

41. Concerning the Khan's great hunting matches.

When the Great Khan goes a hunting 'tis thus ordered. At some twenty days' journey from Cambalech, there is a fine forest of eight days' journey in compass; and in it are such multitudes and varieties of animals as are truly wonderful. All round this forest there be keepers posted on account of the Khan, to take diligent charge thereof; and

passes from one to another, till in the space of one day and night a piece of news passes over a distance of three months' march. Despatches are also sent along without stopping, being passed from hand to hand and from one *kidifu* to another. The word *kidifu* is the name applied to a party of men attached to a station with the following duty. Immediately that a letter or a piece of news reaches them, one who is waiting all ready starts off with it to the next *kidifu*, and so on till it reaches the foot of the imperial throne. The distance from one *kidifu* to another is ten *mereh*; sixteen of which are equal to a *parasang*. The men posted at the *kargú* are ten in number, and are relieved every ten days. But those of the *kidifu* live at their post, building themselves houses there and engaging in agriculture." (From *Notices et Extraits*, xiv, 396.) The *kidifu* is Odoric's *chidebeo*, but I have not been able to make sure of the language or etymology. I may observe however that Ibn Batuta applies to the posts or stages of the foot-runners in India the term *dáwuh* (vol. iii, pp. 96, 145, 191), and the term may possibly be *kad-i-dáwuh* or *kad-dáwuh*, "the house of the runners or foot-post". On the other hand, Martini tells us that the arch which indicated a post station was called in Chinese *P'u*. And the word may be a hybrid, *Kad-i-Pu*, analogous to the equally hybrid *Dak-House* of India. *Kargú* is doubtless connected with the *Karághúl* "Excubitores," and "Viarum Custodes," of Pococke's *Abulpharagius* (363, 369). The double system of horse and foot posts was also found by Ibn Batuta established in India in 1333. The posts of Timur are noticed by Clavijs (p. 105). And Baber describes his own post between Agra and Cabul, using the word *yam*, but adding that it was called in India *dak-choki*, the term in use in all Northern India to this day. (*Erskine's Baber*, p. 393.) Pauthier thinks *yam* to have been taken from the Chinese *yi-ma*, "horse-post". (*Marc. Pol.*, p. 335).

Burnes was told of the continued existence of both post and fire beacons between Yarkund and Pekin. The distance is more than five months' journey as usually travelled, but an express went in thirty-five days, and under very great emergency in fifteen.

The Chinese inns for the lodgment of public officers were, according to Martin, at eighty *li*, or a day's journey apart. According to Magalhaens there were 1145 of these royal inns, or as we should say in India "Government Dak bungalows."