

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SILK ROAD: THE POSTAL RELAY ROUTE OF MONGOL AND GORYEO

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The Silk Road named by Ferdinand von Richthofen was not designated as a specific route. A lot of East-West trade routes had already existed across the continent and the geographical scope and definition of the Silk Road is still expanding. In particular, the claim that the Eastern end of the Silk Road reaches Gyeongju is an example of this expansion. Burial treasures from tombs on the Korean Peninsula have already been identified as products from the Sassanian Dynasty of Persia, and various archaeological and epical evidences support this finding. However, the specific route where these exchanges were made, around the 6th-8th centuries, has yet to be identified. Maritime as well as inland routes can easily be hypothesized.

The Silk Road was largely activated by the Yam postal system with the expansion of the Mongol Empire. It not only served as an effective pathway for the Yuan to rule over the Goryeo, but also connected the Eastern end of the Silk Road to Gyeongju. This can explain the situation since the 13th century. Therefore, this paper claims that the Yeokcham system had been operating on the Korean Peninsula since the Unified Silla Kingdom, the previous period of Goryeo, or perhaps even before then. The Yeokcham should thus be regarded as a prototype of the Mongolian Yam, and the Korean peninsula should be recognized as another route which contributed specifically to the development of the Silk Road, not just as a user or a beneficiary.

Keywords: Silk Road, Yam system, Yeokcham, Goryeo, Gyeongju

INTRODUCTION

The German geographer, Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), named the route of East-West traffic on the Eurasian continent 'the Silk Road'(Die Seidenstrassen). However, the

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name he used was a plural form, so a more accurate translation would be ‘the Silk Roads.’ The Steppe Route, which led over the Ural Mountains to the Tianshan Mountains as recorded by Herodotus c. 5th century BCE., and the traffic route connecting the East-West oasis cities of Bactria, Sogdiana, and Pamir, could be called prototypes of the Silk Road. Therefore, the Richtofen’s ‘Silk Road’ was not a new road, but rather a romantic name for a road which had existed for centuries.¹

Albert Herrmann insisted that the western boundary of the route should be extended beyond India, to Syria.² He said that the last collection place for raw silk and silk fabrics coming from the East was Syria, located on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. In this way, the definition of the territory of the Silk Road was expanded, and this expansion is still under way. For example, such claims include the theory that the Western end of the Silk Road is Rome rather than Syria, and the Eastern end is Gyeongju in Korea or Nara in Japan, rather than Chang’an in China.

In particular, the claim that Gyeongju was the Eastern end of the Silk Road is mainly based on artifacts found on the Korean peninsula, such as the glassware excavated from the royal tombs of Silla in 1973. Furthermore, researchers who have deduced that the origin of certain beads was the East Java Island in Indonesia, have confirmed the existence of an oceanic Silk Road. The same is true in regard to the presence of Roman glassware, considered by researchers to be products from the Eastern Mediterranean or the Sassanian Dynasty of Persia, introduced to Korea through the Eurasian continent. Additionally, the Gyerimno Golden Dagger is similar to that unearthed from Borovoe in Kazakhstan. The main production sites are considered to be Central Asia, the Black Sea, or Iran. A Westerner with deep-set eyes and a prominent nose, standing with his polo stick, is sculpted into a corner pillar stone of the square tomb in Gujeongdong, Gyeongju. He is also presumed to be an Arab, Iranian, or Sogdian. Various cultural and literal sources, including *Kushnahme*, the orally transmitted epic of the Sasanian dynasty, offer further evidence of cultural and commercial exchange.

This paper to examines the evidence suggesting that the Korean Peninsula should be counted as an extension tube, connected to the Mongolian postal system, or Yam. The Yam formed a huge belt, ranging from the Mediterranean Sea to the Korean Peninsula, connecting the Eurasian centers more broadly and densely than ever before. The Mongolian term Jamči was translated as Chamjeok (站赤) in Chinese characters, but the term Yeokcham(驛站) was also used with the same meaning in Korean and Chinese historical records.³

¹ David Christian (2000). “Silk Roads or Steppe Roads: The Silk Roads in World History,” *Journal of World History*, pp. 11-12.

