

## INDIGO

25. As indicated by our word "indigo" (from Latin *indicum*), this dye-stuff took its origin from India. The indigo-plant (*Indigofera tinctoria*), introduced into Persia from India, is discussed by Abu Mansur under the name *nīl* or *līla*. The leaves are said to strengthen the hair. The hair, if previously dyed with henna, becomes brilliant black from the pounded leaves of the plant. Another species, *I. linifolia*, is still used in Persia for dyeing beard and hair black.<sup>1</sup> The Persian words are derived from Sanskrit *nīla*, as is likewise Arabic *nīlej*.<sup>2</sup> Also *nili hindi* ("Indian indigo") occurs in Persian. GARCIA DA ORTA has handed down a form *anil*,<sup>3</sup> and in Spanish the plant is called *añil* (Portuguese and Italian *anil*).<sup>4</sup> It may be permissible to assume that indigo was first introduced into Sasanian Persia under the reign of Khosrau I Anōšarwān (A.D. 531-579); for Masūdī, who wrote about A.D. 943, reports that this king received from India the book *Kalīla wa Dimna*, the game of chess, and the black dye-stuff for the hair, called the Indian.<sup>5</sup>

Under the designation *ts'in tai* 青黛 ("blue cosmetic for painting the eyebrows") the Chinese became acquainted with the true indigo and the Iranian practice mentioned above. The term is first on record as a product of Ts'ao 漕 (Jāgudā)<sup>6</sup> and Kū-lan 俱蘭 in the vicinity of Tokharestan;<sup>7</sup> during the T'ang period, the women of Fergana did not employ lead-powder, but daubed their eyebrows with *ts'in tai*.<sup>8</sup> Ma Či of the tenth century says that "*ts'in tai* came from the country Po-se (Persia), but that now in T'ai-yüan, Lu-liñ, Nan-k'añ, and other

---

<sup>1</sup> ACHUNDOW, Abu Mansur, pp. 144, 271. SCHLIMMER (Terminologie, p. 395) gives *ringi riš* and *wesme* as Persian words for indigo-leaves.

<sup>2</sup> LECLERC, Traité des simples, Vol. III, p. 384.

<sup>3</sup> C. MARKHAM, Colloquies, p. 51. The form *anil* is also employed by F. PYRARD (Vol. II, p. 359, ed. of Hakluyt Society), who says that indigo is found only in the kingdom of Cambaye and Surat.

<sup>4</sup> ROEDIGER and POTT (*Z. f. Kunde d. Morg.*, Vol. VII, p. 125) regard this prefix *a* as the Semitic article (Arabic *al-nīl*, *an-nīl*).

<sup>5</sup> BARBIER DE MEYNARD and PAVET DE COURTEILLE, Les Prairies d'or, Vol. II, p. 203.

<sup>6</sup> *Sui šu*, Ch. 83, p. 8 (see above, p. 317).

<sup>7</sup> *T'ai p'in hwan yü ki*, Ch. 186, p. 12. It was also found in Ki-pin (*ibid.*, Ch. 182, p. 12 b).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 181, p. 13 b.