

« kingdoms » of Persia are in the south, « except... Tunocain, which is near to the Lone Tree » (cf. Vol. I, 116); when the three Polo brought Kōkāčīn to Persia, Kaiḥatu ordered them to hand her over to Ghazan, « who was at that time in the parts of the Dry Tree, on the borders of Persia, to guard certain passes » (cf. Vol. I, 91); in fact, he had been sent earlier by his father Arḡūn « to the Dry Tree, that is to that country, to guard and to save his land and his people » (cf. Vol. I, 467); for a still earlier date, we are told that Abaḡa's lands bordered on the lands of the king Caidu, and this was from towards the Lone Tree which is called the Dry Tree in the « Book of Alexandre »; Abaḡa had sent his son Arḡūn « into the country of the Dry Tree as far as to the river Gion (= Amudaryā) » (cf. Vol. I, 456). Such a use of the name by Polo, YULE says, « can hardly have been a mere whim of his own », though no confirmation has as yet been elicited from Oriental sources, and the « Lone Tree » or « Dry Tree » must have been a well-known landmark. Ghazan had his headquarters at the Dry Tree when watching the great passes, « of which the principal ones debouche at Bostam, at which place also buildings erected by Ghazan still exist ». Local tradition placed at the Dry Tree the decisive battle between Alexander and Darius; « though no such battle took place in that region, we know that Darius was murdered near Hekatompylos », placed by some west of Bostam, near Dāmḡān, by others east of it, and by FERRIER near Bostam itself. Finally, Polo mentions after the Lone Tree a « castle » of the Ismailians, which may be Girdkoh, three parasanges west of Dāmḡān; it just happens that Girdkoh is connected with a district called « Činar »; « this may be a clue to the term *Arbre Sec*; but there are difficulties » (Y, I, 148). For all these reasons, YULE felt inclined to place « meanwhile » the landmark of the Lone Tree in the vicinity of Bostam or Dāmḡān.

The line of this reasoning is not a very straight one, and is not always easy to reconcile with YULE's former statements on the cypresses of Zoroaster, etc.; moreover, some of the arguments must be dismissed. The substitution of the death of Darius to the battle between him and Alexander is arbitrary; I shall express further on my views on the connection occurring in Polo's text between the battle and the Dry Tree, which can afford no clue to the true location of the said Tree. As to the « castle », it has certainly nothing to do with Girdkoh; this « castle » is the Alamūt fortress of the Old Man of the Mountain, the notice of which, in Polo's text, is a digression; and the account ought afterwards to have started again from « Tunocain », to which, in all likelihood, an early « intelligent » copyist, or more probably Rustichello himself, substituted the « castle », so as to turn Polo's narrative into a continuous itinerary (see « Mulecte » and « Old Man of the Mountain »).

As to YULE's other arguments, their value will be different according to the solution we adopt for a question of which YULE said nothing : is Polo's description of the Lone Tree that of an eye-witness, or is he speaking by hearsay ? If Polo saw the Lone Tree, this tree cannot have stood in the region of Dāmḡān or Bostam, which Polo never visited, but in the north-eastern part of Ḥorasān, probably in the plain between Tūn and the Kergat-koh. And I must say that Polo's minute description of the Lone Tree, coupled with the indication that it stood alone for 100 miles, except in one direction where there were trees at 10 miles distance, seems to imply that he is speaking from personal experience. But the region of the « Lone Tree » was the only portion of the frontier between the dominions of the Ilkhans and those of their cousins of the « Middle Empire » which Polo had passed through, and, in my opinion, this is the reason why he used the name of Lone Tree or Dry