² Albert Herrmann (1910). *Die alten Seidenstrassen zwischen China und Syrien* [The Old Silk Roads between China and Syria] Berlin: Weidmannsche.

³ 김성수 (2008). 「몽골제국시기 유라시아 광역 교통망 잡치」, 『몽골학』 25, p. 232. [Kim Sung-soo, “‘Jamci’ the Euraisan broad traffic Network in the Era of Mongolian Empire”, in *Mongol Studies* 25]

MONGOL'S YAM SYSTEM ON THE SILK ROAD

John M. Smith, Jr. provides the most details on the history of the Mongol Empire.⁴ The Mongols reached Europe in 1221. Their force crossed northern Iran, wintering in Azerbaijan (1220-21), crossed the Caucasus Mountains, spent the next winter in the Crimea, and explored the Volga region. In 1236-42, the Mongols returned, acting on knowledge gained on their previous expedition that the steppe extended into the North Pontic region. They then based a large army in Ukraine and on the Volga, creating the sub-realm of the empire that came to be known in the West as the Golden Horde. In 1258, they subjugated and destroyed the Caliphate in Iraq, and extended the empire to the southwest. Although Syria and Egypt were successfully defended by the Mamluks, the Assassins were wiped out, as was the Caliph. Baghdad was wrecked, and much of the commerce that had been focused there now shifted north to Tabriz and Trebizond. In the mid-thirteenth century, they marched to the Middle East, into southern (Sung) China, and against Korea.

The most surprising result of the conquest of Asia was the subjugation of the continent under one leader and the establishment of a communication system which passed information between Europe and Mongolia and vice versa.⁵ This system used a courier on horseback to relay information between the Khan and his generals. Running the empire would have been impossible without this system, which significantly reduced the time a message or intelligence could be delivered. Through the reign of Möngke Khan (1251-1259), all the forces were controlled from the Khan's camp via the Yam service, which connected all of them, and passed, in part, along the Silk Road.

The Yam system established posts along roads at regular intervals about twenty-five or thirty miles by foot, where horses, fodder, and provision for the messengers were held. These posts kept around 400 horses ready for switching for messengers, facilitating speedy trips throughout the empire.⁶ Official messengers and ambassadors used the service for free, while everyone else paid post service taxes, and carried a Paiza, an object that indicated the level of importance of the messenger.⁷ Messengers on horseback could cover somewhere between 200 and 250 miles a day.⁸

⁴ John M. Smith, Jr., "The Mongols and the Silk Road." <http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/newsletter/volumeonenumeratorone/mongols.html>

⁵ David Morgan (1994). "Persian perceptions of Mongols and Europeans", in *Implicit Understandings*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press. p. 203.

⁶ Francis Dvornik (1974). *Origins of Intelligence Services*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. p. 290.

⁷ David Morgan (1994). p. 91.

⁸ Karl Wittfogel (2009). "Russia and the East: A Comparison and Contrast." *Slavic Review* 22, no. 4. p. 639-40.

Several western visitors observed the Yam system in action on their excursions throughout the Mongolian Empire. Of these, Friar Giovanni DiPlano Carpini, the Franciscan monk William of Rubruck, the merchant Marco Polo, and ambassador Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo are the most prominent. All provide similar descriptions of the Yam, with unique information on the different things they saw while traveling along it.

Friar Giovanni di Pian di Carpini (1180-1252), sent by Pope Innocent IV, arrived at the Mongolian military camp stationed on the Dnieper River in 1245. From here, he went on horseback, changing horses provided by Mongolia, sometimes several times in a day, and finally arrived at the camp of Batu. He reported his arrival in Kiev with a detailed description about the Yam.⁹ William of Rubruck (1220-1293), a Franciscan monk, visited Karakorum across Eurasia between 1253 and 1255. He headed to the winter domain of Möngke in west Karakorum, and made a visit to northern China by a sea route through the Hormuz Port. He also wrote a detailed account of his journey with the Yam experience.

