

MANNERS & RELIGION OF THE MEN OF CATAI ≈ MARCO POLO

He forbad, this present great Kaan, all the gaming and cheating, which were more usual with them than in any place in the world; and to take them away from them he said, I have conquered you arms in hand, and all that you possess is mine, and if you gamble you gamble with what is mine. He did not however for this take anything from them.

I do not wish to fail to speak about the order and manner in which the people and barons of the great Kaan behave when they go to him. First the people remain humble, quiet, and calm for half a mile round the place where the great Kaan may be, out of respect for his excellency, so that no sound or noise nor voice of anyone who shouts or talks loudly is heard. And every baron or noble always carries a vase small and beautiful, into which he spits while he is in hall, for none would have the courage to spit upon [the floor of] the hall; and when he has spat he covers and keeps it.¹ They have likewise certain beautiful slippers of white leather which they carry with them, and when they are arrived at the court if they wish to go into the hall, supposing that the lord asks for them, they put on these white slippers and give the others to the servants; and this, so as not to soil the beautiful and cunningly made carpets of silk, both of gold and of other colours.

Z And as we have said above, these people are all idolaters. But in doing reverence to their gods they keep this manner. Each one has in his house a statue hung on the wall of a room
R Z R which represents the high & sublime god of heaven, or only a tablet set high on the wall of
Z R his room with the name of the god written there. And here every day with the thurible of incense
Z R Z they worship him thus and lift up indeed the hands on high, and at the same time gnashing
R thrice their teeth they ask him to give them long life, happy and cheerful, good understanding and
Z health, and they ask him nothing more. Then also down on the ground they have another statue
which is called Natigai, god of earthly matters, who only has to concern himself with earthly
R matters, and of things which grow on the earth. With this god is his wife and children; and
R they worship him in the same way with the thurible and gnashing the teeth and lifting the hands,
and of this one they ask temperate weather and fruits of the earth, children, and similar things.
Z They have indeed no consciousness and care of the soul, but are only devoted to nourishing the
R body and getting pleasure for themselves. About the soul, they hold it to be immortal in this
Z way. For they think that when a man dies he enters immediately into another body, and
R according as in life he had borne himself well or ill, going on from good to better or from bad
Z in life, he will be born again after death of the womb of a gentlewoman and will be a gentleman,
and then of the womb of a lady and will be a lord, if he is the son of a knight and in life has
borne himself well, at death he is born again of the womb of a countess; afterwards being dead
again he is born again of the womb of a princess, and so always ascending until he is taken

¹ lo copre & salua MARS DEN: "and makes a salutation" B.: e lo nascondono