

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD ≈ MEN KILL THEMSELVES
 an idol. The king tells him that he is quite willing for this. And then all the relations and the friends of this one who must kill himself take him and put him on a chair¹ and give him quite twelve² swords or knives well ground & sharp, & tie them round Z R VL
 his neck, and carry him through all the city and go saying and crying, This very valiant FB VB
 man is going to kill himself for the love, honour, & reverence of such an idol. In such L
 a way as I tell you they carry him through all the city, and when they are come at last L
 to the place where justice is to be done, then he who must die takes a knife and cries Z
 with a loud voice, I kill myself for the love of such an idol. After he has said these
 words he strikes himself with the knife in the middle of the [80a] arm. And then he VB
 throws that knife away, and then he takes another knife and strikes himself in the other
 arm. Then he takes another knife and strikes himself through the middle of the belly.
 And so he fixes them all, crying out for every blow, I kill me from love of such idols. And what Z
 shall I tell you about it? He gives himself so many [blows] with these knives that
 he himself kills himself. [For] when all have been fixed, then taking a knife with two handles, Z
 like those with which hoops are worked, he puts it at the back of his head and drawing it violently
 to him cuts through his own neck, for that knife is very well sharpened, and dies in the very
 act. And when he is killed his relations take the body and put it on a great fire and burn VB
 the body with great joy & with great festivity, thinking that he is fortunate.³ And again FB VL
 I tell you that there is also another custom in this kingdom, that each one keeps as VL
 many wives as he can maintain and, when a man is dead and his body is being burnt
 as is their custom, his wife throws herself alive on to the fire herself and lets herself L L
 burn with her lord from love of him, saying she will go with her husband into the other Z VB
 life; and so the wretched woman is burnt with the husband. And these ladies who are not VB
 afraid to do this & those who first leap into the fire are much praised and honoured by VL VB
 the other people. Moreover I tell you quite truly that many ladies do this which I Z
 have told you, but not all the women are found willing to burn with the husbands; and Z VB
 those who are afraid to die with their husbands are much blamed.⁴ And again I tell you that

¹ caiere and so P,Z,VB,L,R FB,TA,LT,V: "cart"

² P: decem uel xx

³ cf. Z (p. lxxiii): *Ille qui mori . . . ipso facto*. A comparison between F, Z, and other texts seems to suggest that they have all been shortened in various ways from a longer original. The detail about the two-handled knife, peculiar to Z among Polo MSS., is found in Jordan of Sévérac. cf. CORDIER *Les Merveilles de l'Asie* p. 117 (Pl. X, XI): *In ista maiori yndia multi se ipsos sacrificant ydolis isto modo . . . et portant tales homines se ydolo sacrificantes gladium unum duorum manubriorum ad modum illorum qui parant coria qui postquam luxerint multum ad collum retro ponunt gladium scindentur fortiter ualde quem(?) trabunt fortissime cum duabus manibus et sic coram ydolo suum amputant capud.* R: *l'ultimo si ficca nel cuore, & subito muore.*

⁴ In TA,VB, this passage refers to the wives of the criminals who kill themselves.