

<http://montesquieu.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article2838>



XVI.11 On domestic servitude, independent of polygamy

- The Spirit of Law - Book XVI. How the laws of domestic slavery relate to the nature of the climate -

Publication date: jeudi 6 septembre 2018

Copyright © Montesquieu - Tous droits réservés

XVI.11 On domestic servitude, independent of polygamy

It is not only the plurality of wives that requires their confinement in certain places in the Orient : it is the climate. If you read the horrors, crimes, treachery, villainies, poisons, and murders caused by the freedom of women in Goa and in the Portuguese settlements in the Indies where the religion allows only one wife, and compare them to the innocence and purity of the morals of the women of Turkey, of Persia, of the Mogul empire, and of China and Japan, you will see clearly that it is often just as necessary to separate them from men when a man has but one wife as when he has several.

It is the climate that must determine things. What good would it be to confine the women in our northern countries, where their morals are naturally sound, all their passions are calm, subdued, and unrefined, where love has such controlled sway over the heart that the simplest structure suffices to guide them ?

It is a blessing to live in these climes which allow us to communicate, where the most attractive sex seems to enhance society, and where the women, restricting themselves to the pleasures of a single man, still serve the entertainment of all.