



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Three Roads to Urga (circa 1920s)

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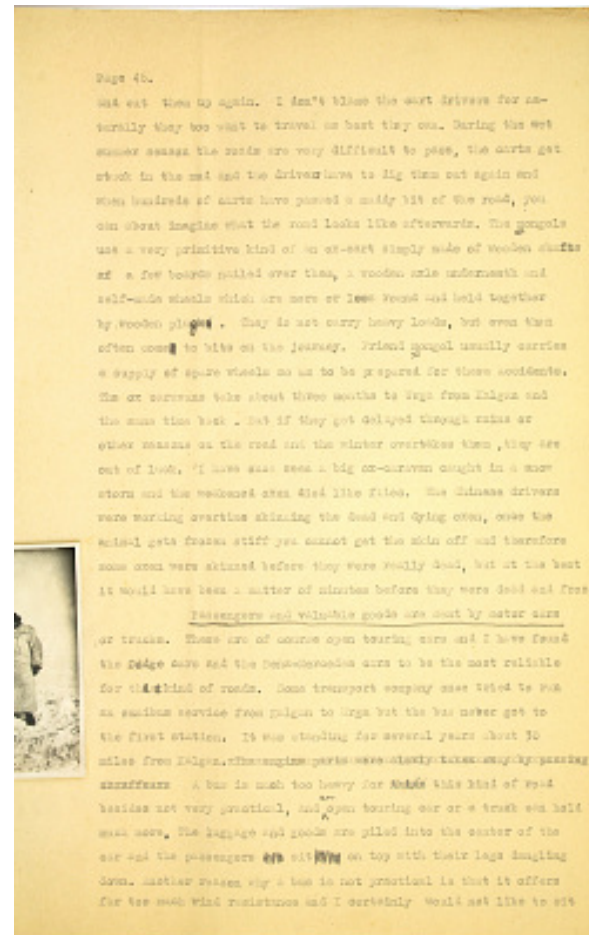
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and out them up again. I don't blame the cart drivers for naturally they too want to travel as best they can. During the wet summer season the roads are very difficult to pass, the carts get stuck in the mud and the drivers have to dig them out again and when hundreds of carts have passed a muddy bit of the road, you can imagine what the road looks like afterwards. The Mongols use a very primitive kind of an ox-cart simply made of wooden shafts ~~of~~ a few boards nailed over them, a wooden axle underneath and self-made wheels which are more or less round and held together by wooden plugs. They do not carry heavy loads, but even then often come to bits on the journey. Friend Mongol usually carries a supply of spare wheels so as to be prepared for these accidents. The ox caravans take about three months to Uрга from Kalgan and the same time back. but if they get delayed through rains or other reasons on the road and the winter overtakes them, they are out of luck. I have once seen a big ox-caravan caught in a snow storm and the weakened oxen died like flies. The Chinese drivers were working overtime skinning the dead and dying oxen, once the animal gets frozen stiff you cannot get the skin off and therefore some oxen were skinned before they were really dead, but at the best it would have been a matter of minutes before they were dead and frozen.

Passengers and valuable goods are sent by motor cars or trucks. These are of course open touring cars and I have found the Dodge cars and the Benz-Mercedes cars to be the most reliable for these kind of roads. Some transport company once tried to run an omnibus service from Kalgan to Uрга but the bus never got to the first station. It was standing for several years about 30 miles from Kalgan. ~~The engine parts were slowly taken away by passing chauffeurs~~ A bus is much too heavy for ~~this kind of road besides not very practical, and~~ open touring car or a truck can hold much more. The luggage and goods are piled into the center of the car and the passengers ~~can~~ sit on top with their legs dangling down. Another reason why a bus is not practical is that it offers far too much wind resistance and I certainly would not like to sit



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