

which are platted together in a wonderful manner, and then covered with a brilliant coat of red lacker. Ten of these plates go to a set, one fitting inside the other, and so fine are they that when you see them you would take the whole set for but one plate. A cover then goes over the whole. There are also great dishes or trays made with the same cane-work. Some of the excellent properties of such dishes are these: they don't break when they tumble, and you can put hot things into them without spoiling or in the least affecting their colour. These plates and dishes are exported from China to India, Khorasan, and other countries.<sup>1</sup>

We passed a night in the fifth town as the guests of the commandant, and the next day we proceeded to enter the sixth by a gate called that of the *kishtivánán*, or boatmen. This town is inhabited only by seamen, fishermen, caulkers, carpenters (these last they call *dúdkarán*), by the *sipahis*, i. e. the archers, and by the *piyádahs*, i. e. the foot soldiers.<sup>2</sup> All of them are the emperor's slaves; no other class live with them, and their numbers are very great. The town of which we speak is situated on the banks of the Great River, and we stayed the night there, enjoying the hospitality of the commandant. The Amír Kurtai had caused a boat to be fitted up for us, and equipped with everything needful in the way of provisions and otherwise. He also sent some of his people to accompany us, in order that we might be received everywhere as the emperor's guests, and so we quitted this

<sup>1</sup> Lackered ware is still made in Burma quite in the way that the traveller describes, and so it is doubtless in China. Indeed the cane dishes are mentioned by the Archbishop of Soltania (*supra*, p. 246).

<sup>2</sup> Here as usual with Ibn Batuta one would suppose that these words were the vernacular Chinese instead of being Persian. If we could depend upon him thoroughly in such matters, the use of these words would indicate that Persian was the language of the Mahomedan communities in China. *Dúdkarán* is for *Durúdgarán*, carpenters. The explanations "archers" and "footsoldiers" (*ul-rajál*) are Ibn Batuta's own, and the use of the latter word is perhaps unfavourable to the translation at p. 474.