

latter possibly confounded again with *Curcuma*.<sup>1</sup> It is curious that in the entire *Pen-ts'ao* literature the fact has been overlooked that under the same name there is also preserved the ancient description of a tree. This fact has escaped all European writers, with the sole exception of PALLADIUS. In his admirable Chinese-Russian Dictionary<sup>2</sup> he gives the following explanation of the term *yü-kin*: "Designation of a tree in Ki-pin; yellow blossoms, which are gathered, and when they begin to wither, are pressed, the sap being mixed with other odorous substances; it is found likewise in Ta Ts'in, the blossoms being like those of saffron, and is utilized in the coloration of wine."

A description of this tree *yü-kin* is given in the Buddhist dictionary *Yi ts'ie kin yin i*<sup>3</sup> of A.D. 649 as follows: "This is the name of a tree, the habitat of which is in the country Ki-pin 罽賓 (Kashmir). Its flowers are of yellow color. The trees are planted from the flowers. One waits till they are faded; the sap is then pressed out of them and mixed with other substances. It serves as an aromatic. The grains of the flowers also are odoriferous, and are likewise employed as aromatics."

I am inclined to identify this tree with *Memecylon tinctorium*, *M. edule*, or *M. capitellatum* (*Melastomaceae*), a very common, small tree or large shrub in the east and south of India, Ceylon, Tenasserim, and the Andamans. The leaves are employed in southern India for dyeing a "delicate yellow lake." The flowers produce an evanescent yellow.<sup>4</sup> In restricting the habitat of the tree to Kashmir, Hüan Yin is doubtless influenced by the notion that saffron (*yü-kin*) was an exclusive product of Kashmir (see below).

The same tree is described by Abu Mansur under the name *vars* as a saffron-like plant of yellow color and fragrant, and employed by Arabic women for dyeing garments.<sup>5</sup> The ancients were not acquainted

<sup>1</sup> A third identification has been given by BRETSCHNEIDER (*Chinese Recorder*, 1871, p. 222), who thought that probably the sumbul (*Sumbulus moschatus*) is meant. This is a mistaken botanical name, but he evidently had in mind the so-called musk-root of *Euryangium* or *Ferula sumbul*, of musk-like odor and acrid taste. The only basis for this identification might be sought in the fact that one of the synonymes given for *yü-kin hian* in the *Pen ts'ao* is *ts'ao še hian* 草麝香 ("vegetable musk"); this name itself, however, is not explained. Saffron, of course, has no musk odor; and the term *ts'ao še hian* surely does not relate to saffron, but is smuggled in here by mistake. The *Tien hai yü hen č'i* (Ch. 3, p. 1 b, see above, p. 228) also equates *yü-kin hian* with *ts'ao še hian*, adding that the root is like ginger and colors wine yellow. This would decidedly hint at a *Curcuma*.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II, p. 202.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. 24, p. 8 (cf. *Beginnings of Porcelain*, p. 115; and above, p. 258).

<sup>4</sup> WATT, *Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*, Vol. V, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> ACHUNDOW, *Abu Mansur*, p. 145.