

CEREMONIES WHEN THE GREAT KAAAN DRINKS MARCO POLO

P P those who wait on the king with the instruments of music, of which there are a vast
 R quantity of all makes, begin to sound until he drinks. And when the great lord has
 FB R his cup in his hand, as soon as the boy has presented it to him he retires backward three paces
 R LT and kneels, and all the barons and all the other people who are serving there kneel
 R down and make a sign of great humility; and then the great lord drinks. And
 R when he has drunk, the instruments cease and the people rise. And every time when he drinks
 R LT it is done so as you have heard with this honour and reverence, or when new food comes.
 P But of the food which is brought to the tables I will tell you nothing, because each must
 P P FB believe that in so magnificent a court it is there in great and lavish abundance of every
 LT sort; that he has dishes and viands many and various of different flesh of animals and birds
 wild and domestic and of fish, when it is the season for this and when he pleases, prepared in
 various and different ways most delicately as befits his magnificence and his dignity. Moreover
 G FB I tell you that no baron nor any knight eats there but brings his first wife also,
 LT and but that she eats¹ there with the other ladies. And when they have eaten and
 P the great Kaan has finished his meal, and the tables are taken away, then all the harpers
 rise up and make sweet melody and there come into that hall before the great lord and
 R before all the other people many persons, and amongst the others a very great multitude
 P VA VA of jugglers and of acrobats and actors and soothsayers and men of many sorts who do
 several kinds of great per[39c]formances, and all make great enjoyment and great
 P festivity before the great lord and the others who have eaten in his court, and the people
 make much joy of it and laugh at it and enjoy it much. And when it is all done,
 VA the people leave and each goes back to his lodging and to his house as he pleases.

R **H**ERE HE TELLS OF THE GREAT FESTIVAL WHICH THE GREAT KAAAN MAKES
 L ON HIS BIRTHDAY. And you may know that all the Tartars and those who
 are subjects of the great Kaan are used to make festival of their birthdays.²
 FB P And the great Kaan-Cublai was born on the 28 day of the moon of the month of
 TA LT LT September, on Monday, the day of Saint Lucy and Geminianus.³ And every year on that
 LT FB LT R day he makes the greatest feast that he makes all the year for any purpose, except the other
 P feast which they make at the beginning of the year on the kalends of February, which
 day they observe as the beginning of the year, for the month of February is with them the first

¹ que ne moine se feme & qe nei menuie LT: qui illuc non ducat suam uxorem, et que non commedat

² FA,FB,P,V,L agree with this. TA,R say that the Tartars celebrate the Kaan's birthday. LT: Quando magnus Kaan nascitur omnes barones faciunt festum de die sue nationis

³ P: xxv. die mensis decembris TA: lunedì misunderstanding iors de la lune V (in a confused sentence): vintioto de setenbrio et fo de luni Qubilai was born on the 28 day of the 8th moon (Wednesday, 23 September) 1215, the octave of the feast of St Lucy and Geminianus. cf. p. 193 above.