

IDOLS OF CATAI AND MANGI AND THE ISLES ≠ MARCO POLO

HERE HE TELLS OF THE FASHIONS OF THE IDOLS. Now you may know that the idols of Catai and of [73c] Mangi and of those of these islands¹ of Indie are all of one fashion, but their idols differ greatly from others.²

And I tell you that those of these islands and also the other idolaters have idols which have an ox's³ head, and some which have a swine's head, and some a dog's, and some a sheep's, and some of many other different sorts. And some there are which have one head with four⁴ faces, and some have three heads, that is one as it should have and the other two on the shoulders, one on each shoulder. And there are some idols which have two eyes on the shoulders, & some which have four eyes and four hands and some which have ten of them, and some a hundred, and some many more, and some which have a thousand of them; but these with a thousand are the better and those for which they have greater reverence than for the others. And when the Christians said to them, why did they make their idols so differently one from the other, they answer, Our ancestors and fathers leave them to us and they were of this kind, and we shall leave them to our sons and to those who shall come after us, and so they will always go from one to the other. And you may know that they are great enchanters and charm the idols, and the deeds of these idolaters are of so great strangeness and of such devil's work as is not fit to mention in our book, because it would be too evil and abominable a thing to tell such things for the Christians to hear, for these idols say such wonderful things both in answers and in other ways that those who told would scarcely be believed. And so we will leave telling you of these idolaters so as not to be tedious, and will tell you of other things. But so much only will I tell you of them that I wish you to know that all these idolaters of these islands, and of all the rest, for the most part do a horrible thing, for when they take any man who is not their friend, if he cannot ransom himself for money, he who has taken the man calls together all his relations and his friends and says, I wish you to come to eat with me at my lodging. And then he makes them kill the [73d] man whom he has taken and eats him in great festivity with his relations. And you understand that he has him cooked. And they hold this human flesh as the best food that they could have in the world, for they say that it is the most savoury that can be found. Now we will leave telling you this and will return to our subject. Now you may know that this sea, where this island of this region is,

¹ e celz de celz de ceste ysles probably for e celz de celz de ceste ysles but Z: et de istis insulis V: ede queste ixole FB: et celles des ysles so that we should perhaps read: e celz de ceste ysles

² VB: "All these islanders are idolaters not of the sect and order of idolaters of Catai nor of Mangi, but very different."

³ TA: *lione*

⁴ Z, V, R: "two"