

THE ABSURD DETESTABLE CUSTOMS OF TEBET = MARCO POLO

FB *the blindness of idolatry. It is true that no man of that country would take a maiden*
P *for wife for anything in the world, but every man requires in her whom he wishes to take*
to wife that she shall first have been known by many men, and they say that they are worth
FB Z *nothing if they are not used and accustomed to lie with many men. For a woman or*
girl who has not been known by any man is said among them to be displeasing to the gods,
wherefore for this reason men avoid them and do not care for them, because if they were pleasing
FB *to their idols men would desire them and love them. And so they are espoused and act in*
VB P *such a way. For I tell you that when they perceive that some caravan of merchants or the*
people of other strange lands pass through that country and have stretched their
FB VA FB *tents for lodging as they pass near by the city, by a hamlet, or a village, or by any other*
VA *dwelling. (& they would not dare to lodge inside those places, because it would not please the*
VA *people of those regions), then the old women of the cities[and]villages and of the*
VA FB *hamlets who have grown-up daughters & maidens at home, are ready with all their daughters*
FB *or their kinswomen or their friends and go and bring their daughters with these maidens.*
TA Z TA *to the road and to the inns and to these tents; and these are sometimes by ten, by twenty,*
TA Z VA *or by thirty, and by forty in one company, and by more and by less according to the number*
FB *of the foreigners so that each one has his own; and give them to the men who will take*
R *them, one vying with another in begging the merchants to take her daughter and keep her at his*
R *pleasure as long as they stay there, that they may do their will with them and that they*
R *may lie with them. And so the young women who are most successful are chosen by the*
merchants, and the others go home sorrowful. Then the men take them and enjoy them-
Z VA FB *selves with them and keep them as long as they wish there, but they cannot take*
them with them to another place nor to another district, forward or backward; and then
they[return]them to the old women who brought them. And in this way the travellers as they
go by the roads find them in twenties and thirties as many as they wish. And when they lodge
with these people in their hamlets or in their villages they have as many of them as they wish,
Z Z FB *for the girls come there to beg them. And then when the men have done their will with*
R R *them and they wish to depart to go their way, it is the custom for him to give some*
VA *little thing, some jewel, a ring, or some other token to that woman with whom he has*
Z FB *lain, so that she can show proof and sign when she comes to be married that she has*
FB *been loved and has had a paramour, and they do it for no other purpose. And in such a*
VA Z *way it is the custom for each girl to have more than twenty such jewels or tokens*
R VB *on her neck to show [51c] that many paramours and many men have lain with her,*
when she wishes to adorn herself, or if she wishes to be taken to wife; and as soon as a girl has
R VB *won any token she hangs it on her breast or on her back. & goes home very happy with her present;*
& is received by her parents with joy & honour; & happy is she who can show that she has
had more presents from more strangers. And those who have more tokens and can show