

the table of contents preceding each chapter, and spinach ranks among these novelties. Judging from the description here given, it must have been a favorite vegetable in the Sung period. It is said to be particularly beneficial to the people in the north of China, who feed on meat and flour (chiefly in the form of vermicelli), while the southerners, who subsist on fish and turtles, cannot eat much of it, because their water food makes them cold, and spinach brings about the same effect.<sup>1</sup> The *Kia yü* (or *hwa*) *lu* 嘉語 (or 話) 錄 by Liu Yü-si 劉禹錫 (A.D. 772-842) is cited to the effect that "*po-liñ* 菠薐 was originally in the western countries, and that its seeds came thence to China<sup>2</sup> in the same manner as alfalfa and grapes were brought over by Čan K'ien. Originally it was the country of Po-liñ 頗陵, and an error arose in the course of the transmission of the word, which is not known to many at this time."

The first and only historical reference to the matter that we have occurs in the *T'an hui yao*,<sup>3</sup> where it is on record, "At the time of the Emperor T'ai Tsuñ (A.D. 627-649), in the twenty-first year of the period Čeñ-kwan (A.D. 647), Ni-p'o-lo (Nepal) sent to the Court the vegetable *po-liñ* 波稜, resembling the flower of the *huñ-lan* 紅藍 (*Carthamus tinctorius*), the fruit being like that of the *tsi-li* 蒺藜 (*Tribulus terrestris*). Well cooked, it makes good eating, and is savory."<sup>4</sup>

This text represents not only the earliest datable mention of the vegetable in Chinese records, but in general the earliest reference to it that we thus far possess. This document shows that the plant then was a novelty not only to the Chinese, but presumably also to the people of Nepal; otherwise they would not have thought it worthy of being sent as a gift to China, which was made in response to a request of the

<sup>1</sup> JOHN GERARDE (The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes, p. 260, London, 1597) remarks, "Spinach is evidently colde and moist, almost in the second degree, but rather moist. It is one of the potherbes whose substance is waterie."

<sup>2</sup> According to another reading, a Buddhist monk (*señ*) is said to have brought the seeds over, which sounds rather plausible. G. A. STUART remarks that the herb is extensively used by the monks in their lenten fare.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. 200, p. 14 b (also Ch. 100, p. 3 b). Cf. *Ts'e fu yüan kwei*, Ch. 970, p. 12, and *Pei hu lu*, Ch. 2, p. 19 b (ed. of Lu Sin-yüan).

<sup>4</sup> The *T'ai p'in yü lan* (Ch. 980, p. 7) attributes this text to the T'ang Annals. It is not extant, however, in the account of Nepal inserted in the two *T'an šu*, nor in the notice of Nepal in the *T'an hui yao*. *Pen ts'ao kañ mu*, *T'u šu tsi č'eñ*, and *Či wu miñ ši t'u k'ao* (Ch. 5, p. 37) correctly cite the above text from the *T'an hui yao*, with the only variant that the leaves of the *po-liñ* resemble those of the *huñ-lan*. The *Fuñ ši wen kien ki* (Ch. 7, p. 1 b) by Fuñ Yen of the ninth century (above, p. 232), referring to the same introduction, offers a singular name for the spinach in the form 波羅拔藻 *po-lo-pa-tsao*, \*pa-la-bat-tsaw, or, if *tsao*, denoting several aquatic plants, does not form part of the transcription, \*pa-la-bat(bar).