

Shahrokia.<sup>1</sup> We do not know, however, what species here come into question.

Čao Žu-kwa states that the home of asafoetida is in Mu-kū-lan 木俱蘭, in the country of the Ta-ši (Ta-džik, Arabs).<sup>2</sup> Mu-kū-lan is identical with Mekrān, the Gedrosia of the ancients, the Makā of the Old-Persian inscriptions. Alexander the Great crossed Gedrosia on his campaign to India, and we should expect that his scientific staff, which has left us so many valuable contributions to the flora of Iran and north-western India, might have also observed the plant furnishing asafoetida; in the floristic descriptions of the Alexander literature, however, nothing can be found that could be interpreted as referring to this species. H. BRETZL<sup>3</sup> has made a forcible attempt to identify a plant briefly described by Theophrastus,<sup>4</sup> with *Scorodosma fœtidum*; and A. HORT,<sup>5</sup> in his new edition and translation of Theophrastus, has followed him. The text runs thus: "There is another shrub [in Aria] as large as a cabbage, whose leaf is like that of the bay in size and shape. And if any animal should eat this, it is certain to die of it. Wherefore, wherever there were horses, they kept them under control" [that is, in Alexander's army]. This in no way fits the properties of *Ferula* or *Scorodosma*, which is non-poisonous, and does not hurt any animal. It is supposed also that the *laserpitium* or *silphion* and *laser* of Pliny<sup>6</sup> should, at least partially, relate to asafoetida; this, however, is rejected by some authors, and appears to me rather doubtful. GARCIA DA ORTA<sup>7</sup> has already denied any connection between that plant of the ancients and asa. L. LECLERC<sup>8</sup> has discussed at length this much-disputed question.

The first European author who made an exact report of asafoetida

<sup>1</sup> BRETSCHNEIDER, *Mediæval Researches*, Vol. II, pp. 193, 254. The interpretation of *lu-wei* ("rushes") as asafoetida in the *Si yu ki* (*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 85) seems to me a forced and erroneous interpretation.

<sup>2</sup> HIRTH and ROCKHILL, *Chao Ju-kua*, p. 224.

<sup>3</sup> *Botanische Forschungen des Alexanderzuges*, p. 285.

<sup>4</sup> *Histor. plant.*, IV. IV, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. I, p. 321.

<sup>6</sup> XIX, 15. The Medic juice, called *silphion*, and mentioned as a product of Media by Strabo (XI. XIII, 7), might possibly allude to a product of the nature of asafoetida, especially as it is said in another passage (XV. II, 10) that *silphion* grew in great abundance in the deserts of Bactriana, and promoted the digestion of the raw flesh on which Alexander's soldiers were forced to subsist there. According to others, the *silphion* of the ancients is *Thapsia garganica* (ENGLER, *Pflanzenfamilien*, Vol. III, pt. 8, p. 247). Regarding the Medic oil (*oleum Medicum*) see Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIII, 6.

<sup>7</sup> C. Markham, *Colloquies*, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> *Traité des simples*, Vol. I, p. 144.