

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD ≈ CUSTOMS OF BARBARIANS

too they have fire and put a cane on the fire and it is made hot and is inflated. And when it is very hot it is suddenly cracked and makes a sound[t: great and terrible so that it is heard]from[t: afar by]three or four miles. And then evil beasts such as lions, bears, &c. fly in terror and depart from the street. The merchants pass, who otherwise would not dare to pass through those places because of the beasts. (cf. chapter 115, p. 268 above.)

The book of Milio also says that in some places in the east and in the south all women and men until they are of four[t(*margin*): xii]years [78b] go in all ways naked. And when a woman is no more virgin she puts herself a little covering of something in front of the belly. And men put nothing as in most cases, and sometimes a few[do so].

It is said that in India and farther under the sun no woman is married if she is virgin. But she whom the more men have had is the better married, because she is said to be more pleasing. And anyone who lies with her[t: gives]her some token that he has had her for proof of the fact. And if she conceives from any one of the aforesaid, [the child]is brought up by him who takes her to wife, and is heir in the house with others who are born. (cf. chapter 115, p. 270 above.)

It says that in another place all women are common as if they were animals; and whoever wishes takes and when he wishes sends[them]away. And if a son or daughter is born he follows the mother, but none cares about the father. And for the[t: time]that one keeps her she does all the duties for the man and works continually. But the men are at leisure for amusements.

In some places among the barbarians they have such a custom. For when a man takes a wife, they lead[her]to a priest that there she may give her offering to her god. And after the offering the priest leads her into his chamber, and after he has known her he gives her to her husband; and thus she is said then to be hallowed. And there are many priests in every place, all ordered as if by parishes. But none but a virgin is given to a priest.

There is some place among the barbarians where there is such a custom. A man takes many wives, namely as many as he wishes; and each stays by herself separate from another, though all in the same district. And they are called among themselves associated wives of the lord. Each keeps her household as well as she can, and they all labour. And they supply their husband with all things as well as they can. And she who does better for him is more loved by him. To day he is with one and to morrow with another, and so he goes round them all continually, and eats and lies there. And if by chance he falls ill, he stays until he is cured in the house of her where he took the sickness. And if it happen that that man die,