Marco Polo (1254–1324) described how a messenger only traveled a short distance of twenty-five miles to reach the next post station and illustrated the amenities of each station as very ‘spacious’ and ‘splendid,’ even in the most barren environments. He spoke on the exceptional number of horses (400) at any given post, these being always ready for messengers looking for a new rested horse. Polo claimed that the Yam, “is surely the highest privilege and greatest resource ever enjoyed by any man on earth, king or emperor or what you will.”¹⁰ Ibn Battuta (1304-1368) visited and recorded details of Muslim residential areas ranging from Egypt to central Asia, including Eastern Europe, India, China, and the Southeast. He visited Ulus and wrote about the Yam system in detail noting its use by many Muslim merchants.¹¹

Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo (?-1412), as ambassador for King Henry III of Castile and Leon of Spain, journeyed into Anatolia, to the city of Samarkand. On his trip, he witnessed the Yam system still in effect after the collapse of the Mongol Empire. He explained how if a messenger’s horse ever tired while on route he would confiscate one from a bystander.¹² He claimed to have spotted a large number of horses dead from over-exhaustion and left on the sides of the roads, while traveling in the area of the Golden Horde.¹³

This variety of documentation was the result of increased movement of political and religious figures who wished to have an audience with the Khagan, who was at that time one of the most important monarchs of the world. Moreover, the Yuan Dynasty was the biggest

⁹ TS. Gantulga (2009). *History of Mongolia*, (김장구 이평래 역, 『몽골의 역사』 동북아역사재단) p. 135.

¹⁰ Marco Polo (1958). *The Travels of Marco Polo*, translated by Ronald Latham. Baltimore: Penguin books. p. 122.

¹¹ Battuta, Ibn (2001). *Rihlatu Ibn Batūtah 2*, (정수일 역, 『이븐바투타 여행기』, 창비출판사) p. 327

¹² Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, “Clavijo’s Embassy to Tamerlane,” trans. Guy Le Strange <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/clavijo/cltxt1.html> (accessed Sept. 7, 2016).

¹³ Ibid.

area of production along with India, and had emerged as the most attractive market all over Eurasia due to its safe and efficient transportation network.

ORIGINS OF THE YAM

It is well known that the Yam system was established in its entirety in the Ögedei period. *The Secret History of the Mongols* contains a record stating that Ögedei Khan built the Yam that bridged the Mongolian mainland and the territory of Chagatai and Batu at regular intervals. In addition, taxes were imposed in order to maintain the system. It was a kind of compulsory labor to provide room, board, and transportation for envoys. In order to maintain the Yam system, the nomads living on the steppe had to work much more. They also served as the post-horse and station keepers.¹⁴

The Mongol ruling class considered the organization and implantation of the Yam a major task for the empire, and its influence was widespread. Successful examples such as the Mamlūk's *barīd*, the Ottoman's *ulak*, and other courier services in Persia and the Delhi Sultanate grew across the empire and continued after its fall.¹⁵ The *barīd* was the state-run courier service of the Umayyad and later Abbasid Caliphates. It was not only responsible for the overland delivery of official correspondence throughout the empire, but functioned as a domestic intelligence agency.¹⁶ The *ulak* was the official courier service of the Ottoman Empire, together with the network of *menzilhanes* (posting-stations) which was established on the most heavily traveled routes of the Empire.¹⁷

One might question how the Mongols were able to set up a system of this nature; did they develop it themselves or did it originate from another nation? How did the Mongols conceive the idea of organizing such an ingenious institution as a regular post with relays for obtaining rapid information? Had nothing similar existed during the time of the nomadic Mongols before? Dvornik claims it follows an example of the Chinese, even though that is still unclear.¹⁸ He emphasizes that there are hardly any documents describing its origin and how it functions, and the only detailed account came from the writings of western visitors, as described above. Morgan agreed that the Chinese had a postal system which operated in North China in the area of the Khitan Liao dynasty, and that this resembled the Yam system even before the Mongols had appeared. There were even similarities in how they received foreign

¹⁴ *The Secret History of the Mongols*, pp. 299-301

¹⁵ Morgan (2007), p. 93.

