

WAS ODORIC OF PORDENONE EVER IN TIBET?

BY

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IN January of this year the Hakluyt Society began to re-issue Colonel Sir Henry YULE's memorable work *Cathay and the Way Thither*, published in 1866. We cannot be grateful enough to Professor H. CORDIER for having taken upon himself the difficult task of thoroughly revising and re-editing this learned work, the republication of which meets a long-felt want, the first edition having been exhausted for at least fifteen years. The additional up-to-date information supplied by the wide erudition of Professor Cordier has increased the bulk of the work to such an extent that in its new garb it will comprise four, instead of the former two, volumes. Volume II, containing the description of the journey of Friar ODORIC of PORDENONE, is the one that has now been issued. In Chapter 45, "Concerning the Realm of Tibet, where dwelleth the Pope of the Idolaters," Professor CORDIER has added a note, taken from L. A. WADDELL'S *Lhasa and its Mysteries* (p. 425), to this effect: "As to Friar Odoric's alleged visit, as the first European to enter Lhasa, it seems to me very doubtful whether the city he visited in the fourteenth century A. D. could have been this one at all, as his description of the place is so different from Lhasa as we now find it . . . Now none of the streets of Lhasa are paved, although

plenty of stones are locally available for the purpose, and it seems unlikely that a city which was formerly 'very well paved' should have so entirely given up this practice and left no trace of it." The weight of this argument is not very cogent, and hardly presents a sufficient basis in favor of the desired proof. Still more categorically P. LANDON¹ has given vent to his feelings in the words, "It seems clear that he never reached Lhasa." This conclusion, however, is not backed up by any evidence; and for the rest, LANDON adheres to the general view that "Odoric appears to have visited Tibet about 1328." Whatever the foundation of these contentions may be, on reading Odoric's account of Tibet carefully, it seems to me a fitting time now to raise the broader question, Was Odoric of Pordenone ever in Tibet?

It is with a considerable amount of reluctance and *gêne* that this challenge is advanced. No lesser geographer than Colonel Sir Henry Yule has indorsed the tradition that Odoric, starting from Peking, turned westward through Tenduc, the Ordos country, and Shen-si, to Tibet, and its capital Lhasa, where "we lose all indication of his further route, and can only conjecture on very slight hints, added to general probabilities, that his homeward journey led him by Kabul, Khorasan, and the south of the Caspian, to Tabriz, and thence to Venice."² F. v. RICHTHOFEN³ and C. R. MARKHAM⁴ have shared this opinion, and Friar Odoric has thus acquired the fame of having been the first European traveller to visit Tibet and Lhasa. Mr. ROCKHILL⁵ opens a history of the exploration of Tibet in the words: "As far as my knowledge goes, the first European

¹ *Lhasa*, Vol. I, p. 4 (London, 1905).

² *Cathay*, Vol. II, p. 10; again, on p. 23, "We are ignorant of his route from Tibet westward."

³ *China*, Vol. I, p. 617.

⁴ *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle*, p. XLVI.

⁵ *Diary of a Journey through Mongolia and Tibet*, p. IX.

traveller who entered Tibet was Friar Odoric, who, coming from northwestern China, traversed central Tibet on his way to India in or about 1325, and sojourned some time in its capital, Lhasa." It would seem almost cruel to destroy this nimbus, and to depose the good Friar from the throne which he has so long occupied in the history of geographical discoveries.

His claim to the honor of being the first Tibetan traveller, however, is deserving of serious scrutiny. It means a great deal to strip him of this glory, and such a denial should certainly be placed on more weighty arguments than the mere matter of street pavement. Lhasa may have undergone manifold changes from the fourteenth century down to 1904, and the lack of stone pavement in recent times does not yet exclude the possibility of better street conditions during the middle ages. It seems unfair, at any rate, to throw this stone at the poor Friar; and while I am not inclined to believe that he ever was in Lhasa, I feel perfectly convinced that he was given the information regarding the well-paved streets. There is no doubt that the Tibetans understand the art of cutting stones and making pavement. The excellent Jesuit Father Ippolito DESIDERI, who lived in Tibet from 1715 to 1721, relates that the halls, main rooms, galleries, and terraces, in most houses of Lhasa, were covered with a very fine pavement made from small pebbles of various colors, and well arranged; between these they put resin of pine-trees and various other ingredients, and then for several days they continually beat stones and ingredients together, till the pavement becomes like a veritable porphyry, very smooth and lustrous, so that when cleansed with water it is like a mirror.¹

