

milk, but has a bone on the top of its head about the size of an egg, which is of a blood colour; whilst under its throat it has a skin hanging down for half a span.¹ And these geese are as fat as fat can be, yet one of them well dressed and seasoned you shall have there for less than a groat. And as it is with the geese, so also with the ducks and fowls; they are so big that you would think them perfectly marvellous.

Here too there be serpents bigger than anywhere else in the world, many of which are taken and eaten with great relish. These serpents [have quite a fragrant odour and]² form a dish so fashionable that if a man were to give a dinner and not have one of these serpents on his table, he would be thought to have done nothing.³ In short this city hath a great abundance of all possible kinds of victual.

30. Concerning the noble city called Zayton; and how the folk thereof regale their gods.

Departing from that district, and passing through many cities and towns, I came to a certain noble city which is

¹ This description of Odoric's agrees almost precisely with the following: "*Anser Cygnoides*, the Guinea goose...approaching in size to the swan...it has a fleshy tubercle rising from the base of the bill...and a pendant skin in the form of a pouch under the throat....The beak and tubercle are reddish," etc. (*Nouveau Dict. de l'Hist. Naturelle*, Paris, 1817, tom. xxiii.) I am told on excellent authority that the modern domestic goose of China has *not* the pendant skin, though it certainly has the knob or tubercle. Yet Odoric's evidence is curiously precise.

² MIN. RAM.

³ Conti speaks of the large pythons of the Burmese forests as being greatly prized for food. But, more precisely, Chinese authors quoted by Klaproth speak of a great snake called *Nan-che* or southern serpent, from being found only south of the great chain of Southern China (therefore in Quangtung and the adjacent provinces), which is hunted and sold at a great price, the flavour of the flesh being in such high estimation. (*Journ. As.*, ser. 2, ii, 118.) Till I found this I suspected some mistake on Odoric's part, his expressions so closely resemble those of a later ecclesiastic in speaking of swallow-nest soup: "No entertainment without this dish; if it is wanting the best is wanting; and without it no dinner can be deemed in worthy style." (*P. Marini*, quoted by Kircher, *China Illust.*, 199.)