

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s THE SENSIN ASCETICS

And again I tell you that *besides these* there is another kind of religious men according to their usage who are called in their tongue sensin, who are men of very great abstinence according to their custom and lead their life so very hard & rough as I shall tell you. For you may know quite truly that in all the times of their life they eat nothing but semola and bran, that is the husks that are left from wheat flour.¹ And they prepare it as we prepare it for swine; for they take that semola, that is bran, & put it in hot water to make it soft and leave it to stay there some time till the whole heart or grain is removed from the husk, and then they take it out and eat it washed like this without any substantial taste. And it is their food. They fast many times a year and eat nothing in the world but that bran of which I have told you & drink water, and stay much in prayer; so that it is a very hard life beyond measure. And they have great idols and many, and sometimes they worship the fire. And I tell you that the other idolater regulars who hold laxer rules say that these who live in so great abstinence² are like heretics from their law, because they do not worship the idols in such manner as they do according to due form and properly. But there is great difference between them in many things, that is between the one [33d] rule and the other. And these would not take a wife for anything in the world, but they wear the crown and the beard shaved; and they wear black and blue³ clothes of the commonest and coarsest sackcloth, and if they should be of silk they would wear them of such colour as I have told you. They always sleep on the very hard and cheap mats, these are rods.⁴ They lead a harder life than any men in the world. And they have their monasteries or temples separate from the others. And their idols are all women;⁵ that is to say that they all have

¹ P: nec comedunt nisi sulphur aqua mixtum See p. 404.

² que uent ensint grant astinence The translation follows Z: uiuentes in tanta abstinentia and P: sic dure uiuentes

³ VA: biancho

⁴ sor les estiuies ce sunt boides Z: super sextoria FA,FB: sus nates LT,P: super stramina durissima TA omits V: dorme soua stuore VB: nelle stuore R: sopra stuore grosse VA: suxo pani B.: sor les estuies, ce sunt boises, with a note which does not say what estuies means, but says that boises is attested in the sense of baculi. B. also suggests bosces, and points out that this could easily be corrupted to boides. Another very simple change would make bordes, meaning "cabins" or, possibly, "boards". Estui seems to mean a close-fitting case, a narrow pen, or sty; but estiuies must probably be supposed to represent the Italian stuoie or stuore, "mats", as the words describe that on which, & not in which, the men slept.

⁵ qe homes dou monde lor moistier & lor ydres sunt toutes femes FA(FB): que cest merueilles. leur ydoles sont toutes fames. Cest por ce que leur nons sont touz nons femenins V: e li suoi monestieri e le suo idole si a nome pure de femene Few, if any, texts besides F and V have the "monasteries", but most (except Z,R) have the statement that the idols are feminine. After monde, ē ("in" — ". . . in