

*sativa* has been found wild, with every appearance of an indigenous plant, in several provinces of Anatolia, to the south of the Caucasus, in several parts of Persia, in Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and in Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> Hence the Greeks, he concludes, may have introduced the plant from Asia Minor as well as from India, which extended from the north of Persia. This theory seems to me inadmissible and superfluous, for the Greeks allude solely to Media in this connection, not to India. Moreover, the cultivation of the plant is not ancient in India, but is of recent date, and hardly plays any rôle in Indian agriculture and economy.

■ In ancient Iran, alfalfa was a highly important crop closely associated with the breeding of superior races of horses. Pahlavi *aspast* or *aspist* New Persian *aspust*, *uspust*, *aspist*, *ispist*, or *isfist* (Puštu or Afghan *spastu*, *špēšta*), is traceable to an Avestan or Old-Iranian \*aspō-asti (from the root *ad*, "to eat"), and literally means "horse-fodder."<sup>2</sup> This word has penetrated into Syriac in the form *aspestā* or *pespestā* (the latter in the *Geoponica*). Khosrau I (A.D. 531-578) of the Sasanian dynasty included alfalfa in his new organization of the land-tax:<sup>3</sup> the tax laid on alfalfa was seven times as high as that on wheat and barley, which gives an idea of the high valuation of that forage-plant. It was also employed in the pharmacopœia, being dealt with by Abu Mansur in his book on pharmacology.<sup>4</sup> The seeds are still used medicinally.<sup>5</sup> The Arabs derived from the Persians the word *isfist*, Arabicized into *fisfisa*; Arabic designations being *ratba* and *qatt*, the former for the plant in its natural state, the latter for the dried plant.<sup>6</sup>

The mere fact that the Greeks received *Medicago* from the Persians, and christened it "Medic grass," by no means signifies or proves at the outset that *Medicago* represents a genuinely Iranian cultivation. It is well known how fallacious such names are: the Greeks also had the peach under the name "Persian apple," and the apricot as "Armenian apple;" yet peach and apricot are not originally Persian or Armenian, but Chinese cultivations: Iranians and Armenians in this case merely

<sup>1</sup> As to Kashmir, it will be seen, we receive a confirmation from an ancient Chinese document. See also G. WATT, *Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*, Vol. V, pp. 199-203.

<sup>2</sup> NELDEKE, *ZDMG*, Vol. XXXII, 1878, p. 408. Regarding some analogous plant-names, see R. v. STACKELBERG, *ibid.*, Vol. LIV, 1900, pp. 108, 109.

<sup>3</sup> NÖLDEKE, *Tabari*, p. 244.

<sup>4</sup> ACHUNDOW, *Abu Mansur*, p. 73 (cf. above, p. 194).

<sup>5</sup> SCHLIMMER, *Terminologie*, p. 365. He gives *yondže* as the Persian name, which, however, is of Turkish origin (from *yont*, "horse"). In Asia Minor there is a place Yonjali ("rich in alfalfa").

<sup>6</sup> LECLERC, *Traité des simples*, Vol. III, p. 35.