

OAK-GALLS

24. Oak-galls (French *noix de galles*, Portuguese *galhas*) are globular excrescences caused by the gall-wasp (*Cynips quercus folii*) puncturing the twigs, leaves, and buds, and depositing its ova in several species of oak (chiefly *Quercus lusitanica* var. *infectoria*), to be found in Asia Minor, Armenia, Syria, and Persia. In times of antiquity, galls were employed for technical and medicinal purposes. In consequence of their large percentage (up to 60 per cent) of tannic or Gallo-tannic acid, they served for tanning, still further for the dyeing of wool and the manufacture of ink.¹ Both Theophrastus² and Dioscorides³ mention galls under the name *κηκίς*. Abu Mansur describes galls under the Arabic name *afs*.⁴

The greater part of the galls found in Indian bazars come from Persia, being brought by Arab merchants.⁵ The Sanskrit name *mājūphala* (*phala*, "fruit") is plainly a loan-word from the Persian *māzū*.

In Chinese records, oak-galls are for the first time mentioned under the term *wu-ši-tse* 無食子 as products of Sasanian Persia.⁶ They first became known in China under the T'ang from Persia, being introduced in the Materia Medica of the T'ang Dynasty (*T'an pen ts'ao*). The *T'an pen ču* 唐本注 states that they grow in sandy deserts,⁷ and that the tree is like the tamarisk (*č'en* 檉). A commentary, cited as *kin ču* 今注, adds that they are produced in Persia, while the *Č'en lei pen ts'ao*⁸ says that they grow in the country of the Western Žuñ (Iranians). The *Yu yañ tsa tsu*⁹ gives a description of the plant as follows: "*Wu-ši-tse* 無石子 are produced in the country Po-se (Persia),

¹ BLÜMNER, Technologie, Vol. I, 2d ed., pp. 251, 268.

² Hist. plant., III. VIII, 6.

³ I, 146 (cf. LECLERC, Traité des simples, Vol. II, p. 457). See also Pliny, XIII, 63; XVI, 26; XXIV, 109.

⁴ ACHUNDOW, Abu Mansur, p. 98.

⁵ W. AINSLIE, Materia Indica, Vol. I, p. 145; WATT, Commercial Products of India, p. 911.

⁶ *Sui šu*, Ch. 83, p. 7 b.

⁷ According to another reading, "in sandy deserts of the Western Žuñ" (that is, Iranians).

⁸ Ch. 14, p. 20.

⁹ Ch. 18, p. 9.