

THE EVIL DISHONEST BEHAVIOUR IN GAINDU = MARCO POLO

FB have in his house; but they regard it as a great good when one lies with them, and they say that for this deed their god and their idols do better for them and give them temporal things in great abundance. *This they have from their idols which give them an answer saying that in that year they may have plenty of all good things.* And therefore they make so great liberality of their wives to the foreigners especially, because being away from home they have no women, and to all other people as I shall tell you. For you may know that when a man of this country sees that a foreigner is coming to him to his house to lodge, or, though he may not wish to lodge there, yet to enter into his house, he is so glad and joyful to receive him into his house. And as soon as he is lodged,¹ the master of the house he immediately [52c] goes outside and strictly commands his wife and others of the house that all his will may be done for the stranger & for his companions completely. And then when he has said and ordered this he goes his way abroad either to his field or to his vines and does not come back there so long as the stranger stays in his house. And I tell you that many times he stays there three days or four, eight and sometimes ten, and lies in bed enjoying himself with the wife of that wretch or his daughter or his sister or whoever he shall wish. And as soon as the man of the house is gone the stranger who is in the house makes this sign to show that he is inside; for he has his hat or any other token hung up at the window or over the gate of the courtyard, and it is a sign that he is inside. And the cuckold wretch, so long as he sees that token at his house, does not dare go back at all, knowing that the stranger is still there, lest he should hinder him in his pleasures. For whichever of the women, as well the wife, daughters, sisters as the others, or all whom he would wish to use, rejoice, believing that for that so liberal benefit done to strangers their gods and idols bestow on them more abundantly flocks and fruits of the earth. And when the stranger is gone the master comes back & finds his family all joyful and happy, and rejoices with them making them tell all the entertainment they made for the stranger, and all with joy give thanks to the gods. And they do this vile custom through all this province of Gaindu, and do not take this thing for a shame. And they assign such a reason for this custom. For they say that because of the pleasures and conveniences which they bestow on foreigners of this sort their gods rejoicing with them provide them abundantly with temporal goods. But the great Kaan forbad them this custom. But they do not cease on this account to observe it, for they all willingly do it; there is not any to accuse another. There are some who live in the villages and houses on the rugged places of the mountains near the roads who have fair wives whom they allow to passers by at will, and the merchants give to the women a piece of some thin stuff, perhaps about half an ell, or other thing of little cost. After having his pleasure then the merchant mounts the

¹ V: quelle femene li mena al so ostello . . .