

THE CUSTOMS OF THE MEN & WOMEN ISLANDS ≈ MARCO POLO

V P greater Indie only of the provinces and of the cities which are on the sea, or of certain
 FB islands which are in that sea, for we have not told you of those which are up inland,
 VB which are in very great numbers, because it would be too long a matter to mention.
 FB And so we will depart then from this province and will tell you of some other
 L islands which also belong to greater Indie, and we will begin with the two islands
 Z Z which are called *the one Males* and *the other the island of Women*.

Z H ERE HE TELLS OF THE MALES AND WOMEN ISLANDS. The island¹ indeed
 FB FB H which is called Male is on the high sea quite 500 miles toward midday
 Z when one sets out from *this realm of Kesmacoran which is on the mainland*.
 Z They are all baptized Christians and keep themselves to the faith and to the
 z customs [90c] of the Old Testament. For I tell you that when his wife is pregnant
 z he does not touch her afterwards until she has given birth, and from the time when
 she has given birth he leaves her again without touching her forty days. But from
 forty days onward he touches her at his pleasure. But yet I tell you that their
 wives do not stay in this island, nor any other ladies, but they all live in the other
 Z FB island which is called *Female Island*. On the island which they call Male stay all the
 VA FB men. And you may know that *the women never come to the island of men, but when it*
comes to the month of March the men of this island go off to this island of Women
 V and stay there for three months, these are March and April and May.² And these
 G three months the men go to that other island to stay with their wives, each man
 V with his wife in his wife's house, and in these three months they take great enjoyment
 V and pleasure with them, and at end of these three months they come back to this
 FB Z island & do their ploughing & their traffic and make their profit there all the other
 V nine months of the year. Moreover I tell you that ambergris is produced³ in this
 FB VA island very fine and good and beautiful & in plenty, by reason of the whales of which
 V VB many are taken in that sea. And they live on rice and on milk and on flesh and on fish.
 L L And they are very good fishers, for you may know that many very large good fish
 are caught in that sea of this island. And they catch so much of it that they have a
 VL great quantity of it dried in the sun so that they have enough of it to eat all the
 P FB year; and they also sell it fresh & dried to the other people, to the merchants who go

¹ VA begins: "There are two islands, one thirty miles from the other; in one stay the men without women and it is called in that tongue Male Island, in the other stay the women without the men and it is called Female Island; those who dwell in these islands are one same thing." P,R,G to the same effect, G ending "the inhabitants of both the islands are Christian."

² VL: "August, September, and October."

³ laist probably for naist V: nasse