

WEDDING CUSTOMS & GODS OF THE TARTARS ≠ MARCO POLO

ashamed when I look at the unfaithfulness of the Christian women, [and call] those happy who being a hundred wives to one husband keep [their virtue] to their own most worthy praise, to the very great shame of all the other women in the world. The ladies are the most chaste women in the world and are good and very loyal to their lords, nor would a woman be found false to her husband, and they are very hard-working women and take great pains to do the necessary duties of the household very well. The marriages are done in this way. For each can take according to their custom as many wives¹ as he likes, up to a hundred if he has the power to be able to maintain them; and the men give the dowries to the wives and to the mother of their wife to obtain them, nor does the wife give anything to the man for dowry when she is married. But you may know too that they always hold the first of their wives for more genuine and for better than the others, and likewise the children who are born of her. And they have more sons than all the other people in the world have because they have so many wives² as I have told you, & it is a marvel how many children one man has, I mean those who have the power to keep many wives. They take their cousins for wife and, what is more, if the father dies his eldest son takes to wife the wife of his father, if she is not his mother, and all the women who are left by the father except his mother and sisters. He takes also the wife of his own brother if he dies. And when they take a wife they make very great weddings and great gathering of people.

HERE HE TELLS OF THE GOD OF THE TARTARS AND OF THEIR RELIGION. And you may know that their religion is thus as I shall tell you. They say that there is the high, sublime, and heavenly God of whom every day with censer and incense they ask nothing else but good understanding and health. For they worship idols, & they have one of their gods whom they call Natigai, and they say that that is a terrestrial god or god of the land who [28d] protects & cares for their wives and their sons and their cattle and their corn. And they do him great reverence and great honour, for each keeps him in an honourable place in his house. For they make this god of felt and of other cloth and they keep him in their houses; and they believe that this god of theirs has a wife and sons, and so they also make of cloth another feminine image & say that it is the wife of this god and they make other little images & say they are his sons. And the wife of this god they put on the left side and the sons in front, who seem to be doing him reverence, and keep all honourably covered, and give them honour enough. And when they come to eat breakfast or supper, first they take some of the fat flesh and anoint the mouth of that god and also of his wife and of his sons; and

¹ *tantes foies* B.'s conjecture of *tantes femes* is supported by TA,LT,P,VA,VB,V,R.
² *toutes femes* FB: *tant de fames* & so V.