

Caspian Sea and Persia. According to DE CANDOLLE,<sup>1</sup> its cultivation does not date from more than three or four centuries before our era. The Egyptian illustration brought forward by F. WOENIG<sup>2</sup> in favor of the assumption of an early cultivation in Egypt is not convincing to me.

It is therefore probable, although we have no record referring to the introduction, that *Beta vulgaris* was introduced into China in the T'ang period, perhaps by the Arabs, who themselves brought many Persian words and products to China. For this reason Chinese records sometimes credit Persian words to the Ta-ši (Arabs); for instance, the numbers on dice, which go as Ta-ši, but in fact are Persian.<sup>3</sup>

The real Chinese name of the plant is *tien ts'ai* 蒸菜, the first character being explained in sound and meaning by 甜 *tien* ("sweet"). Li Ši-čen identifies *tien ts'ai* with *kün-t'a*. The earliest description of *tien ts'ai* comes from Su Kuñ of the T'ang, who compares its leaves to those of *šen ma* 升麻 (*Actea spicata*, a ranunculaceous plant), adding that the southerners steam the sprouts and eat them, the dish being very fragrant and fine.<sup>4</sup> It is not stated, however, that *tien ts'ai* is an imported article.

38. Reference was made above to the memorable text of the *T'an hui yao*, in which are enumerated the vegetable products of foreign countries sent to the Emperor T'ai Tsuñ of the T'ang dynasty at his special request in A.D. 647. After mentioning the spinach of Nepal, the text continues thus:—

"Further, there was the *ts'o ts'ai* 酢菜 ('wine vegetable') with broad and long leaves.<sup>5</sup> It has a taste like a good wine and *k'u ts'ai* 苦菜 ('bitter vegetable,' lettuce, *Lactuca*), and in its appearance is like *kü* 苣,<sup>6</sup> but its leaves are longer and broader. Although it is somewhat bitter of taste, eating it for a long time is beneficial. *Hu k'in* 胡芹

<sup>1</sup> Origin of Cultivated Plants, p. 59; see also his Géographie botanique, p. 831

<sup>2</sup> Pflanzen im alten Aegypten, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> See *T'oung Pao*, Vol. I, 1890, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> A *tien ts'ai* mentioned by T'ao Huñ-kiñ, as quoted in the *Pen ts'ao kañ mu*, and made into a condiment 鮓 for cooking-purposes, is apparently a different vegetable.

<sup>5</sup> The corresponding text of the *Ts'e fu yüan kwei* (Ch. 970, p. 12) has the addition, "resembling the leaves of the *šen-hwo* 慎火." The text of the *Pei hu lu* (Ch. 2, p. 19 b) has, "resembling in its appearance the *šen-hwo*, but with leaves broader and longer." This tree, also called *kiñ t'ien* 景天 (see *Yu yan tsa tsu*, Ch. 19, p. 6), is believed to protect houses from fire; it is identified with *Sedum erythro-stictum* or *Sempervivum tectorum* (BRETSCHNEIDER, Bot. Sin., pt. III, No. 205; STUART, Chinese Materia Medica, p. 401).

<sup>6</sup> A general term for plants like *Lactuca*, *Cichorium*, *Sonchus*.