

WEDDING CEREMONIES FOR DEAD CHILDREN = MARCO POLO

V of the dowry and marriage aforesaid, how the father of this dead girl gives that his daughter
V to wife to this dead boy. Then a necromancer throws this paper into the fire and they burn
LT those documents and when they see the smoke which goes into the air then they say
L that they go to their children in the other world and announce this marriage to the dead,
L and that they know it and that they, the dead boy and dead girl in the other world,
V hold themselves as husband and as wife. And thus they believe that henceforth they are
V married. And then they make a great wedding feast and banquet, and of that food they
V scatter some of it hither & thither on running water¹ and say that they go to their
P children in the other world that the bride and bridegroom may eat their share of that feast.
VB And having made two images, one in the form of the youth and the other in the form of the
maid, they put both of these images on a car adorned as richly as possible, and the carriages
being drawn by horses they take these two images with great festival and rejoicings through all
the land, and then conduct them to the fire and burn those two images, and with great prayer
and supplication to the gods that they make that marriage known in the other world with
L R on card men in the likeness of slaves² and horses and other animals and cloth of all
R P FB sorts and bezants and every kind of furniture and many utensils, and all that they agree
to give one to the other for dowry, without being obliged to give it; and then they have them
L burnt and say that their children, the dead bridegroom and bride, will have in the other
VA world all those things in reality which they have had portrayed and burnt. And
P when they have done it they the parents and kinsmen of the dead count themselves as
V P kindred and keep up their relation as long as they live as well as if that wedding had
V VB been exactly celebrated in reality, and as if they their dead children were alive. Now it
VB seems to me that I have shown you and described clearly enough the provinces of this
FB race and all the uses and the customs of the Tartars; not that I have told you of the
R very great deeds and enterprises of the great Kaan, that is the great lord of all the
V Tartars, nor of his vast imperial court, but I shall tell you them clearly in this book

¹ L: *circumquaque per teram . . . per teram exspanssas*

² *des eles* cf. B.p.57. B. leaves the text uncorrected (to be translated presumably "of them") on the ground that VA, VB, P read "of the boy & girl" without "slaves"; but he recorded that V (*omeni chomo schiaui*), L (*homines in modum seruorum*), R (*buomini in luogo di serui*) have "men like slaves" without the "boy and girl"; while TA (*vccielli*, LT: *aves*) shows that the passage was early regarded as puzzling. In 1932 B. translated it *uomini che somigliano a schiavi*. FB omits the sentence.

VB has taken it to be the marriage of a dead boy and living girl, *matremonio della garzona uiua con el puto morto . . . et con gran letizia . . . la meschina garzona i mete nel focho et arde quella*, and naturally calls it *questo crudel costume*.