

can subsist, the answer is that all the Idolaters, and Saracens as well, take six, eight, or ten wives apiece when they can afford it, and beget an infinity of children. In fact, you shall find many men who have each more than thirty sons who form an armed retinue to their father, and this through the fact of his having so many wives. With us, on the other hand, a man hath but one wife; and if she be barren, still he must abide by her for life, and have no progeny; thus we have not such a population as they have.

“And as regards food, they have abundance; for they generally consume rice, panic, and millet (especially the Tartars, Cathayans, and people of Manzi); and these three crops in those countries render an hundred-fold. Those nations use no bread, but only boil those kinds of grain with milk or meat for their victual. Their wheat, indeed, does not render so much, but this they use only to make vermicelli, and pastes of that description. No spot of arable land is left untilled; and their cattle are infinitely prolific, so that when they take the field every man is followed by six, eight, or more horses for his own use. Thus you may clearly perceive how the population of those parts is so great, and how they have such an abundance of food.”

NOTE 5.—The Burmese kings used to have the odoriferous *Durian* transmitted by horse-posts from Tenasserim to Ava. But the most notable example of the rapid transmission of such dainties, and the nearest approach I know of to their despatch by telegraph, was that practised for the benefit of the Fatimite Khalif Aziz (latter part of 10th century), who had a great desire for a dish of cherries of Balbek. The Wazir Yakub ben-Kilis caused six hundred pigeons to be despatched from Balbek to Cairo, each of which carried attached to either leg a small silk bag containing a cherry! (*Quat. Makrizi*, IV. 118.)

NOTE 6.—“Note is taken at every post,” says Amyot, in speaking of the Chinese practice of last century, “of the time of the courier’s arrival, in order that it may be known at what point delays have occurred.” (*Mém.* VIII. 185.)

NOTE 7.—The post-system is described almost exactly as in the text by Friar Odoric and the Archbishop of Soltania, in the generation after Polo, and very much in the same way by Magaillans in the 17th century. Posts had existed in China from an old date. They are spoken of by Mas’udi and the *Relations* of the 9th century. They were also employed under the ancient Persian kings; and they were in use in India, at least in the generation after Polo. The Mongols, too, carried the institution wherever they went.

Polo describes the couriers as changed at short intervals, but more usually in Asiatic posts the same man rides an enormous distance. The express courier in Tibet, as described by “the Pandit,” rides from Gartokh to Lhasa, a distance of 800 miles, travelling day and night. The courier’s coat is *sealed* upon him, so that he dares not take off his clothes till the seal is officially broken on his arrival at the terminus. These messengers had faces cracked, eyes bloodshot and sunken, and bodies raw with vermin. (*J. R. G. S.* XXXVIII. p. 149.) The modern Turkish post from Constantinople to Baghdad, a distance of 1100 miles, is done in twenty days by four Tartars riding night and day. The changes are at Sivas, Diarbekir, and Mosul. M. Tchihatcheff calculates that the night riding accomplishes only one quarter of the whole. (*Asie Mineure*, 2^{de} Ptie. 632-635.)—See I. p. 352, *pai tze*.