¹⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barid_\(caliphate\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barid_(caliphate))

¹⁷ CJ. Heywood(1980). *The Ottoman menzilhane and ulak system in Rumeli in the eighteenth century*, in Osman Okyar and Halil Inalcik (eds.), *Türkiye'nin sosyal ve ekonomik tarihi (1071-1920)*, Ankara j, p. 179-84 .

¹⁸ Francis Dvornik (1974). *ibid*.

envoys and issued silver tablets marking authority, which Morgan claims, “are clearly the immediate ancestors of the Mongol Paiza.”¹⁹ He also gives the Mongols credit for extending the post system model across the entirety of the empire. Users of the Yam in the Yuan period were supposed to all possess Paiza, which were issued by the government. Paiza took the role of a Khan's order and functioned as a symbol of power in the districts governed by Mongolia.

It is true that the Yam system was not formed abruptly with the advent of the Mongol Empire. Although the scale is incomparable to the size of the Mongol Empire, it can be regarded as the accumulated results accruing from the countries existing all over Eurasia. It was deeply connected with the activities of the Huns, Xianbei, Turks, and Uighur who occupied the Eastern Eurasian steppes, ranging from the Mongol steppes to Central Asia, including Persia, Byzantine, and Kushan. Thus, it is not at all unusual to find similarities in the ‘Yeokjeon System (驛傳制度)’ from the Qin and Han (221 BCE - 220 CE) to the Tang and Song (618-1279 CE) dynasties.

Such development had a deep connection with military activities, as well. Being able to deliver military secrets and supplies in a short time was vital. In the Han period, it was extremely important to organize and maintain stations in the northwestern area for preparing for the war with the Xiongnu. Forty-one stations were built, from Chang’an to Dunhuang, and they were almost identical to military camps. At each station were inns where travelers could stay, a postal service for the delivery of documents, and carriages which transported traveling officials.²⁰ In the Tang period, the requirement that the stations be installed every 30 li²¹ appeared, and specific statistics showing 1,639 stations installed across the country were recorded.

During the Yuan Dynasty, the empire or ruling dynasty of China established by Kublai Khan was developed so that the artillery could move 400 li at a run in a single day.²² Considering one li is about 550 meters, 400 li is 220 km. This was more than twice as fast as in the Tang period, when they ran about 100 km/day. This change in speed was not because of any dramatic change in vehicles, but probably due to the maintenance of transportation and the elaborate organization of the Yam system.

It is interesting that a very similar system was extended to the area of the Yuan Dynasty.

¹⁹ Morgan (2007). p. 94.

²⁰ 김성수 (2008). 「몽골제국시기 유라시아 광역 교통망 잡치」, 『몽골학』 25, p. 232. [Kim Sung-soo, “‘Jamci’ the Euraisian broad traffic Network in the Era of Mongolian Empire”, in *Mongol Studies* 25]

²¹ 1 li was approximately 534 meters in the Tang Dynasty, and it corresponded to 576 meters in the Qing Dynasty. It did not exceed this range in even the Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties. According to this, it was calculated assuming approximately 550 meters, so a certain amount of error will be difficult to avoid. 박흥수. 『한중도량형제도시』. 성균관대학교출판부, 1999, p. 357; 418-1; 452-5. [Park Heung-su, *An Institutional History of measurement in Korea and China*]

²² 『元史兵志』 4, 2596-2597.

Horse breeders were selected and assigned as government officials for horse management, and their positions were passed on to their descendants. They had a duty to breed the horses, brand official seals on the horses' left legs, and compensate for the loss of horses which died of disease or were lost, with their own livestock.²³ In addition, the nomads had to supply the country with some of their own horses, at a price set by the state, in order to cover the need. Their speed was 700 li (approx. 383 km) in 24 hours, which means they galloped at about 16 km per hour. This would have been possible if the traffic routes were well maintained and the Yam stations were densely arranged.

