

Mongol dynasty. On the other hand, T'ao Tsung-i does not say that Huang *tao-p'o* introduced cotton cultivation into Wu-ni-ching, but that, at the beginning of the Mongol dynasty, she taught the Wu-ni-ching cotton growers how to make the necessary gins for a simpler treatment of the floss and afterwards a better use of the threads. Interesting as it is, T'ao Tsung-i's text has no direct bearing on the introduction of cotton cultivation into China.

For a number of centuries, the opinion has been generally held by Chinese scholars that cotton was already known in almost prehistoric China, because the «Tribute of Yü», in the *Shu ching*, contains the following sentence 島夷卉服 *tao-i hui fu*, «the island barbarians [brought] garments of grass» (cf. LEGGE, *Chin. Classics*, III, 111); *hui*, «grass», would be a designation of various vegetable textiles, including «cotton» (*mu-mien*). This explanation originated with Ts'ai Ch'ên (1167-1230; cf. GILES, *Biogr. Dict.* No. 1968), whose famous commentary on the *Shu ching* was completed in 1210, and it has been accepted, with more or less qualification, by men like Ch'iu Hsün (1418-1495; cf. GILES, *Biogr. Dict.* No. 407) in his *Ta-hsüeh yen-i pu* (cf. *T'u-shu chi-ch'êng, ts'ao-mu tien*, 303, 6 b; *Chin. Repository*, XIX, 458), WANG Hsiang-chin (cf. *T'u-shu chi-ch'êng, ibid., i-wên*, 2 a; on WANG Hsiang-chin, cf. *supra*, p. 438), T'AN Ch'ien (in his *Tsao-lin tsa-tsu, chung-chi*, 57 b), and even Hsü Kuang-ch'i (cf. *infra*, p. 488); the Emperor K'ang-hsi gave his sanction to it in the introduction to his «Ode on cotton», *Mu-mien fu* (reproduced in *Sung-chiang fu chih*, 6, 8 a). The sentence in question in the «Tribute of Yü» occurs in the section devoted to Yang-chou, *i. e.* the region of the lower Yang-tzŭ; *tao-i*, «island barbarians» is a vague term; at a later date, the Northern Wei used it as the designation of the dominions of the Liang, that is of the whole of south-eastern China. Of course there was no «cotton» in China before the Christian era; its occurrence in STEELE's *I li*, II, 94, is a bad anachronism. Ts'ai Ch'ên's explanation is untenable (just as much as his attempted connection between 貝 *pei*, which comes at the end of the sentence, with *chi-pei*, whereas this *pei* can only mean «shell», «cowry»), but its interest lies in the fact that, to have proposed it, Ts'ai Ch'ên must have been aware of the cultivation of cotton in some part of China. Now Ts'ai Ch'ên was a native of Chien-yang in Fu-chien, and we may conclude from his mistaken commentary that cotton was already largely cultivated in Fu-chien in 1210.

Other texts point also to times prior to the end of the 13th cent. (not to speak of the «14th» indicated by MAYERS, HIRTH and ROCKHILL, and COULING).

We must leave out the «*ta* (or *t'a*) cloth» of Han times, since we are not yet in a position to guarantee that it was cotton, and provisionally the slightly later *po-tieh* of the *Hua-yang kuo-chih* and the *Hou-Han shu*. But the question of the «*mu-mien* tree» mentioned by the two parallel passages of Chang Po's *Wu lu* as growing in Tongking and western Yün-nan, can be settled. Li Shih-chên had placed them in the same category as the «*p'an-chih hua*», which in his time was indubitably *Bombax*; Hsü Kuang-ch'i opposed him with very sound reasons in his *Nung-chêng ch'üan-shu* (35, 2).

I have already referred to the *Nung-chêng ch'üan-shu*, without however saying anything definite on the history of this agricultural encyclopaedia, the history of which is far from being satisfactorily explained. The date «1619» given by LAUFER, *Sino-Iranica*, 336, is an error or a misprint for «1639»; and the book was not printed «by Imperial command», as said by WYLIE