

THE OLIVE

43. The *Yu yan tsa tsu*¹ has the following notice of an exotic plant: "The *ts'i-t'un* 齊墩 (*dzi-tun, *zi-tun) tree has its habitat in the country Po-se (Persia), likewise in the country Fu-lin (Syria). In Fu-lin it is termed 齊廬 *ts'i-t'i*² (*dzi, zi-ti). The tree grows to a height of twenty or thirty feet. The bark is green, the flowers are white, resembling those of the shaddock (*yu* 柚, *Citrus grandis*), and very fragrant. The fruit is similar to that of the *yan-t'ao* 楊桃 (*Averrhoa carambola*) and ripens in the fifth month. The people of the Western countries press an oil out of it for frying cakes and fruit, in the same manner as sesame seeds (*kü-šen* 巨勝)³ are utilized in China."

The transcription *ts'i-t'un* has been successfully identified by HIRTH⁴ with Persian *zeitun*, save that we have to define this form as Middle Persian; and Fu-lin *ts'i-t'i* with Aramaic *zaitā* (Hebrew *zayit*). This is the olive-tree (*Olea Europaea*).⁵ The Persian word is a loan from the Semitic, the common Semitic form being *zeitu (Arabic *zeitun*). It is noteworthy that the Fu-lin form agrees more closely with Grusinian and Ossetic *zet'i*, Armenian *jēt*, *dzēt* ("olive-oil"), *zeit* ("olive"), Arabic *zait*,⁶ than with the Aramaic word. The olive-tree, mentioned in Pahlavi literature (above, p. 193), grows spontaneously in Persia and Baluchistan, but the cultivated species was in all likelihood received by the Iranians (as well as by the Armenians) from the Semites. The olive-tree was known in Mesopotamia at an early date: objects in clay in the form of an olive belonging to the time of Urukagina, one of the pre-Sargonic rulers of Lagash, are still extant.⁷

¹ Ch. 18, p. 11.

² A gloss thus indicates the reading of this character by the *fan ts'ie* 湯兮.

³ See above, p. 292.

⁴ *Journal Am. Or. Soc.*, Vol. XXX, 1910, p. 19.

⁵ See, for instance, the illustrated article "olivier" in DUJARDIN-BEAUMETZ and EGASSE, *Plantes médicinales indigènes et exotiques* (p. 492, Paris, 1889), which is a very convenient and commendable reference-book, particularly valuable for its excellent illustrations. Cf. also S. KRAUSS, *Talmudische Archäologie*, Vol. II, p. 214; S. FRAENKEL, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen*, p. 147.

⁶ W. MILLER, *Sprache der Osseten*, p. 10; HÜBSCHMANN, *Arm. Gram.*, p. 309.

⁷ HANDCOCK, *Mesopotamian Archaeology*, p. 13. The contributions which A. ENGLER has made to the olive in Hehn's *Kulturpflanzen* (p. 118) are just as singular as his notions of the walnut. Leaves of the olive-tree have been found in Pliocene deposits near Mongardino north-west of Bologna, and this is sufficient for Engler to "prove" the autochthonous character of the tree in Italy. All it proves, if the