¹ Le sale, le camere principali, le logge e i terrazzi della maggior parte delle case, hanno un bellissimo pavimento, fatto di pietruzze minutissime, di diversi colori e ben disposte, fra le quali pongono della ragia di pino, e vari altri ingredienti, e di poi battono per vari giorni continuamente e pietruzze e ingredienti, fin che il pavimento viene come un intero porfido, molto liscio e molto lustro; di modo che lavato con acqua, diventa come

If the people of Lhasa were capable of work of this sort within their habitations, they could have accomplished the same on their public high-roads.¹ The technical term for this kind of mosaic work is *rtsig nos bstar-ba*.²

All authors seem to be agreed on the one point that Odoric's account of Tibet is a rather thin fabric woven of slender threads, and that it is certainly not what we ought to expect from a man who is reported to have traversed Tibet from one corner to the other, and to have even sojourned at Lhasa. The first question to be brought on the tapis, then, is this, — Is his information that of an eye-witness, or of one who drew it second-hand from the interviews of Chinese or Mongols regarding Tibet? If it contains such striking features as could only come to the notice of a personal observer of things and events, we are compelled to admit that Odoric did dwell within the boundaries of Tibet proper. Odoric, however, imparts nothing that would immediately force upon us such a conclusion: his scant notes could have been gathered at that time in China or as well in Mongolia. Tibet then was subject to the sway of the Great Khan; and Tibetans, those of the clergy and the laity, swarmed at his Court. Plano Carpini, who was not in Tibet, nevertheless had occasion to see Tibetan people, and to observe their custom of plucking out the hairs of their beards with iron tweezers.³ Marco Polo's notice of Tibet is succinct, yet more graphic

uno specchio. — C. PUINI, *Il Tibet*, p. 59 (Roma, 1904). To YULE's note on p. 249, lamenting the loss of the records of Desideri and Samuel van de Putte, it should now be added that Desideri's manuscript has been rediscovered and edited by Puini under the title quoted, and that the remains of Putte's diary have been published by P. J. VETH (*De Nederlandsche reiziger Samuel van de Putte, Tijdschrift van het Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, 1876, deel II, pp. 5—19).

¹ DESIDERI (l. c., p. 58) speaks of a "cammino largo, e ben fabbricato."

² SCHIEFNER, *Mélanges asiatiques*, Vol. VII, p. 524, note 5.

³ Hi pilos in barba non habent, imo ferrum quoddam in manibus, sicut vidimus, portant, cum quo semper barbam, si forte crinis aliquis in ea crescit, depilant (*Libellus historicus*, Cap. X).

and lively than Odoric's, and presents the result of border information, presumably picked up at Ya-chou fu or thereabout.¹ Half of Odoric's chapter on Tibet is devoted to a description of the burial-practice; and he tells with manifest interest the story of how the corpses are cut to pieces by the priests and devoured by the eagles and vultures, how the son cooks and eats his father's head and makes his skull into a goblet, from which he and all of the family always drink devoutly to the memory of the deceased father; and they say that by acting in this way they show their great respect for their father.² The same is reported in substance by his predecessors, Plano Carpini (1246) and William of Rubruk (1253), the latter honestly adding that an eye-witness had told it to him.³ Certainly these two writers were not copied by Odoric, but each of the three independently reported a tradition which he had heard from the Mongols. Here we are allowed to apply the same verdict as pronounced by YULE⁴ in regard to Odoric and Marco Polo having in common the story of the Old Man of the Mountain, — "Both related the story in the popular form in which it spread over the East." Their peculiar burial-practice was that characteristic trait of the Tibetans by which their neighbors were most deeply struck, and which also was

¹ YULE and CORDIER, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, Vol. II, p. 45.

² This is in striking agreement with what HERODOTUS (IV, 26) relates concerning the Issedonians, who have been identified by W. Tomaschek with the forefathers of the Tibetans (compare also HERODOTUS, IV, 65). Regarding skulls as drinking-cups in the country of Chao and among the Hiung-nu, see CHAVANNES (*Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, Vol. V, pp. 50, 485). Compare R. ANDREE, *Z. d. Vereins für Volkskunde*, 1912, p. 1—33.

