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THE HORRIBLE POPPING OF CANES IN TEBET = MARCO POLO
five days journeys of which I have told you above, then one finds a province much
V wasted *and destroyed*, which is called Tebet; and we shall treat of it for you below.

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VB L **H**ERE HE SPEAKS OF THE PROVINCE OF TEBET. After the five days journeys
FB L of which I have spoken to you, then one enters into a great province
R L which one calls Tebet which is much laid waste by the scourge of the Tartars,
R L for Mongu Kaan has destroyed it by war which he had with it. And there are many
R L towns and many villages and hamlets in this province, but all dilapidated and ruined.
L And one passes for quite twenty days journeys through uninhabited places, through which a
vast multitude of wild beasts roam, such as lions, bears, lynxes, and other kinds; for which
reason the passage is dangerous. Nevertheless travellers have found a remedy like this. There are
R VA found in that region, and specially near the rivers, very wonderfully thick and large canes;
and I shall describe to you how they are[so]thick that they are quite three¹ palms
V L round, and they are from ten paces to a good fifteen paces long, or there about. They have
quite three palms from the one knot to the next. Moreover I tell you that the
P merchants and other wayfarers who go through such² country, when they wish to rest
L I by night take some of those canes with them. & put them on a cart, and make a fire
of them, because when they are in the fire they make so great crackling and so
FB great report that the lions and the bears and the other fierce beasts of which there are
VB so many about this devastated province have so great fear of it that when they hear those
L terrible reports they fly as far as ever they can, rather than follow, and they would not
VA try to come near the fire for anything in the world. And the men make fires like
FB this to protect themselves and their animals from the fierce wild beasts of which there
FB FB are so many throughout that country and throughout that [51a] land that it is a
FA wonder. And it is because no people dwell there that these wild beasts are so much multiplied.
And if it were not for these canes which make so great reports in burning that the beasts fly
and have so great fear of them, otherwise none would be able to pass that way. Moreover
I shall tell you, because it does well to tell, how the reports of these canes are heard
R afar and how they cause great fear, and what comes of it. Now you may know
R that one takes some of these canes all green[and]makes great bundles of them in the
R evening, and puts them on a fire of logs at some distance from the camp, and they are
R many. And when these canes have stayed awhile in this great fire, then feeling the
P R TA heat they are twisted³ this way and that and are split in half, popping terribly as they

¹ TA,LT: *quatuor* I: *est illa grossicies unius cubiti antequam perueniatur ad foramen in medio*
VL: *chane bregane . . . grosse diece spane luna* S: *cañas que dizen berganegas* cf. pp. 165,343.

² FA,FB: *celle*

³ R: *si scorzano* LT says that the men split the canes.