Feb. 21st]) we came to the head of the Araxes, and after crossing a mountain, we came to the Euphrates, along which we descended for eight days, going always westward till we came to a certain fort called Camath [=Kamakh]. Here the Euphrates turns southward toward Halapia [=Aleppo]. We crossed the river, continuing westward through very high mountains and deep snow. That same year there was such an earthquake there that in one city called Arsengen [=Arzijan] ten thousand persons known by name were lost, exclusive of the poor, of whom there was no record. During three days' ride we saw a rent in the ground as if split in the commotion, and masses of earth which had slid down from the mountains and filled the valleys: had the earth been shaken a little more, what Isaiah said would have been fulfilled to the letter: "Every valley shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

We crossed the valley in which the Soldan of Turkie had been defeated by the Tartars. It would take too long to write how he had been defeated, but a servant of my guide, who had been with the Tartars (in the battle), said that there were not over ten thousand Tartars in all; and a Curgian slave of the Soldan's said that there were with the Soldan two hundred thousand, all on horses. In that plain in which that fight and that rout occurred, a large lake burst out in the earthquake; and I said to myself that that whole country had opened its mouth to drink in the blood of the Saracens.

We were in Sebaste [=Sivas] in Lesser Hermenia in the Greater Week [J: during the Hol Week (March 21-27th)], and we visited there the sepulcher of the Forty Martyrs. There is at that place a church of Saint Blaise, but I could not go there, for it was up in the citadel. On the Octave of Easter (4th April) we came to Cesarea of Capadocia, where there is a church of saint Basil the Great. After that in fifteen days (i.e., 19th April), we came to Iconium, traveling by short stages and resting in many places, for we could not get horses very quickly. And my guide used to do this trick: he would sell in every town his requisition on it for three days. I was much worried over this; but I dared not speak, for he could have sold or killed me or our servants; there would have been no one to say him nay. I found several Franks in Iconium, and a Genoese trader from Acon, Nicholas by name, from Santo Siro, who with his partner, a Venetian called Benefatius de Molendino, had monopolized all the alum in Turkie, so

that the Soldan could sell none of it to any save these two; and they resold it so dear that what used to be sold for fifteen besants is sold for fifty.

My guide presented me to the Soldan. The Soldan said he would be pleased to have me taken to the sea of Hermenia or of Silicia. But this trader (Nicholas) knowing that the Saracens would take little care of me, and that I was wearied beyond measure with my guide's company, who pestered me daily for presents, had me taken to Curta [=Gorighos], a port of the king of Hermenia. Here I arrived the day before the Ascension (5th May), and remained to the day after Pentecost (17th May). Then I heard that messengers had come from the king (of Hermenia) to his father, so I put our things in a ship to be carried to Acon, and I myself went at once to the king's father, to learn whether he had received any news from his son. I found him at Assissi with all his sons, save one called Barunusin [=Baron Oshin (d. 1264)], who was having a castle built; and he had received messengers from his son (saying) he was coming back, and that Mangu Chan had greatly reduced the tribute for him, and that he had granted him the privilege that no ambassadors should enter his country; on account of this the old man with all his sons and all his people were holding a great feast. He had me taken to the sea, to a port called Auax [=Ayas]; and from there I passed over into Cyprus, and at Nicosia I found your Provincial, who the same day took me with him to Antioch, which is in a most dilapidated condition. We were there for the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul (29th June). Thence we came to Tripoli, where we held our chapter on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin (15th August); and the Provincial ordered me to remain at Acon [J: to teach in Acre], not allowing me to come to you, directing me to write you whatever I had to say by the bearer of these presents [J: ordering me to send in writing, by the bearer (of the letter), what I wished to say]. Not daring to disregard my vow of obedience; I did as best I could and have written; and I beg grace from your great kindness for what is said either too much or too little, or injudiciously or foolishly, as it comes from a man with little ability, and not accustomed to composing such long stories.

May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your heart and mind.

I would gladly see you and those particular friends I have in your kingdom; so if it displeases not Your Majesty, I would beg you to write to the Provincial that he allow me to come to you, to return after a little while to the Holy Land.

You must know of the Turks that not one man out of ten (among them) is a Saracen ; nearly all are Hermenians and Greeks, and (the country) is governed by children. For the Soldan who was defeated by the Tartars (as I have related) had as a legitimate wife an Iberian woman, by whom he had one son, a weakling [J: an invalid], who he ordered should be Soldan (after him). By a Greek concubine, whom he gave (later on) to a certain powerful emir, he had another; and he had yet another by a Turk; and a lot

of Turks and Turkemans conspired with this one to kill the sons of the Christian (women). They arranged, as I was told, that when they had gained the victory they would destroy all the churches, and put to death all those who would not become Saracens. He was, however, defeated, and many of his followers were killed. A second time he got together an army, and that time he was made prisoner, and is still kept in chains. Pacaster, the son of the Greek woman, has arranged with his half-brothers that he shall be Soldan, for the latter is delicate [J: The stepfather of the son by the Greek woman contrived for his stepson to be sultan since other son was an invalid], and they have sent him to the Tartars; and this has angered his relatives on the side of his mother, the Iberian or Georgian woman [J: the Iberians and Georgians]. So it is that a child governs in Turkic without a treasure, with few soldiers and many enemies. The son of Vastacius is delicate, and is at war with the son of Assan [=Tsar of Bulgaria], who likewise is a youth, and under the yoke of the Tartars; so if the army of the Church mere to come to the Holy Land, it would be very easy to conquer or to pass through all these countries. The King of Hungary has not at most thirty thousand soldiers. From Cologne to Constantinople is not over forty days in a cart. From Constantinople it is not so far as that to the country of the King of Hermenia. In times past valiant men passed through these countries, and succeeded, though they had most powerful adversaries, whom God has since removed from the earth. Nor should we (if the followed this road) be exposed to the dangers of the sea or to the mercies of the sailor men, and the price which would have to be given for a fleet would be enough for the expenses of the (whole) land journey. I state it with confidence, that if your peasants--I speak not of the princes and noblemen--would but travel like the Tartar princes, and be content with like provisions, they would conquer the whole world.

It seems to me inexpedient to send another friar to the Tartars, as I went, or as the preaching friars go; but if the Lord Pope, who is the head of all Christians, wishes to send with proper state a bishop, and reply to the foolishness they have already written three times to the Franks (once to Pope Innocent the Fourth of blessed memory [Dec. 7, 1254], and twice to you: once by David, who deceived you, and now by me), he would be able to tell them whatever he pleased, and also make them reply in writing. They listen to whatever an ambassador has to say, and always ask if he has more to say; but he must have a good interpreter--nay, several interpreters--abundant traveling funds, etc.