³ Plano Carpini (Cap. XI) says, "Hi consuetudinem habent mirabilem, imo potius miserabilem. Cum enim alicuius pater humanae naturae solvit debitum, congregant omnem parentelam, et comedunt eum." And William of Rubruk relates, "Post illos sunt Tebet homines solentes comedere parentes suos defunctos, ut causa pietatis non facerent aliud sepulchrum eis nisi viscera sua. Modo tamen hoc dimiserunt, quia abominabiles erant omni nationi. Tamen adhuc faciunt pulchros ciphos de capitibus parentum, ut illis bibentes habeant memoriam eorum in iocunditate sua. Hoc dixit mihi qui viderat."

⁴ *Cathay*, Vol. II, p. 257, note 3.

doubtless exaggerated by them. Carpini's and Rubruk's versions show us that this report was a current story circulating among the Mongols, and Odoric must have derived it from exactly the same source. He simply relates it as "another fashion they have in this country;" but he does not say that this custom came under his own observation, or that it was communicated to him directly by Tibetans. The fact that Odoric shares this part of his information concerning Tibet with Carpini and Rubruk, who had never been in Tibet, constitutes evidence that this account cannot be utilized for a plea in favor of his personal experience with Tibetan affairs.

In analyzing the remaining portion of his chapter, we have to discriminate between statements which are correct, and data which are inexact or out and out wrong. Odoric is perfectly correct on three points: he is acquainted with the geographical location of Tibet on the confines of India proper; he is familiar with the law of Lhasa, prohibiting bloodshed within the precincts of the holy city;¹ and he knows that "in that city dwelleth the *Abassi*, that is, in their tongue, the Pope, who is the head of all the idolaters, and who has the disposal of all their benefices such as they are after their manner."² All this is true, but rather general; at any rate,

¹ This law, of course, is merely theoretical, as intimated also by M. CORDIER by the insertion of a note culled from a letter of Desgodins. King gLan-dar-ma was assassinated in Lhasa by a Lama, and civil war shook the city under the rule of the Dalai Lamas. "Executions are conducted in the open street before the people, and apparently culprits suffer not far from the temple, and not outside the city, Buddhist injunctions notwithstanding. When Nain Singh visited Lhasa, he saw a Chinaman beheaded in public" (G. SANDBERG, *Tibet and the Tibetans*, p. 191, London, 1906). The holy city has also its meat-market (*ša k'rom*). According to E. KAWAGUCHI (*Three Years in Tibet*, p. 286), there is a special place near the monastery 3Bras-spuñs, some miles west from Lhasa, where yaks, goats, and sheep, seven in number, are daily butchered for the table of the Dalai Lama.

² It is a debatable point whether the Sa-skya hierarchs really took up their permanent residence in Lhasa. The famed 3P'ags-pa Blo-gros rgyal-mts'an, the spiritual adviser of Kubilai, on his return from China, wended his way back in 1265 to "the great residence dpal-ldan Sa-skya" in southern Tibet, and there he returned again in 1276 after his second

it is not of such a specific or intimate character that it could be explained only through an actual visit to Tibet. All this, and more, could have been learned at that time from the Chinese and the Mongols. It is somewhat a matter of regret that Colonel Sir Henry Yule's note on Odoric's *Abassi* has been allowed to remain. This word has no connection whatever with *lobaes*, *ubashi*, or *bakshi*,¹ nor is it necessary to resort to such extravagances. Odoric plainly states that the word is of the Tibetan language; and it has to be sought, therefore, in Tibetan only. KOEPPEN'S² explanation, overlooked by YULE, remains the only one that is admissible. The Sa-skyā hierarchs, who practically ruled Tibet in the age of the Mongols, bore the Tibetan title *ap'ags-pa* ("eminent, excellent"),³

journey (HUTH, *Geschichte des Buddhismus in der Mongolei*, Vol. II, pp. 154, 157). His biography makes no allusion to his residing in Lhasa. Our knowledge of Tibetan historical sources is still so limited that we cannot be positive on this point. The greater probability seems to be that the abode of the Sa-skyā was their ancestral seat, the monastery of Sa-skyā. Lhasa, nevertheless, may have continued as the capital of political administration.

