

The preliminary results reached by WATTERS (*Essays on the Chinese language*, 439-440), HIRTH and ROCKHILL (*JNCB*, XXI, 230-231, and *HR*, 217-220), and LAUFER (*Sino-Iranica*, 488-492 and 574) are sadly in need of correction and elaboration. Although I am not a botanist, and moreover cannot undertake here a thorough examination of the problem, I think it will be worth while to record a certain number of facts which I have ascertained.

GOSSYPIUM AND BOMBAX. — Before examining the various terms which have been used in Chinese to designate cotton, some preliminary explanations are necessary. Cotton, properly so called, is the produce of a malvaceous plant, the *Gossypium*. There are many species of *Gossypium*; for our present purpose, they may be reduced to two, the *Gossypium herbaceum*, which is a plant of little size, and the *Gossypium arboreum*, which is a small tree, reaching three and sometimes even six or seven yards in height. In the Middle Ages, it was *Gossypium arboreum* which was most generally planted in tropical or subtropical regions like Indo-China, and in parts of Yün-nan, Kuang-tung, and even Fu-chien, whereas only *Gossypium herbaceum* was grown in the provinces of Chê-chiang and Chiang-su which soon produced most of the cotton stuffs used throughout the country. But there is also a lofty tree, of imposing proportions, the *Bombax*, or silk-cotton tree, the fruit of which yields a floss, the kapok, which is used for stuffing and padding purposes. Although recent botanists are inclined to speak of it as *Bombax pentandrum*, or *Bombax ceiba*, or *Ceiba pentandra*, there is only one kind of *Bombax* in Asia, with varieties, and we may retain for it the earlier and more common name *Bombax malabaricum*. Now, the whole problem of the history of cotton in the Far East is dominated by the confusion which has been made by Chinese scholars between *Gossypium arboreum* and *Bombax malabaricum*. But Western scholars might have known better. Speaking of *Gossypium herbaceum*, STUART (*Materia Medica*, 197) says that « this malvaceous plant, which yields the cotton wool, and which is the same as *Gossypium indicum*, is not distinguished in Chinese works from the sterculiaceus *Bombax malabaricum*, the cotton tree. The reason for this probably appears in the fact that the cotton tree was known in China from very ancient times, and its cotton was used by the Chinese in the manufacture of cloth before the introduction of the cotton plant ». But, as we shall see, there is no indication that the Chinese ever used the floss of the *Bombax* for making any cloth. Moreover, there is not one single word in STUART's book about *Gossypium arboreum*, which is precisely the one species which lies at the basis of the confusion. In the same way, LAUFER (*Sino-Iranica*, 491), finding in a Chinese work a plant the name of which was said to be synonymous with *mu-mien*, « cotton », automatically equated it with *Bombax malabaricum*, because *mu-mien* literally means « tree floss », and in spite of the fact that the very author he cited has expressly stated that the plant in question was « the *mu-mien* which was like a plant », not « the *mu-mien* which was like a tree »; but the *Gossypium arboreum* is absent, too, from LAUFER's notes on cotton. The only Western authors who have written on cotton in China and introduced *Gossypium arboreum* are HIRTH and ROCKHILL (*HR*, 219); they give it as the equivalent of *mu-mien*, and translate the latter term « tree-cotton ». But we shall see that *mu-mien* applies to both *Gossypium arboreum* and *Gossypium herbaceum*, not to speak of its confusion, perhaps even at an early date, with *Bombax malabaricum*. To avoid misunderstandings in the following notes, I shall never speak of *Bombax malabaricum* as the « cotton tree », but always as