

the reproduction of a foreign *k*; but the character *yü* in transcriptions usually answers to \*ut, ud. The whole theory, however, is exposed to much graver objections. The Chinese themselves do not admit that *yü-kin* represents a foreign word; nowhere do they say that *yü-kin* is Persian, Sanskrit, or anything of the sort; on the contrary, they regard it as an element of their own language. Moreover, if *yü-kin* should originally designate the saffron, how, then, did it happen that this alleged Persian word was transferred to the genus *Curcuma*, some species of which are even indigenous to China, and which, at any rate, has been acclimated there for a long period? The case, indeed, is not simple, and requires closer study. Let us see what the Chinese have to say concerning the word *yü-kin*. PELLLOT<sup>1</sup> has already clearly, though briefly, outlined the general situation by calling attention to the fact that as early as the beginning of the second century, *yü-kin* is mentioned in the dictionary *Šwo wen* as the name of an odoriferous plant, offered as tribute by the people of Yü, the present Yü-lin in Kwañ-si Province; hence he inferred that the sense of the word should be "gold of Yü," in allusion to the yellow color of the product. We read in the *Šwi kin ču* 水經注<sup>2</sup> as follows: "The district Kwei-lin 桂林郡 of the Ts'in dynasty had its name changed into the Yü-lin district 鬱林郡 in the sixth year of the period Yüan-tiñ (111 B.C.) of the Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty. Wañ Mañ made it into the Yü-p'in district 鬱平. Yin Šao 應邵 [second century A.D.], in his work *Ti li fun su ki* 地理風俗記, says, 'The *Čou li* speaks of the *yü žen* 鬱人 ('officials in charge of the plant *yü*'), who have charge of the jars serving for libations; whenever libations are necessary for sacrifices or for the reception of guests, they attend to the blending of the plant *yü* with the odoriferous wine *č'an*, pour it into the sacred vases, and arrange them in their place.'<sup>3</sup> *Yü* is a fragrant plant. Flowers of manifold plants are boiled and mixed with wine fermented by means of black millet as an offering to the spirits: this is regarded by some as what is now called *yü-kin hian* 鬱金香 (*Curcuma*); while others contend that it was brought as tribute by the people of Yü, thus connecting the name of the plant with that of the clan and district of Yü." The latter is the explanation

<sup>1</sup> *Bull. de l'Ecole française*, Vol. III, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> This work is a commentary to the *Šwi kin*, a canonical book on water-courses, supposed to have been written by Sañ K'in under the Later Han dynasty, but it was elaborated rather in the third century. The commentary is due to Li Tao-yüan of the Hou Wei period, who died in A.D. 527 (his biography is in *Wei šu*, Ch. 89; *Pei ši*, Ch. 27). Regarding the various editions of the work, see PELLLOT, *Bull. de l'Ecole française*, Vol. VI, p. 364, note 4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. BIOT, *Le Tcheou-li*, Vol. I, p. 465.