

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s THE ISLAND OF SCOTRA

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there to buy it, and specially the ambergris; & they make great profit from these fish. And those of this island they have no king nor temporal lord except a bishop¹ who again is subject to the court of the archbishop of another island which is named Scotra. And they have a language for themselves. And you may know that it is about thirty miles from this island to that where their wives stay. And for this reason they do not stay all the year with their wives according to what they say, because they could not live if they were to stay with them all the year. And their children which are born their mothers nourish in their island,² & if it is a girl then the mother keeps her there till she is of the age to be married, & then at the season marries her to one of the men of the island. Yet it is true that as soon as they are weaned and the male child has fourteen³ years, so soon does his mother send him to his father [god] in their island. And this is the custom and the usage of these two islands as you have heard. Yet it is true that their wives do nothing else but nourish their children, for the men supply them with what they need. When the men come to the womens islands they sow grain, and then the women cultivate and reap it; and the women also gather any fruit, which they have of many kinds in that island. Now we have told you all the affair of this matter. There is nothing else which does to mention and so we will depart from these two islands and proceeding farther will tell you of the island of Scotra.

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HERE HE TELLS OF THE ISLAND OF SCOTRA. When one sets out from these two islands aforesaid which are called Male & Female and goes about 500 miles over the sea toward midday then one finds the island of Scotra. And you may know that all those of this island are again baptized Christians and have an archbishop in this island. And ambergris is produced there in great quantity. And it is found in the belly of the whale fish and in the capdoille;⁴ now they are the two largest fishes which are in the sea. And we will tell you the way in which the whale is caught in those parts. They have much of the tunny fish which they catch for the reason written below alone. The tunny is very fat, and they cut it into pieces and place it in large vases or jars and put in salt and make much brine. This done there will be perhaps twelve who will take a small ship and, putting on board this fish with all the brine or salt broth of the fish, will go out to sea. And then they will have some remnants of torn pieces or of other cast off things, and they will soak these leavings tied in a bundle in the aforesaid brine which will be very fat, and afterwards they will throw them into the water; and they will be tied to the little ship with a rope. Then they will hoise sail and will go all day wandering through the high sea hither and

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¹ L: archiepiscopum

² Z: suis insulis and see just below.

³ Z,VB,R: "twelve" G: "thirteen" VL: "seven"

⁴ Sperm whale or cachalot.