

PEPPER

27. The pepper-plant (*hu tsiao*, Japanese *košō*, 胡椒, *Piper nigrum*) deserves mention in this connection only inasmuch as it is listed among the products of Sasanian Persia.¹ Ibn Haukal says that pepper, sandal, and various kinds of drugs, were shipped from Sīrāf in Persia to all quarters of the world.² Pepper must have been introduced into Persia from India, which is the home of the shrub.³ It is already enumerated among the plants of India in the Annals of the Han Dynasty.⁴ The *Yu yan tsa tsu*⁵ refers it more specifically to Magadha,⁶ pointing out its Sanskrit name *marica* or *marīca* in the transcription 昧履支 *mei-li-či*.⁷ The term *hu tsiao* shows that not all plants whose names have the prefix *hu* are of Iranian origin: in this case *hu* distinctly alludes to India.⁸ *Tsiao* is a general designation for spice-plants, principally belonging to the genus *Zanthoxylon*. Li Ši-čen⁹ observes that the black pepper received its name only for the reason that it is bitter of taste and resembles the *tsiao*, but that the pepper-fruit in fact is not a *tsiao*. It is interesting to note that the authors of the various *Pen ts'ao* seem to have lost sight of the fact of the Indian origin of the plant, and do not even refer to the Han Annals. Su Kuñ states that *hu tsiao* grows among the Si Žuñ, which plainly shows that he took the word *hu* in the sense of peoples of Central Asia or Iranians, and substituted for it

¹ *Sui šu*, Ch. 83, p. 7 b; *Čou šu*, Ch. 50, p. 6; and *Wei šu*, Ch. 102, p. 6. According to HIRTH (Chau Ju-kua, p. 223), this would mean that pepper was brought to China by Persian traders from India. I am unable to see this point. The texts in question simply give a list of products to be found in Persia, and say nothing about exportation of any kind.

² W. OUSELEY, *Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal*, p. 133. Regarding the former importance of Sīrāf, which "in old times was a great city, very populous and full of merchandise, being the port of call for caravans and ships," see G. LE STRANGE, *Description of the Province of Fars*, pp. 41-43.

³ In New Persian, pepper is called *pilpil* (Arabicized *filfil*, *fulful*), from the Sanskrit *pippalī*.

⁴ *Hou Han šu*, Ch. 118, p. 5 b.

⁵ Ch. 18, p. 11.

⁶ Cf. Sanskrit *māgadha* as an epithet of pepper.

⁷ In fact, this form presupposes a vernacular type *meriči.

⁸ *Hu tsiao* certainly does not mean "Western Barbarians (Tartar) pepper," as conceived by WATTERS (*Essays on the Chinese Language*, p. 441). What had the "Tartars" to do with pepper? The Uigur adopted simply the Sanskrit word in the form *murč*.

⁹ *Pen ts'ao kañ mu*, Ch. 32, p. 3 b.