On the other hand, the development of the Yam had a number of negative effects. The quantity of Paiza granting utilization of the Yam increased. This was a big blow because lodging and transportation had even been provided for unauthorized people. However, this phenomenon is also strong evidence that there were many people who wanted to travel to the territories of Mongolia for various reasons. The center of power of the world's largest empire at the time was bound to attract both goods and population.

THE YAM SYSTEM ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

The Goryeo dynasty, though still independent from the Yuan, was in need of reorganization of the Yeokcham system which had been in disorder since the Later Three Kingdoms era. Thus, a systematic network and efficient organization of stations was established by sending external officials in order to effectively promote control over the provinces with the strengthening royal authority. This was organized during the regime of King Seongjong (r. 981-997). However, this station system of Goryeo underwent many changes under interference from Mongolia.

Wonjong of Goryeo (r. 1260–1274) ascended the throne with the help of Kublai Khan. During his reign, Goryeo became a vassal of the Mongol-founded Yuan dynasty in China and entered into friendly relations with Yuan. The installation of Yam was one of the six articles which Yuan required of Goryeo as a condition of friendly relations. The Yam was a required device for the stable management of the Mongol Empire across the Eurasian continent, and as the main line of descendants of the Mongol Empire, Yuan required Goryeo to complete the Yam system. Goryeo was already operating 22 postal routes and 525 stations, Yeokcham system, with Gaegyeong as the center, so they became closely related to the Yuan's vast Yam system.²⁴

Goryeo made a prompt rebuttal to the requirement at the beginning of the Yuan invasion,²⁵

²³ *History of Yuan* (元史), Treatises 3 · Article of Horse Management, volume 100.

²⁴ 정요근 (2007). 「고려 역로망에 대한 원(元)의 개입과 그 의미」, 『역사와 현실』 64, 2007, 161/165 [Jeong, Yo-keun, “Yuan’s Intervention in Koryo’s Management of the Postal Station System and its Meaning” in *Yoksa wa Hyonsil* 64]

²⁵ 『고려사』 24권, 고종 40, 8월. [*Goryeosa*, vol. 24]

emphasizing that the work of ‘installation of postal roads’ on the northern border had already been completed.²⁶ This was acknowledged by Yuan.²⁷ The speedy installation of Yam in Goryeo as part of the six requirements was due to the fact that Goryeo had experience of operating a dense transportation network. On the basis of this tradition, Goryeo was able to recover the stations devastated due to the long-term war and grant Yuan’s request for installation of Yam by recruiting workers who could be charged with the maintenance of post-stations.

The Yam installed in Goryeo according to the Yuan requirement was different to the traditional Yeokcham stations of Goryeo, but the names Yeok and Cham had become interchangeable, even in Yuan; In Goryeo, Heunguiyeok and Jeollyeongyeok, located between Gaegyeong and Seogyeong, were referred to as the Yam. As this suggests, there was no particular resistance to renaming the existing Yeok as Yam in Goryeo. Although the possibility has been raised, it is difficult to infer that Yeok and Yam existed in separate systems in Goryeo, because there was not any significant difference in their original functions.²⁸

The purpose of the installation of Yam was to establish a rapid transit system of transportation and communication. The Yam required by Yuan was a main-line traffic route directly connecting the main road of Yuan and Gaegyeong of Goryeo, rather than connecting every place in the territory of Goryeo. The stable operation of this route would have been an important foundation of efficient control in Goryeo. From the viewpoint of Goryeo, it was also considered necessary, in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with Yuan. Therefore, whether the traffic route was newly installed or a pre-existing one was of no importance. Although the existing stations could be used in principle, a new facility would have been installed when the original was too old or beyond repair. Each station would have had the specified number of staff and horses required by Yuan. At that time, the number of Yeokcham installed in Goryeo was confirmed to be over 40.²⁹ In addition, their approximate locations are shown on the map below.³⁰

