

practice among the infidels of Cathay, a formal record is made of the punishment inflicted for every crime, and they enter into very long details on this subject. But my pen refuses to expose particularly the (horrid) nature of these punishments. The people of Cathay in all that regards the treatment of criminals proceed with extreme caution. There are twelve courts of justice attached to the emperor's administration; if an accused person has been found guilty before eleven of these, and the twelfth has not yet concurred in the condemnation, he may still have hopes of acquittal.¹ If a case requires a reference involving a six months' journey or even more, still as long as the matter is not perfectly clear the criminal is not put to death, but only kept in custody.

"The 27th day of Moharram His Worship the Kazi sent a message to the ambassadors: 'To-morrow is the New Year. The Emperor is going to visit his New Palace, and there is an order that none should wear white clothes' (for among these people white is the colour of mourning). The 28th, about midnight, the *Sekjin* arrived to conduct the ambassadors to the New Palace. This was a very lofty edifice which had only now been finished after nineteen years of work. This night in all the houses and shops there was such a lighting up of torches, candles, and lamps, that you would have thought the sun was risen already. That night the cold was much abated. Everybody was admitted into the New Palace, and the Emperor gave an entertainment to his great officers of state. . . .² It would be impossible to give a just description of this edifice. From the gate of the hall of audience to the outer gate there is a distance of 1985 paces. . . . To the right and left there is an uninterrupted succession of buildings, pavilions, and gardens. All the buildings are constructed of polished stone and glazed bricks of porcelain clay,³ which in lustre are quite like white marble. A space of two or three hundred cubits is paved with stones presenting not the very slightest deflexion or inequality, insomuch that you would think the joints had been ruled with a pen. In the arts of stone-polishing, cabinet-making, pottery, brick-making, there is nobody with us who can compare with the Chinese. If the cleverest of our workpeople were to see their performances they could not but acknowledge the superiority of these foreigners. Towards noon the banquet ended.

"On the 9th of Safar (13th February, 1421), in the morning, horses were sent for the ambassadors. . . . Every year, according to a practice of theirs, the emperor passes several days without eating animal food, or

¹ Here is doubtless some misapprehension. See preceding page.

² Astley's version has here a passage not found in Quatremère's: "They found at the palace one hundred thousand people who had come thither from all parts of Cathay, the countries of Tachin and Machin, Kalmak, Tibet, Kabul (read *Kamul*), Karakhoja, Jurga (*Churché?*), and the sea coasts."

³ I suppose this meant by "bricks formed of Chinese earth."