

its fruit was like a wine cup; in the 'mouth' of the [fruit] there was floss with which one could make cloth; see Chang Po's *Wu lu*. [The *mu-mien*] is the *pan-chih hua* of our days; YANG Yung-hsiu (= YANG Shên) has discussed [the question], and he was right.» So, for the author of the *Wu-Hsün tsa-p'ei* as for YANG Shên, WANG Shih-mou and LI Shih-chên, the *mu-mien* was *Bombax malabaricum*. At the same time, we can see from his text that, in his time, *mu-mien* was a more or less obsolete term, for the meaning of which he had to fall back on the ancient description given in Chang Po's *Wu lu*. But he was mistaken in speaking of the «armful in girth», the only feature which could not be applied to *Gossypium arboreum*, since there is no such sentence in the *Wu lu*. Above all, he has neglected an important point: cloth was woven with *mu-mien*, and as WANG Shih-mou justly remarked after other writers, the floss of the *Bombax*, our kapok, can only be used for stuffing mattresses; moreover, the author of the *Wu-Hsün tsa-p'ei* almost says so himself in another paragraph.

It is in the light of what has just been said that I am tempted to interpret this other paragraph on *mu-mien* of the *Wu-hsün tsa-p'ei* (cf. *T'u-shu chi-ch'êng*, *ts'ao-mu tien*, 303, *hui-k'ao*, 2a): «*Mu-mien* is also called 瓊枝 *Ch'iung-chih*, 'Precious branch'. It is several ten-foot measures high. The tree [itself] resembles *wu-t'ung*; the leaves are like [those of] the peach-tree, but somewhat larger; the flowers are of a deep red colour and like the camelia (*shan-ch'a*). In spring and summer, the flowers open and cover the tree, which from afar looks like a gay brocade. When the flowers wither, they form a fruit (*tzü*) which is like a wine-cup; floss spouts out of its orifice (*k'ou*, lit. 'mouth'), abundant like a fine down. Anciently it was said that the Barbarians (Man) of Hai-nan wove [*mu-mien*] into a cloth which was called *chi-pei*; now [*mu-mien*] is used only to stuff mattresses, because it is soft and warm, and nobody employs it to make cloth. In Hsün[-chou] and Wu[-chou] (both in Kuang-hsi), there is also *mu-mien*; but local people do not collect [the floss], which is merely blown about and made to fall by the wind.» This is the only text in which I have found *ch'iung-chih* as an equivalent of *mu-mien*. This fancy name, taken from the fabulous *ch'iung-chih* tree in *Chuang-tzü*, has also been given to «coral», and *ch'iung-chih*- [菜] *ts'ai*, «*ch'iung-chih* vegetable», is one of the names of the seaweed which we know as agar-agar (cf. *HR*, 176, 186). It does not seem to have ever been a true equivalent of *mu-mien*, except perhaps locally, among scholars, and perhaps for a short period. But, in view of the other text of the *Wu-Hsün tsa-p'ei*, it is just possible that *ch'iung-chih* was a misreading for *p'an-chih* [*hua*], this misreading being due to the attraction of *Chuang-tzü*'s *ch'iung-chih*. What the author gives is a description of the *Bombax malabaricum*, which we know from the other text to have been familiar to him as *pan-chih hua*. As to *mu-mien*, it would come in only as an antiquarian and scholarly — but mistakenly scholarly — equivalent of *pan-chih hua*.

In 1583, the Burmese army was defeated by the Chinese generals Liu T'ing and Têng Tzŭ-lung at a place called P'an-chih-hua (south-east of Yung-ch'ang in Yün-nan; cf. *Ming shih*, 315, 3b). Another P'an-chih-hua still exists at the extreme south-eastern corner of Yün-nan province. It is certain that these place-names were given under the Ming, probably by Chinese officials who were not natives of Yün-nan, on account of the presence of *Bombax* trees. Moreover, in Têng Tzŭ-lung's biography (*Ming shih*, 247, 10a), the battle of 1583 is located not «at P'an-chih-hua», but «under *p'an-chih* trees» 攀枝樹下, which proves the equivalence.