

CUSTOMS & BELIEFS OF THE CIUGUI IN LAR ≈ MARCO POLO

rod or twig and so spread the dung with it and divide it hither & thither about the sand that nothing of it is seen. [If] they are asked why they do this they answer, Because worms would be created in it, and the worms created, when the nourishment was consumed by the sun, would die when food failed them; and since that substance comes out of our body (because without food too we cannot live) from the death of so many souls which would have been made from our substance we should have very great sin. And therefore we so destroy that substance, that worms may not at all be able to be created from it for this that afterwards, when food fails, by fault
 Z and failing of ours they may die. And again I tell you that these religious men they sleep¹
 L on the naked earth quite naked without keeping anything whatever in the world
 V FB neither below nor above. And so it is a great wonder how they do not all die,
 VB V and how they can live [85a] so long as I have told you above. And they make great
 Z TA abstinence from eating *flesh*, for they fast all the years and they eat nothing but bread
 and drink water and nothing else. And again I will tell you another thing about
 Z V them. For they have their regulars who stay in the Churches to serve the Churches
 Z and the idols.² And when they are appointed to another office or rank they prove them in
 Z such way as I shall tell you. For when some one of them dies and another must be chosen
 FB in his place they keep him for a time in their abbey and make him lead their life; and then
 Z they make the maidens who are offered to the idols, as is said above in the book,
 come and they cause those men who watch the idols to be touched by these
 maidens. They touch them both here and there in many parts of the body, they
 Z Z embrace and kiss them and put them in the greatest pleasure which they know and is
 possible in the world. And that man who is handled in such a way by the maidens
 of whom I have told you, if his member is not moved at all except as it was before
 V VB VB the maidens touch him, this one is counted good and pure and they keep him in the
 V VB order with them as approved, and he serves the idols. And if another whom the maidens
 should handle, if his member is moved and rises, this one they do not keep at all
 L FB but drive him away all immediately from the fellowship of the monks for ever and say
 VB that they refuse to keep a man of self-indulgence with them, not thinking him fit to
 stay in the order to serve the idols, since they wish these to be very holy men. And these are
 FB FB FB so cruel and so treacherous & so perfect idolaters that I tell you that it is devilry. They
 VA say that they have all their dead bodies burnt for this reason because they say that
 V if they should not burn the dead bodies they would receive harm and they would
 make worms and after the worms should have eaten that body from which they

¹ Z: permanent V: stano FB: dorment LT: [dor]miunt L: dormiunt VA,VB,VL: dormeno
 TA: dormono G: si slofin

² VB: "There is also another order who sleep in water to serve their idols."