

CASSIA PODS AND CAROB

44. In his *Pen ts'ao šī i*, written during the first half of the eighth century, Č'en Ts'an-k'i has this notice regarding an exotic plant: "A-lo-p'o 阿勒勃 (*a-lak-bwut) grows in the country Fu-lin (Syria), its fruit resembling in shape that of the *tsao kia* 皂莢 (*Gleditschia* or *Gymnocladus sinensis*), save that it is more rounded and elongated. It is sweet of taste and savory."¹

In the *Čen lei pen ts'ao*² we read that "a-lo-p'o grows in the country Fu-ši 佛逝"; that is, Bhoja, Sumatra. Then follows the same description as given above, after Č'en Ts'an-k'i. The name *p'o-lo-men tsao kia* 婆羅門皂莢 is added as a synonyme. Li Ši-čen³ comments that P'o-lo-men is here the name of a Si-yü 西域 ("Western Regions") country, and that Po-se is the name of a country of the south-western barbarians; that is, the Malayan Po-se. The term *p'o-lo-men tsao kia*, which accordingly would mean "*Gleditschia* of the P'o-lo-men country," he ascribes to Č'en Ts'an-k'i, but in his quotation from this author it does not occur. The country P'o-lo-men here in question is the one mentioned in the *Man šu*.⁴

A somewhat fuller description of this foreign tree is contained in the *Yu yan tsa tsu*,⁵ as follows: "The Persian *tsao kia* (*Gleditschia*) has its habitat in the country Po-se (Persia), where it is termed *hu-ye-yen-mo* 忽野簪默, while in Fu-lin it is styled *a-li-k'ü-fa* 阿梨去伐.⁶ The tree has a height of from thirty to forty feet, and measures from four to five feet in circumference. The leaves resemble those of *Citrus medica* (*kou yüan* 枸緣), but are shorter and smaller. During the cold season it does not wither.⁷ It does not flower, and yet bears fruit.⁸ Its pods are two feet long. In their interior are shells (*ko ko* 隔隔). Each of these encloses a single seed of the size of a finger, red of color,

¹ *Pen ts'ao kañ mu*, Ch. 31, p. 9 b, where the name of the plant is wrongly written *a-p'o-lo*. The correct form *a-lo-p'o* is given in the *Čen lei pen ts'ao*.

² Ch. 12, p. 56 (ed. of 1587).

³ *Pen ts'ao kañ mu*, Ch. 31, p. 9 b.

⁴ See below, p. 468.

⁵ Ch. 18, p. 12. Also Li Ši-čen has combined this text with the preceding one under the heading *a-p'o-lo* (instead of *a-lo-p'o*).

⁶ The *Pen ts'ao kañ mu* (Ch. 31, p. 9 b), in quoting this text, gives the Po-se name as *hu-ye-yen* and the Fu-lin name only as *a-li*.

⁷ This means, it is an evergreen.

⁸ This is due to erroneous observation.