

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD'S GOOD AND BAD CUSTOMS  
 in a book. And when the years have run their course up to the sign of the twelfth number, <sup>Z</sup>  
 then they begin again from the first number, always proceeding in this order. And so when a  
 man shall ask of the astrologer or diviner what end his proposal shall obtain, & shall have first  
 told him the day, hour, & minute of the moon of his birth & in the course of what year, then the  
 diviner after inspecting the constellation and finding the planet under which he was born will  
 foretell him everything which will happen to him on that journey in order, and how his proposal  
 will prosper in all his doings, whether well or ill; namely, if he is a merchant, the planet which  
 will then be in the ascendant will be opposed to his trade, so that he will wait until another  
 shall reign propitious to him; or the sign which faces directly opposite to the gate by which he  
 is to leave the city will be in opposition to his own sign, so that he will be obliged to go out  
 by another gate, or to wait until that sign is changed; again that in such a place or time he  
 will find robbers; in such, rain will come upon him or tempest; in such, the horse will break  
 a leg; in such, he will lose on his wares, or gain; and thus he will foretell about each separate  
 point propitious as well as adverse, according to the signs propitious to him or opposed, until  
 his return, according to the disposition in which the sky shall be found to be. <sup>R</sup>

He found then the men of the province of Catai beyond other people endued with prettier <sup>Z</sup>  
 and more good manners, for they are always intent on study and learned exercises; but he found  
 one horrible custom which he altogether forbade.<sup>1</sup>

They speak indeed prettily and in order,<sup>2</sup> they greet becomingly with cheerful and smiling  
 face, they behave with dignity and cleanliness in eating; and so with each separate thing.  
 They bear great reverence to the father and mother. And if it is found that any son does anything <sup>R</sup>  
 to displease them, or does not help them in their need, there is a public office which has no  
 other duty but to punish severely ungrateful sons whom they know to have committed some act  
 of ingratitude towards them. Malefactors of different crimes who have been taken and put in  
 prison, if they have not been despatched<sup>3</sup> when the time fixed by the great Kaan for the release  
 of prisoners comes (which is every three years), then come out, but a mark has been made on  
 them on one jaw, so that they may be recognized.

<sup>1</sup> The subject of *inuenit* (p. xxv) seems to be the great Kaan rather than, as has been assumed, Marco Polo. The sentences form apparently an introduction to the account of the good and bad customs which follows, though this would not have been clear if the paragraph about the "horrible custom" of "gaming and cheating", omitted by Z, had not fortunately been preserved by R.

<sup>2</sup> *ordinate* R (probably better): *vn parlar ornato*

<sup>3</sup> *se non sono spacciati* Whether *spacciati* means strangled (MARSDEN) or set free (RICCI) I cannot presume to say, though I incline to agree with MARSDEN. PURCHAS, MARSDEN, BALDELLI-BONI, YULE, and BENEDETTO all seem to have used one of the later editions of R, which cause difficulty by the omission of *se non*.