

been pointed out, the plant is indigenous also in northern Persia, and must have been cultivated there from ancient times, although we have no information on this point from either native documents or Greek authors.¹

BRETSCHNEIDER² says that "flax was unknown to the ancient Chinese; it is nowadays cultivated in the mountains of northern China (probably also in other parts) and in southern Mongolia, but only for the oil of its seeds, not for its fibres; the Chinese call it *hu ma* ('foreign hemp'); the *Pen ts'ao* does not speak of it; its introduction must be of more recent date." This is erroneous. The *Pen ts'ao* includes this species under the ambiguous term *hu ma*; and, although the date of the introduction cannot be ascertained, the event seems to have taken place in the first centuries of our era.

At present, the designation *hu ma* appears to refer solely to flax. A. HENRY³ states under this heading, "This is flax (*Linum usitatissimum*), which is cultivated in Šan-si, Mongolia, and the mountainous parts of Hu-pei and Se-č'wan. In the last two provinces, from personal observation, flax would seem to be entirely cultivated for the seeds, which are a common article in Chinese drug-shops, and are used locally for their oil, utilized for cooking and lighting purposes." In another paper,⁴ the same author states that *Linum usitatissimum* is called at Yi-č'añ, Se-č'wan, *šan č'i ma* 山脂⁵麻 ("mountain sap-hemp"), and that it is cultivated in the mountains of the Patuñ district, not for the fibre, but for the oil which the seed yields.

Chinese *hu ma* has passed into Mongol as *xuma* (*khuma*) with the meaning "sesame,"⁶ and into Japanese as *goma*, used only in the sense of *Sesamum indicum*,⁷ while *Linum usitatissimum* is in Japanese *ama* or *ičinen-ama*.⁸

Yao Miñ-hwi 姚明輝, in his book on Mongolia (*Moñ-ku č'i*),⁹ mentions *hu ma* among the products of that country. There are several wild-growing species of *Linum* in northern China and Japan,— *ya ma*

¹ JORET, *Plantes dans l'antiquité*, Vol. II, p. 69.

² *Bot. Sin.*, pt. II, p. 204.

³ *Chinese Jute*, p. 6 (publication of the Chinese Maritime Customs, Shanghai, 1891).

⁴ *Chinese Names of Plants*, p. 239 (*Journal China Branch Royal As. Soc.*, Vol. XXII, 1887).

⁵ The popular writing 芝, according to the *Pen ts'ao kañ mu*, is incorrect.

⁶ KOVALEVSKI, *Dictionnaire mongol*, p. 934.

⁷ MATSUMURA, No. 2924.

⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 1839.

⁹ Ch. 3, p. 41 (Shanghai, 1907).