

(Iranians and Indo-Aryans) possess an identical word for "hemp" (Avestan *bangha*, Sanskrit *bhaṅga*), while the European languages have a distinct designation, which is presumably a loan-word pointing to Finno-Ugrian and Turkish; and, second, that there is a common Old-Turkish word for "hemp" of the type *kändir*, which stands in some relation to the Finno-Ugrian appellations.¹ It is most likely that the Scythians brought hemp from Asia to Europe.² On the other hand, it is well known what vital importance flax and linen claimed in the life of the Egyptians and the classical peoples.³ Flax is the typically European, hemp the typically Asiatic textile. Surely *Linum usitatissimum* was known in ancient Iran and India. It was and is still wild in the districts included between the Persian Gulf, the Caspian Sea, and the Black Sea.⁴ It was probably introduced into India from Iran, but neither in India nor in Iran was the fibre ever used for garments: the plant was only cultivated as a source of linseed and linseed-oil.⁵ Only a relatively modern utilization of flax-fibres for weaving is known from a single locality in Persia,—Kāzirūn, in the province of Fars. This account dates from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and the detailed description given of the process testifies to its novelty and exceptional character.⁶ This exception confirms the rule. The naturalization of *Linum* in China, of course, is far earlier than the fourteenth century. As regards the utilization of *Linum*, the Chinese fall in line with Iranians and Indo-Aryans; and it is from Iranians that they received the plant. The case is a clear index of the fact that the Chinese never were in direct contact with the Mediterranean culture-area, and that even such cultivated plants of this area as reached them were not transmitted from there directly, but solely through the medium of Iranians. The case is further apt to illustrate how superficial, from the viewpoint of technical culture, the influence of the Greeks on the Orient must have been since Alexander's campaign, as an industry like flax-weaving was not promoted by them, although the material was offered there by nature.

For botanical reasons it is possible that *Linum usitatissimum* was introduced into China from Fergana. There it is still cultivated, and only for the exclusive purpose of obtaining oil from the seeds.⁷ As has

¹ Z. GOMBOCZ, *Bulgarisch-türkische Lehnwörter*, p. 92.

² Cf. for the present, A. DE CANDOLLE, *Origin of Cultivated Plants*, p. 148.

³ Pliny, XIX, 1-3; H. BLÜMNER, *Technologie*, Vol. I, 2d ed., p. 191.

⁴ A. DE CANDOLLE, *Origin of Cultivated Plants*, p. 130.

⁵ See the interesting discussion of WATT, *Commercial Products of India*, p. 721.

⁶ G. LE STRANGE, *Description of the Province of Fars in Persia*, p. 55.

⁷ S. KORŽINSKI, *Vegetation of Turkistan (in Russian)*, p. 51.