

Liang (A.D. 536) it came to China. At the time of the Liang dynasty, people of Kin čou 荊州 used to gamble in their houses at backgammon with gold coins. When the supply of coins was exhausted, they resorted to gold-coin flowers. Hence Yü Huñ 魚弘 said, 'He who obtains flowers makes money.'” The same work likewise contains the following note:¹ “*P'i-ši-ša* 毗尸沙 is a synonyme for the gold-coin flower,² which was originally produced abroad, and came to China in the first year of the period Ta-t'uñ of the Liang (A.D. 535).” The gold-coin flower visualized by Twan Kuñ-lu and Twan Č'en-ši assuredly cannot be *Inula chinensis*, which is a common, wild plant in northern China, and which is already mentioned in the *Pie lu* and by T'ao Huñ-kiñ.³ It is patent that this flower introduced under the Liang must have been a different species. The only method of solving the problem would be to determine the prototype of *p'i-ši-ša*, which is apparently the transcription of a foreign word. It is not stated to which language it belongs; but, judging from appearances, it is Sanskrit, and should be traceable to a form like *viṣīṣa (or *viṣeṣa). Such a Sanskrit plant-name is not to be found, however. Possibly the word is not Sanskrit.⁴

The *Pei hu lu*, accordingly, conceives the finger-nail flower as an introduction due to the Persians, but does not allude to its product, the henna. I fail to find any allusion to henna in other books of the T'ang period. I am under the impression that the use of this cosmetic did not come into existence in China before the Sung epoch, and that the practice was then introduced (or possibly only re-introduced) by Mohammedans, and was at first restricted to these. It is known that also the leaves of *Impatiens balsamina* (*fuñ sien* 鳳仙) mixed with alum are now used as a finger-nail dye, being therefore styled *žan či kia ts'ao* 染指甲草 (“plant dyeing finger-nails”),⁵—a term first appearing in the *Kiu hwan pen ts'ao*, published early in the Ming period. The earliest source that mentions the practice is the *Kwei sin tsa ši* 葵辛

¹ Ch. 19, p. 10 a.

² The addition of 中 before *kin* in the edition of *Pai hai* surely rests on an error.

³ Cf. also BRETSCHNEIDER, Bot. Sin., pt. III, p. 158.

⁴ The new Chinese Botanical Dictionary (p. 913) identifies the gold-coin flower with *Inula britannica*. In Buddhist lexicography it is identified with Sanskrit *jāti* (*Jasminum grandiflorum*; cf. EITEL, Handbook, p. 52). The same word means also “kind, class”; so does likewise *viṣeṣa*, and the compound *jāti-viṣeṣa* denotes the specific characters of a plant (HOERNLE, Bower Manuscript, p. 273). It is therefore possible that this term was taken by the Buddhists in the sense of “species of *Jasminum*,” and that finally *viṣeṣa* was retained as the name of the flower.

⁵ STUART, Chinese Materia Medica, p. 215; *Pen ts'ao kañ mu*, Ch. 17 B, p. 12 b.