

writers, that Odoric's narrative has been largely interpolated with lying wonders by medieval editors and copyists. Though there are great differences of expression in the various MSS., and some unaccountable ones of fact, the *substance* of all the chief MSS. is the same, and especially in regard to the principal difficulties; whilst some of the stories that Tiraboschi brands as interpolations and fictions, are indeed the very seals of truth.¹

It may be well here to point out a few of those passages which stamp Odoric as a genuine and original traveller. He is then the first European who distinctly and undoubtedly mentions the name of Sumatra. He also (though on this the variety of readings may cast a shade of doubt) mentions the Rejang of the same island, a people not known to Europe otherwise for centuries after his time. The cannibalism and community of wives which he attributes to certain races in that island do certainly belong to it, or to islands closely adjoining. And it is to be remembered that Odoric travelled with neither the scepticism of a man of science nor the experience of a man of the world. His good faith is indicated if his stories are those really current about the places which he visited. His description of sago in the Archipelago is not free from errors, but they are the errors of an eyewitness. His mention of the annoyance from leeches in the forests of Ceylon, and of a two-headed

¹ I am excluding here those few Italian MSS. which are classified below as the fourth type of versions of Odoric. Some remarks will be made on them separately.

One of the examples of interpolation adduced by Tiraboschi is Odoric's account of the Tulsi trees before the doors of the Hindus, a passage, apparently, a little obscured by the misapprehension of the scribe. Another is the statement about the king of Champa's having fourteen thousand elephants, the printed version in Ramusio giving only fourteen. But here it is certain that it is the Ramusian version which has dropt the M, and not the others, which have interpolated it. The region in question is the very metropolis of elephants, and for Odoric to have said that the king kept *fourteen* elephants would have been a ludicrous bathos.

On the other hand the real difficulties of Odoric's story are the accounts of the Islands of Nicoverra and Dondin, and the Passage through the Terrible Valley, with, perhaps, one or two more. The former of these are found in *all* the versions of Odoric, and the latter in all but the truncated narrative which we call here the *Minor Ramusian*.