

have one fire, and so pay for one fire only.¹ Now of these fires there are reckoned eighty-five *tumans*,² and with four more of Saracens,³ making eighty-nine *tumans*. Now one tuman is equal to ten thousand fires. And besides these there are the Christians and the merchants and others only passing through the country.

This being so, I greatly marvelled how such numbers of human bodies could manage to dwell in one place, and yet there is always there great plenty of bread and pork, and rice and wine, which wine is otherwise called *Bigni*,⁴ and is

by the excessive issues and strange financial pranks of the Mongol emperors, including the great Kublai himself.

Freytag's *Lexicon* gives the word and explains it as a Tartar designation for a certain great sum of gold or silver, but offers no etymology. Richardson gives "BALISH, P., a cushion or pillow, bedding, a staple. A certain weight of gold; from *balidan*, to extend, spread, reach, overtake; to match or equal, to grow long, to ripen," etc.; and also "BALISHE, a little cushion put on a saddle, which it resembles in shape." Now may not the balish have been an ingot of gold or silver resembling in form such a cushion, or some other object of like name? For instance, Richardson also gives "BALIK, a shoe or slipper;" and we find in Barrow's account of the presents given at the Chinese court to Lord Macartney's suite, that, as in the case of their Persian predecessors centuries before, a part consisted of ingots of silver, and these were "cast in the form of a Tartar shoe, each being about an ounce in weight."...More about *balish* is to be seen, I find, in Quatremère's notes on Rashideddin, pp. 320-21.

¹ The term "fires" (*ignes*) used by Odoric is technically correct, or nearly so. The official word used in the Chinese census is *yen-hu*, literally *fires-doors*. Persons called *Pao-kia*, or "chiefs of ten fires," are appointed to collect the numbers of their tithing, and this may have been misunderstood by Odoric. (See *Chine Moderne*, p. 187.)

² *Tuman* in the Mongol language signifies ten thousand. It was borrowed by the Persians and Arabs, and with them means a weight or sum of money, originally equal to ten thousand *mithkals* or Arab drachms of silver. "The Mogols and Khwarezmians often use the word for ten thousand men, and say (e.g.) that the city of Samarkand affords seven *tumans*, i.e. seventy thousand men capable of bearing arms." (*D'Herbelot in voce*.)

Polo reckons the population of Quinsai at one hundred and sixty tumans of fires, but he does not add Odoric's exaggeration about each fire representing ten or twelve families.

³ Fires of the *Hoei-hu* or Mahomedans appear as a separate class also in the modern Chinese census. (*Chine Mod.*, p. 167.)

⁴ In calling this Chinese liquor *wine*, Odoric does the same as many