The main agent of the Yeokcham was Goryeo, not Yuan. This was because Goryeo had its own network before the interference of Yuan. While the invasion of Yuan was proceeding, Yeokcham was reinforced and increased for military purposes. This was then followed by the interference and intervention of Yuan. It was also discarded when it was no longer consistent with the interests of Yuan. Under the domination of Mongolia, the scale and organization of Yeokcham had expanded along with the pioneering excursions into the northern region. However, the system then collapsed, due to the increasing number of people using post-horses

²⁶ 『고려사』, 25권 원종 4, 4월. [*Goryeosa*, vol. 25]

²⁷ 『고려사』 25권 원종 9, 3월. [*Goryeosa*, vol. 25]

²⁸ 정요근 [Jeong, Yo-keun]. p. 166.

²⁹ *History of Yuan*, volume 11, Emperor Shizu 8, June.

³⁰ 정요근. p. 175.



Uiju: Uiju-gun County Pyeonganbuk-do Province
 Anbukbu: Anju-si City Pyeongannam-do Province
 Seogyeong: Pyongyang
 Pyeongju: Pyeongsan-gun County Hwanghaebuk-do Province
 Gaegyeong: Gaeseong-si City, Gyeonggi-do Province
 Namgyeong: Seoul
 Dongju: Cheorwon-gun County, Gangwon-do
 Gyoju: Hoeyang-gun County Gangwon-do Province
 Hwaju: Yeongheung-gun County Hamgyeongnam-do Province
 Jeongju: Geumya-gun County Hamgyeongnam-do Province
 Hamju: Hamju-gun County Hamgyeongnam-do Province
 Kanggye: Kanggye-si City Pyeonganbuk-do Province
 Manpo: Manpo-si City Jagang-do Province

without permission, and the escape of many Yeokcham workers. Moreover, the fields owned by postal stations had lost their value after the landed gentry and influential families took possession of them. For this reason, the Joseon Dynasty had to reorganize administrative division in 1398, while inheriting the Yeokcham system of Goryeo. The new system was not only for military purposes but also for diplomatic relations with Jurchen. Finally, the nationwide postal road network system was established, and Yeokcham was installed even on Jeju Island. During the early days of the Joseon Dynasty Yeokcham could not function efficiently, because of people using post horses without permission, rising horse prices, and the increasing number of escaping workers. In fact it was almost paralyzed around the time of the Japanese Invasion of Korea, due to the privatization of fields owned by the stations by corrupt officials and sergeants, along with a breakdown in social discipline.

After the Japanese Invasion, the communication function of the stations was reinstated after supplementation. That is, the Pabal system of the Ming Dynasty was installed and took over the role of military communication together with the Bongsu system of sending smoke signals. A standard Pabal system had been established such that one Cham should be placed every 20 li for horses, and every 30 li for those on foot. Three arterial roads were prepared using the three main routes named Seobal, Bukbal, and Nambal. This Pabal organization was installed and operated in conjunction with the existing post stations. However, immediate messages were often delayed or damaged because of the negative effects of the Pabal system. Nevertheless, it performed an important role in military communications until a modern phone telecommunication facility was installed in 1896.

CONCLUSION

Yam was obviously a government transport network run by the Mongol Empire, so it was natural for the system to be affected by political situations. With the Great Yuan Ulus becoming weak, the Yam system would have received a huge blow. Before and after the 15th century the scale of the Mongol Empire was greatly reduced and descendant regimes appeared all across the continent. The Eurasian transportation network seemed to be split into several regions at this time. However, this did not mean that the Yam system had been interrupted or disrupted in its role. The Yam system continued its importance because it was necessary for the maintenance and development of official commerce.

With the development of Yam in the Mongol Empire era, the development of a private traffic network should not be taken lightly. A comprehensive commercial distribution network, including financial business, evolved from accommodations and warehousing run by merchants, and into a public transportation network. It was likely that not only the private distribution network of merchants was enlarged as a result, but also the private traffic network developed to support this. The fact that the merchants of Goryeo advanced into Xiyu through Yam also could be an instance of this process. After Yam was installed for political purposes in Goryeo, this became an important passage connecting Goryeo and Yuan, although the system was later abolished.

