

favored by the *Šwo wen*.¹ Both explanations are reasonable, but only one of the two can be correct.² My own opinion is this: *yü* is an ancient Chinese name for an indigenous Chinese aromatic plant; whether *Curcuma* or another genus, can no longer be decided with certainty.³ The term *yü-kin* means literally "gold of the *yü* plant," "gold" referring to the yellow rhizome,⁴ *yü* to the total plant-character; the concrete significance, accordingly, is "*yü*-rhizome" or "*yü*-root." I do not believe, however, that *yü-kin* is derived from the district or clan of Yü; for this is impossible to assume, since *yü* as the name of a plant existed prior to the name of that district. This is clearly evidenced by the text of the *Šwi kin ču*: for it was only in 111 B.C. that the name Yü-lin ("Grove of the Yü Plant") came into existence, being then substituted for the earlier Kwei-lin ("Grove of *Cinnamomum cassia*"). It is the plant, consequently, which lent its name to the district, not the district which named the plant. As in so many cases, the Chinese confound cause and effect. The reason why the name of this district was altered into Yü-lin is now also obvious. It must have been renowned under the Han for the wealth of its *yü-kin* plants, which was less conspicuous under the Ts'in, when the cassia predominated there. At any rate, *yü-kin* is a perfectly authentic and legitimate constituent of the Chinese language, and not a foreign word. It denotes an indigenous *Curcuma*; while under the T'ang, as we have seen, additional species of this genus may have been introduced from abroad. The word *yü-kin* then underwent a psychological treatment similar to *yen-či*: as *yen-či*, "safflower," was transformed to any cosmetic or rouge, so *yü-kin* "turmeric," was grafted on any dyes producing similar tinges of yellow. Thus it was applied to the saffron of Kashmir and Persia.

¹ The early edition of this work did not contain the form *yü-kin*, but merely the plain, ancient *yü*. Solely the *Fan yi miñ yi tsi* (Ch. 8, p. 10 b) attributes (I believe, erroneously) the term *yü-kin* to the *Šwo wen*.

² Li Ši-čen says that the district Yü-lin of the Han period comprises the territory of the present čou 州 of Sün 潯, Liu 柳, Yuñ 鬱, and Pin 賓 of Kwañ-si and Kwei-čou, and that, according to the *Ta Miñ i t'un či*, only the district of Lo-č'en 羅城 in Liu-čou fu (Kwañ-si) produces *yü-kin hian*, which is that here spoken of (that is, *Crocus*), while in fact *Curcuma* must be understood.

³ There is also the opinion that the ancient *yü* must be a plant similar to *lan* 蘭, an orchidaceous plant (see the *P'i ya* of Lu Tien and the *T'un či* of Čeñ Tsiao).

⁴ PALLEGOIX (Description du royaume Thai ou Siam, Vol. I, p. 126) says, "Le curcuma est une racine bulbeuse et charnue, d'un beau jaune d'or."