¹ The word *bakshi* is not, as stated by YULE (also *Marco Polo*, Vol. I, p. 314), connected with Skr. *bhikṣu*. The Tibetans are acquainted with both words, translating the latter by the term *dge-slon*, and writing the former *pag-ši* (JÄSCHKE's spelling *pa-ši* is inexact). The Tibetan dictionary *Li-šii gur k'añ*, fol. 23a (see *T'oung-Pao*, 1914, p. 65), explains this word by *bsun-pa* ("respectable, reverend"), and states that it is derived from the language of the Turks (*Hor*). The word seems to be, indeed, of Turkish origin (VÁMBÉRY, *Primitive Cultur*, p. 248; RADLOFF, *Wörterbuch der Türk-dialecte*, Vol. IV, col. 1445).

² *Die lamaische Hierarchie*, p. 105. It is notable that BOLLAND's text in the *Acta Sanctorum*, as quoted by Koeppen, "Abbassi, quod sonat Papa in illa lingua" (M. CORDIER quotes the same reading from the manuscript of Berlin), differs from the texts of Yule (Latin version, "Lo Abassi, id est Papa in linguâ suâ;" Italian version, "il Atassi, che viene a dire in nostro modo il Papa"). It seems to me much more probable that Bolland has preserved the true, original reading. Odoric means to say that the Tibetan word which is written *ap'ags-pa* (varying in its pronunciation) was heard by him *ba-se*, *ba-si*, and sounds in their language also like *papa* (*p'a'-pa*). The comparison with the Pope would almost savor of a heresy in the mouth of the pious Friar, and "the Pope" was no doubt dragged in by the later copyists. — N. KÜNER (*Description of Tibet*, in Russian, Vol. I, 1, p. 30) attempts to explain *Abassi* as an inexact transcription of *bLo-bzañ šes-rab*, "a common title of the highest Buddhist clergy." I see no possibility of such an interpretation; this term, moreover, is neither a common title nor a title at all, but merely a personal name.

³ *ḡJigs-med nam-mk'a* tells a little anecdote in explanation of this title (HUTH,

and were spoken of as the *aP^cags-pa bLa-ma*. This word, variously articulated *p^cags-pa*, *p^cag-pa*, *p^cas-pa*,¹ *p^ca²-pa*, is the source of Odoric's Abassi.²

A striking assertion made by the Friar is that "they have in it great plenty of bread and wine as anywhere in the world." Such a statement cannot possibly be advanced by any one who has had but the slightest contact with the Tibetan borderlands and the most superficial acquaintance with Tibetan people. First of all, there is nothing like bread in Tibet, where even the preparation of dough is unknown. Parched barley-flour mixed with tea or milk into a porridge forms the staple food; and the alcoholic beverage called *č^cani*, obtained from fermented barley, is neither wine nor beer, but a liquor *sui generis*.³ Even granted that Odoric simply committed a mistake in the choice of his words, and merely intended to say that food and drink abound in Tibet, his statement nevertheless remains very strange. The majority of Tibetans eke out a wretched living as poor shepherds or farmers, and earn enough to be kept from starvation; but emphasis on the food-supplies being as abundant as anywhere in the world is thoroughly out of place for a poor country like Tibet.

The assertion that the women have a couple of tusks as long as those of wild boars has been attributed by Yule to an error of the scribe. I am rather under the impression that it is a bit of information misunderstood on the part of Odoric. Boar's tusks are

Geschichte des Buddhismus in der Mongolei, Vol. II, p. 141). The same is narrated in *Yüan shi* (Ch. 202, p. 1), where the word is written 帕克斯巴.

¹ The spelling *Passepa* appears in the *Lettres édifiantes*, nouv. éd., Vol. XXIV, p. 9 (Paris, 1781). The Mongols pronounce the word *papa* (PALLAS, *Sammlungen*, Vol. II, p. 87).

² Koepfen's theoretical *ap^cags-črī*, which does not exist, must be discarded.

³ The grape-wine mentioned by Mr. ROCKHILL (*J. R. A. S.*, 1891, p. 227, note 1) as being made in small quantities, and high-priced, is almost restricted to religious offerings, and plays no part in the life of the people. No foreign traveller has ever seen or tasted it.

