

places, a dye-stuff of similar virtues is made from *tien* 靛 (the indigenous *Polygonum tinctorium*)."¹ Li Ši-čen holds the opinion that the Persian *ts'in tai* was the foreign *lan-tien* 藍靛 (*Indigofera tinctoria*). It must not be forgotten that the genus *Indigofera* comprises some three hundred species, and that it is therefore impossible to hope for exact identifications in Oriental records. Says G. WATT² on this point, "Species of *Indigofera* are distributed throughout the tropical regions of the globe (both in the Old and New Worlds) with Africa as their headquarters. And in addition to the *Indigoferas* several widely different plants yield the self-same substance chemically. Hence, for many ages, the dye prepared from these has borne a synonymous name in most tongues, and to such an extent has this been the case that it is impossible to say for certain whether the *nīla* of the classic authors of India denoted the self-same plant which yields the dye of that name in modern commerce." "Indigo," therefore, is a generalized commercial label for a blue dye-stuff, but without botanical value. Thus also Chinese indigo is yielded by distinct plants in different parts of China.³

It is singular that the Chinese at one time imported indigo from Persia, where it was doubtless derived from India, and do not refer to India as the principal indigo-producing country. An interesting article on the term *ts'in tai* has been written by HIRTH.⁴

¹ *Pen ts'ao kai mu*, Ch. 16, p. 25 b.

² *Commercial Products of India*, p. 663.

³ BRETSCHNEIDER, *Bot. Sin.*, pt. II, p. 212.

⁴ *Chinesische Studien*, pp. 243-258.