

effect that Madhyāntika, the first apostle of Buddha's word in Kashmir, planted the saffron there.¹ If nothing else, this shows at least that the plant was regarded as an introduction. The share of the Persians in the distribution of the product is vividly demonstrated by the Tibetan word for "saffron," *kur-kum*, *gur-kum*, *gur-gum*, which is directly traceable to Persian *kurkum* or *karkam*, but not to Sanskrit *kuṅkuma*.² The Tibetans carried the word to Mongolia, and it is still heard among the Kalmuk on the Wolga. By some, the Persian word (Pahlavi *kulkem*) is traced to Semitic, Assyrian *karkuma*, Hebrew *karkōm*, Arabic *kurkum*; while others regard the Semitic origin as doubtful.³ It is beyond the scope of this notice to deal with the history of saffron in the west and Europe, on which so much has been written.⁴

From the preceding investigation it follows that the word *yü-kin* 鬱金, owing to its multiplicity of meaning, offers some difficulty to the translator of Chinese texts. The general rule may be laid down that *yü-kin*, whenever it hints at a plant or product of China, denotes a species of *Curcuma*, but that, when used with reference to India, Indo-China, and Iran, the greater probability is in favor of *Crocus*. The term *yü-kin hian* ("yü-kin aromatic"), with reference to foreign countries, almost invariably appears to refer to the latter plant, which indeed served as an aromatic; while the same term, as will be seen below, with reference to China, again denotes *Curcuma*. The question may now be raised, What is the origin of the word *yü-kin*? And what was its original meaning? In 1886 HIRTH⁵ identified *yü-kin* with Persian *karkam* ("saffron"), and restated this opinion in 1911,⁶ by falling back on an ancient pronunciation *hat-kam. Phonetically this is not very convincing, as the Chinese would hardly have employed an initial *h* for

¹ SCHIEFNER, *Tāranātha*, p. 13; cf. also J. PRZYLUKI, *Journal asiatique*, 1914 II, p. 537.

² *T'oung Pao*, 1916, p. 474. Cf. also Sogdian *kurkumba* and Tokharian *kurkama*.

³ HORN, *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, Vol. I, pt. 2, p. 6. Besides *kurkum*, there are Persian *kākbān* and *kāfīša*, which denote "saffron in the flower." Old Armenian *k'rk'um* is regarded as a loan from Syriac *kurkemā* (HÜBSCHMANN, *Armen. Gram.*, p. 320).

⁴ In regard to saffron among the Arabs, see LECLERC, *Traité des simples*, Vol. II, pp. 208-210. In general cf. J. BECKMANN, *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Erfindungen*, 1784, Vol. II, pp. 79-91 (also in English translation); FLÜCKIGER and HANBURY, *Pharmacographia*, pp. 663-669; A. DE CANDOLLE, *Géographie botanique*, p. 857, and *Origin of Cultivated Plants*, p. 166; HEHN, *Kulturpflanzen* (8th ed.), pp. 264-270; WATT, *Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 592; W. HEYD, *Histoire du commerce du levant*, Vol. II, p. 668, etc.

⁵ *Journal China Branch Roy. As. Soc.*, Vol. XXI, p. 221.

⁶ Chau Ju-kua, p. 91.