generally employed by Tibetan women for making the parting of their hair.¹ Odoric's remark that the women have their hair plaited in more than a hundred tresses applies only to the pastoral tribes of northern and north-eastern Tibet;² and if he had really crossed Tibet to Lhasa and beyond, he could not have failed to notice that quite different styles of hair-dressing prevail in other parts of the country. This matter is not very serious, but an error of grave account is the observation that "the folk of that country dwell in tents made of black felt." Certainly the Tibetans understand the art of making felt;³ but the tents inhabited by the pastoral tribes of Tibet, throughout the country, are covered with a black cloth woven from yak-hair.⁴ In this respect, and in its quadrangular structure, the Tibetan tent represents a dwelling-type of its own, which is plainly distinguished from the Mongol circular felt tent. It is impossible to assume that in the days of Odoric there may have been Tibetan nomads living in felt tents, and thus come to the Friar's rescue. The mode of habitation is one of the most permanent and enduring factors in the life of all peoples, which is but very seldom sacrificed to outward influences. The conclusion

¹ I doubt very much the correctness of Yule's statement that the women in Tibet commonly use boar's tusks as ornaments, both attached to the head and hung round the neck. I paid particular attention to ornaments in Tibet, and never saw a woman wearing boar's teeth on her head or neck. Among the nomads of Derge I observed now and then a man wearing a perforated boar's tooth as a protective amulet; sometimes two such teeth are joined together at their bases and held by a brass hoop.

² See, for instance, the plate opposite p. 18 in GRUM-GRŽIMAILO's *Description of a Journey in Western China* (in Russian, Vol. II, St. Petersburg, 1907).

³ The process is described by ROCKHILL (*Notes on the Ethnology of Tibet*, p. 700). F. GRENARD (*Mission scient. dans la haute Asie*, Vol. II, p. 372) is certainly right in saying that Tibetan felt is rather mediocre, and very inferior to the Chinese and Kirgiz specimens.

⁴ See ROCKHILL, *l. c.*, p. 701, and *The Land of the Lamas*, pp. 75—77; GRENARD, *l. c.*, p. 337. I do not concur with Grenard in the view that the Tibetan tent is in every respect much inferior to the Mongol one; for myself, I prefer the Tibetan tent as more practical and durable, and a more efficient means of protection against heat and cold.

prompted by the ethnological point of view, that the Tibetan tents of yak-hair stuffs go back to a venerable age, is fully corroborated by the records of the Chinese. Both *Sui shu* and *T'ang shu* tell in regard to the Tang-hiang 党項, a Tibetan tribe living in southwestern Kan-su and in the vicinity of the Kuku-nōr, that their habitations are made from weavings of the hair of yak-tails and sheep.¹ The Annals of the T'ang Dynasty relate, in regard to the

織犛牛尾及牯羴毛以爲屋 (*Sui shu*, Ch. 83, p. 2b).
 織犛尾羊毛覆屋歲一易 (*T'ang shu*, Ch. 221 上, p. 1b). — When *Kiu T'ang shu* (Ch. 196 上, p. 1b) asserts that the Tibetan nobles dwell in large felt tents called *fu-lu* (貴人處於大氈帳名爲拂廬 [see *T'oung Pao*, 1914, p. 92]), it is not contradictory to the fact, as stated above. In the sentence preceding this one the question is of the houses in which the Tibetan people ordinarily live, covered with flat roofs and reaching a height up to ten feet. In this case, accordingly, it is the sedentary agricultural portion of the populace which is spoken of, but not the pastoral tribes. These Tibetan nobles were not nomads, but warriors, with a stationary residence among the sedentary farmers, and they undoubtedly imitated the custom of the Turkish chieftains (at a later date adopted by the Mongols) of residing in felt tents (*sbra*) as a mode of living better suiting their warlike occupation (compare Tib. *p'yiñ gur* ("felt tent, a Tartar hut") in JÄSCHKE's *Dictionary*, p. 350). The probability that Odoric might have struck such war-tents is so slight that it merits no discussion. His statement, moreover, is generalized to the effect that the folk of that country dwell in tents made of black felt. — The above word *ku-lü* (*ku* is written also 羴) is recorded both in *Erh ya* and *Shuo wén*. Li Shichên (*Pén ts'ao kang mu*, Ch. 50 上, p. 11b) defines it as a sheep with plenty of hair. K'ou, Tsung-shi, in his *Pén ts'ao yen i* of 1116, says that its habitat is in Shen-si and Ho-tung 河東 (Shan-si), and that its hair is very strong, long, and thick. Chinese authors, in their descriptions of Sikkim (*Pai mu jung* 白木戎, transcription of Tib. *aBras-mo ljoñ*, pronounced *bü* or *drü mo juñ*, "Land of Rice;" the identity of the names has been recognized neither by KLAPROTH, *Description du Tibet*, p. 275, nor by ROCKHILL, *J. R. A. S.*, 1891, p. 131; the latter's identification with Pari-djong is untenable), speak of a species of sheep styled "big *kü-lü* sheep" 大羴羴 (these two characters are not recorded in K'ang-hi) 羊 (*Wei Tsang t'ung chi* 衛藏通志, Ch. 15, p. 13b, 1896, anonymous, not mentioned by Rockhill). The *Wei Tsang t'u chi* (Ch. 下, p. 32) calls this animal *kü chao* 羴羴 (ROCKHILL writes 羴羴, and transcribes *chü-shao*; KLAPROTH, "des moutons ou chèvres appelés *kü tchao*;" both without explanation). This is doubtless the barrel sheep (*Ovis nahura*), found in considerable flocks at high altitudes in Sikkim (RISLEY, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, p. 239) and throughout Tibet, and called by the Tibetans *gna-ba*, colloquially *na-po*, *nao*, *nau*, Nepalese *nāhur*: hence the zoological *nahura* (Jäschke's explanation "antelope" is wrong, Chandra Das is correct), Lepcha *na-wo*. The

