

Professor Kunstmann, about 1380, fifty years after Odoric's death, but the author was fully entitled to be termed a contemporary, for one of his works, cited by Wadding, was dated as early as 1347, and at his death in 1401 he is said to have been over a century old.¹

According to the ecclesiastical biographers, however, having in early years taken on him the vows of the Franciscans, and joined their convent in Udine, he speedily became eminent for ascetic sanctity, living on bread and water, going barefoot, scourging himself severely, and wearing ever next his skin hair-cloth or iron mail. His humility refused promotion, and with the leave of his superior he retired for a long time into the wilds to pass a solitary life. A local reputation for sanctity and miracles is ascribed to him before his wanderings began.²

On these he started sometime between 1316 and 1318 (inclusive), and from them he returned shortly before the spring of 1330. That he was in Western India soon after 1321, that he spent three of the years between 1322 and 1328 in Northern China, and that he died in January 1331, are all the chronological facts that we know, or can positively deduce, from his narrative, and contemporary evidence.³

I shall not here give any detailed view of his travels; the particulars of these, with the fullest explanations that I can provide, will be found in the ensuing text and notes. Suffice it to say that his route lay by Constantinople to Trebizond; thence to Erzerum, Tabriz, and Soltania; and that in all probability he spent a considerable part of the time previous to 1322 in the Houses of his Order in those cities. From Soltania he passed to Kashan and Yezd, and thence turning by Persepolis he followed a somewhat devious route, probably by Shiraz, and perhaps a part of Kurdistan, to Baghdad. From Baghdad he wandered to the

¹ *Cave, Script. Eccles.*, App., p. 48; *Wadding*, vol. vii.

² *Acta Sanctorum*, January 14th; *Wadding*, vol. vi, under 1331; *Liruti, Notizie delle Vite ed opere scritte da' Letterati di Friuli*. Venez., 1760, i, 274 et seq.

³ D'Avezac, in the very valuable dissertation prefixed to Carpini's account of the Tartars, says that Odoric reached Trebizond in 1317, and Tana in 1322; but I do not trace the authority for such precision.