Relevant documentation can be found in the *Seojeongrok* and *Huseojeongrok*, which described a trip to China from 1314 to 1323 by Yi Jehyeon. Unfortunately, the original copy of this book has disappeared, but the dates and places can be compared with the existing traffic routes, since his journey on the Yam route was recorded.³¹ He visited Beijing several times, and stayed at Mount Emei in Sichuan and Mount Putuo in Zhejiang. He also went to Linxia, Gansusheng, to meet King Chungseon, who had been released from exile after Emperor Yingzong of Yuan (r. 1320-1323) ascended the throne. At that time, he also used Yam, that is Yeokcham, and it is confirmed that King Chungseon of Goryeo used Paizas.³² Therefore Yam was an irreplaceable path for Goryeo to reach the continent and Xiyu.

Recently, a copy of the letter of Pope John XXII to King Chungbuk in 1333 has been found in the Vatican.³³ It has not been confirmed whether this letter, starting with “Dear His Majesty of Goryeo”, was finally delivered to King Chungbuk. However, it includes the phrase, “I was so pleased to hear that you treated Christians well.” This tells us that Vatican priests had already crossed into Goryeo before the letter delivery. In addition, it strongly supports the argument that exchange between the east and the west was already being actively developed

³¹ 지영재 (2003). 『서정록(西征錄)을 찾아서』, 푸른역사, 2003. [Ji Yeongjae, *Looking for Seojeongnok*]

³² 지영재 [Ji Yeongjae]. pp. 15-37.

³³ *Yonhap News*: 09.29.2016

through the Yam route.

The Yam of the Mongol Empire had a profound influence on the development of Eurasian traffic routes that connected Eurasia. It also helped with the dense and wide transport network called Chamjeok in China, Yeokcham in Goryeo, Jam in Tibet, and Yam in Persia, ruled by the Il Khanate. The road of the empire, under the name of Silk Road, offered an expanded open space to mankind through east-west Eurasia. This road clearly shows us the trail of the path existed in the previous era.

There is a record that “the Postal Service(郵驛) was installed in every direction and ordered office workers to repair the roads in Silla.”³⁴ In 668, another record says that “When the King came to the Yokdolyeok Station (褥突驛), they gave a feast privately and entertained the king and all attendants by playing music.”³⁵ In addition, “There are already 11 surrendered fortresses in the north of the Yālù River. One of them is Guknaeseong which can be reached through the 17 stations from Pyeongyang.”³⁶ These references confirm that the Yeokcham system already existed at this time. The function of the above mentioned stations was to provide convenience in case of the King’s local tours, delivery of executive orders, or accommodation for envoys. On that basis, the Yeokcham System began after the establishment of the Postal Service in the Three Kingdoms Period. This fact is made even clearer from the records of events such as those putting the control of traffic and horse management under the Department of Transportation, and renaming Dojeongyeok Station (都亭驛) to Gyeongdoyeok Station (京都驛).³⁷ Moreover, one record shows that several officials, such as two Gyeong (卿), two Daesa (大舍), one Saji (舍知) and two Sa (史) were appointed and ran the station under the control of the Department of Transportation.³⁸

Such visible traffic routes could be formed because similar tracks had already been partially operated. The confirmation of these tracks allows us to be certain that Gyeongju was the eastern end of the Silk Road. In fact, in some areas, including the Korean Peninsula, it has been confirmed that traces of Yam in the name of Yeokcham already existed prior to the Mongolian Yam. At the same time, the Korean peninsula can be recognized as a cultural belt that contributed specifically to the development of the Silk Road, not just as a user or a beneficiary.

³⁴ *Samguksagi*, in 487: Article in March, 9th year of King Soji.

³⁵ *Samguksagi*, in 668: Article in October, 8th year of King Munmu.

³⁶ *Samguksagi*, Goguryeo Kingdom chapter from *Jiriji*

³⁷ *Samguksagi*, in 584: King Jinpyeong 6

³⁸ *Samguksagi*, in pp. 742–765

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