Tibetans, that, although they have towns formed by huts, they are loath to live there, but prefer to dwell in tents made from pieces of soft animal hair joined together, and that those styled "big tents" (*ta fu-lu*) are capable of holding several hundred men.¹

From whatever point of China Odoric may have transgressed the Tibetan boundary, he could not have failed to observe the peculiar tents which have struck the eyes of all subsequent travellers, and at none of these points are felt tents to be seen.² It is obvious beyond any doubt that Odoric's observation refers, not to Tibetan, but to Mongól tents, which he may have encountered in the Ordos country³ or while crossing Mongolia on his way back to Europe. It seems to me infinitely more probable that Odoric, coming out of the Ordos and Kan-su, returned by way of Mongolia, on a similar route as Carpini and Rubruk, than that he should

species was first described by B. H. HODGSON (*On the Two Wild Species of Sheep inhabiting the Himalayan Region, J. A. S. B.*, Vol. X, 1841, p. 231), then by W. T. BLANFORD (*Fauna of British India*, p. 499, with illustration). This *kü-lü*, as a word, is perhaps related to *ku-li*, though the two certainly refer to different animals. The *ku-li* mentioned above in *Sui shu* must be a domestic sheep, its wool being utilized, while *kü-lü* is a wild sheep. Mr. ROCKHILL remarks that "these characters are used phonetically, they have no meaning in Chinese;" but I can trace no Tibetan or Lepcha word which they could be intended to transcribe.

1 有城廓廬舍不肯處聯毳帳以居號大拂
廬容數百人 (*T'ang shu*, Ch. 216 上, p. 1).

² It is a gratuitous speculation of C. PUINI (*Il Tibet*, p. xxv) when he makes Odoric descend from Tenduc to Si-ngan fu, "e di là, per entrare nel Tibet, seguì probabilmente la via percorsa da Marco Polo, o se ne tenne forse più a settentrione; ma il nostro frate francescano si spinse assai più oltre, giungendo fino a Lhasa." If Odoric should have taken this beaten track, which is so familiar to me, I should be very positive in denying that he could have found any felt tents on this route. From Ta-t sien-lu to Ba-t'ang and beyond, from Ta-t sien-lu to Derge and Chamdo, further, in north-western and northern Sze-ch'uan, in southern and western Kan-su, and in the region of the Kukuñör, — nowhere is there to be met with a single felt tent. Also KÜNER (*l.c.*) has Odoric travel through Shan-si, Shen-si, Sze-ch'uan, and Tibet.

³ There felt tents are now scarce, the Mongols usually living in houses of plaited wicker-work plastered with clay (see POTANIN, *The Tanguto-Tibetan Borderland of China*, in Russian, Vol. I, p. 103, St. Petersburg, 1893).

have performed the long and fatiguing journey across Tibet. True it is, he himself tells us that he came to a certain great kingdom called Tibet, and there is no reason whatever to question his veracity. Odoric was earnestly and honestly convinced of having come to Tibet, but coming to Tibet does not yet mean entering and crossing Tibet. The geographical notion "Tibet" was always conceded a liberal interpretation on the part of travellers; the days are not so far behind us when men nearing the outskirts of Tibet, touching Ladakh, Darjeeling, Ta-t sien-lu, Ba-t'ang, or Si-ning, had all been "to Tibet;" and the books on Tibet whose authors were around but never in the country are numerous. No doubt Odoric came in contact with Tibetans somewhere in Kan-su¹ or on its borders, but this is the utmost concession that can be made to him. It is incredible that he should have traversed Tibet, nor does he himself make any statement to this effect. He makes no pretence whatever to having been in Lhasa. All these allegations are preposterous inferences of his overzealous admirers. The fact remains that the diary of his travels abruptly closes and absolutely terminates with the first sentence of Chapter 45. What follows it, down to the end of the book, consists, not of observations of the traveller,

