

and Jāgudā (Zābulistān) it was observed by the famous pilgrim Hūan Tsañ in the seventh century.¹ The Buddhist traveller Yi Tsin (671-695) attributes it to northern India.²

The earliest description of the plant is preserved in the *Nan čou i wu či*, written by Wan Čen in the third century A.D.,³ who says, "The habitat of *yü-kin* is in the country Ki-pin (Kashmir), where it is cultivated by men, first of all, for the purpose of being offered to the Buddha. After a few days the flower fades away, and then it is utilized on account of its color, which is uniformly yellow. It resembles the *fu-yuñ* (*Hibiscus*) and a young lotus (*Nelumbium speciosum*), and can render wine aromatic." This characteristic is fairly correct, and unequivocally applies to the *Crocus*, which indeed has the appearance of a liliaceous plant, and therefore belongs to the family *Irideae* and to the order *Liliiflorae*. The observation in regard to the short duration of the flowers is to the point.⁴

In A.D. 647 the country Kia-p'i 伽比 in India offered to the Court *yü-kin hian*, which is described on this occasion as follows: "Its leaves are like those of the *mai-men-tuñ* 麥門冬 (*Ophiopogon spicatus*). It blooms in the ninth month. In appearance it is similar to *fu-yuñ* (*Hibiscus mutabilis*). It is purple-blue 紫碧 in color. Its odor may be perceived at a distance of several tens of paces. It flowers, but does not bear fruit. In order to propagate it, the root must be taken."⁵

¹ S. JULIEN, Mémoires sur les contrées occidentales, Vol. I, pp. 40, 131; Vol. II, p. 187 (story of the Saffron-Stūpa, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 474; or S. BEAL, Buddhist Records, Vol. II, p. 125); W. W. ROCKHILL, Life of the Buddha, p. 169; S. LÉVI, *Journal asiatique*, 1915, I, pp. 83-85.

² TAKAKUSU's translation, p. 128; he adds erroneously, "species of *Curcuma*."

³ *Pen ts'ao kan mu*, Ch. 14, p. 22.

⁴ Compare Pliny's (XXI, 17, §34) description of *Crocus*: "Floret vergiliarum occasu paucis diebus folioque florem expellit. Viret bruma et colligitur; siccatur umbra, melius etiam hiberna."

⁵ *T'an hui yao*, Ch. 200, pp. 14 a-b. This text was adopted by the *Pen ts'ao kan mu* (Ch. 14, p. 22), which quotes it from the T'ang Annals. Li Ši-čen comments that this description agrees with that of the *Nan čou i wu či*, except in the colors of the flower, which may be explained by assuming that there are several varieties; in this he is quite correct. The flower, indeed, occurs in a great variation of colors,—purple, yellow, white, and others. W. WOODVILLE (Medical Botany, Vol. IV, p. 763) gives the following description of *Crocus*: "The root is bulbous, perennial: the flower appears after the leaves, rising very little above the ground upon a slender succulent tube: the leaves rise higher than the flower, are linear, simple, radical, of a rich green colour, with a white line running in the centre, and all at the base inclosed along with the tube of the flower in a membranous sheath. The flower is large, of a bluish purple, or lilac colour: the corolla consists of six petals, which are nearly elliptical, equal, and turned inwards at the edges. The filaments are three, short, tapering, and support long erect yellow antherae. The germen is roundish, from