

incontinently at a great pace on horseback for the court; but if the matter be very serious and urgent they set off upon dromedaries. And when they come near those *yam*, hostels or stations, they blow a horn, whereupon mine host of the hostel straightway maketh another messenger get ready; and to him the rider who hath come posting up delivereth the letter, whilst he himself tarrieth for refreshment. And the other taking the letter, maketh haste to the next *yam*, and there doth as did the first. And in this manner the emperor receiveth in the course of one natural day the news of matters from a distance of thirty days' journey.¹

But the despatch of foot runners is otherwise ordered. For certain appointed runners abide continually in certain station-houses called *chidebeo*, and these have a girdle with a number of bells attached to it. Now those stations are distant the one from the other perhaps three miles; and when a runner approaches one of those houses he causes those bells of his to jingle very loudly; on which the other runner in waiting at the station getteth ready in haste, and taking the letter hastens on to another station as fast as he can. And so it goes from runner to runner until it reaches the Great Khan himself. And so nothing can happen, in short, throughout the whole empire, but he hath instantly, or at least very speedily, full tidings thereof.²

¹ The MIN. RAM. describes these post-stations as "very high towers." But this seems a confusion arising from some knowledge of the beacon towers mentioned in a note below.

² With this account of the Chinese posts we may compare that given by Shah-Rokh's ambassadors about a century later. We find in it the *yam* and the *chidebeo* of Odoric both named: "This city (Sokcheu) is the first on passing the frontier of Cathay; thence to Kambalik, the emperor's residence, there are ninety-nine *yams* or post-houses..... Every *yam* is situated opposite to a city or town, and in the intervals between the *yams* you may count many *kargús* and *kidifús*. The word *kargú* is applied to a tower of some sixty cubits in height, where two men are constantly on duty. The tower is so placed that the next *kargú* is in sight from it; and when any event of importance occurs, like the approach of an enemy's army, the men on watch immediately light a fire, and this being seen from the next *kargú* they make haste to light another. And so the signal