¹ I believe that his province called *Kansan* is rather Kan-su than Shen-si, as explained by Yule; though Yule also is inclined to regard it as Shen-si and Kan-su united, as the two provinces were indeed under the Sung; the name Kan-su appears only from under the Yüan. Odoric's reference to rhubarb as growing in this province, "and in such abundance that you may load an ass with it for less than six groats," fits Kan-su far better than Shen-si. True it is, that rhubarb grows also in Shen-si (PARENIN, *Lettres édifiantes*, nouv. éd., Vol. XIX, p. 307; BRETSCHNEIDER, *Bot. Sin.*, pt. 3, p. 230; *List of Chinese Medicines*, p. 480, Shanghai, 1889), but the output is not so large that it would strike the casual traveller. Kan-su, the adjoining Amdo region, then Sze-ch'uan and Tibet, were always the classical land of rhubarb; and it is in the mountains of Tangut that, according to MARCO POLO (ed. of YULE and CORDIER, Vol. I, p. 217), rhubarb is found in great abundance, and where merchants come to buy it and carry it all over the world. Hence we may take it for granted that likewise Odoric did not hear about rhubarb before reaching the territory of Kan-su.

but of stories reproduced from hearsay. The story of Tibet moves along the same line as the following stories of the rich man in Manzi, the Old Man of the Mountain, the devil exorcisms in Tartary, and the valley of terrors.¹ No principle of geographical order is observed in the arrangement of these concluding chapters, which is sure evidence of the fact that Odoric terminated the narrative of his journey at the moment when he turned his back to Cathay. In Chapter 46 he reverts to the province of Manzi as the theatre of action for the plot of the rich man; and in the next chapter we are told that he reached a certain country which is called Millestorte, the residence of the Old Man of the Mountain, but, very curiously, after he had left the lands of Prester John and was travelling toward the west. Where, then, is Tibet? If he had ever crossed Tibet, he would naturally have located Millestorte to the west of, or beyond, Tibet; but he has forgotten Tibet, and takes us back to Prester John. Tibet has left no profound or lasting impression upon his mind, because he rubbed elbows but superficially with its north-eastern borderland. If the case were further supported by negative circumstantial evidence, it would lead to no end of discussions: he lisps not a word as to the nature and physical conditions of Tibet, and whoever enters Tibet from China is soon aware of being transferred into another world. There is no need, however, of invoking this striking lack of personal experience and observation. Odoric of Pordenone has never traversed Tibet proper,

¹ It is certainly out of the question to utilize the alleged localities of these stories for reconstructing the stages of Odoric's return journey, as attempted, for instance, by PUINI (*l. c.*, p. xxvi), who remarks that Odoric, coming out of Tibet, tells us that, leaving that country, he betook himself to Millestorte. Odoric, of course, does not even express himself in this manner; but he came to Millestorte by journeying towards the west, after leaving the lands of Prester John. — KÜNER (*l. c.*, notes, p. 25) reads much between the lines when he distils out of Odoric the inference that, according to him, Tibet is situated between the possessions of Prester John and the Old Man of the Mountain.

has never been at Lhasa,¹ — a feat with which he has been unduly credited for so long, and to which he himself lays no claim. The honor of being the first Europeans to have reached Lhasa is justly due to the two Jesuit Fathers Grueber and Dorville, who spent two months there in 1661.

¹ He does not even make mention of the very name Lhasa, but speaks only of "the chief and royal city," and "in this city." Only the French version adds, "Elle est appelée Gota;" and M. CORDIER justly annotates that there is no city called Gota. This name certainly is mere fancy. Is it credible that a man who has visited Lhasa should not even record the name of the city? And where does Odoric say that he visited it at all? How did modern writers ever get at the assuring statement that he sojourned there for some time? Surely this is a repetition of the miracles attributed to the good Friar after his death, and of which he himself was innocent.
