

that the character *men* should be pronounced in this case 漫 *man*, that the name of the tree is 文木 (thus written in the *Nan fan ts'ao mu čwan*), and that the southerners, because they articulate 文 like 構, have substituted the latter. This is a perfectly satisfactory explanation. The *Ku kin ču*,<sup>1</sup> however, has preserved a transcription in the form 翳木翳 \*i-muk-i or 罌 \*bu (wu), which must have belonged to the language of Kiao-čou 交州 (Tonking), as the product hailed from there. Compare Khmer *mak pen* and Čam *mökiā* ("ebony," *Diospyros eben-aster*).<sup>2</sup>

Ebony was known in ancient Babylonia, combs being wrought from this material.<sup>3</sup> It is mentioned in early Egyptian inscriptions as being brought from the land of the Negroes on the upper Nile. Indeed, Africa was the chief centre that supplied the ancients with this precious wood.<sup>4</sup> From Ethiopia a hundred billets of ebony were sent every third year as tribute to Darius, king of Persia. Ezekiel<sup>5</sup> alludes to the ebony of Tyre. The Periplus (36) mentions the shipping of ebony from Barygaza in India to Ommana in the Persian Gulf. Theophrastus,<sup>6</sup> who is the first to mention the ebony-tree of India, makes a distinction between two kinds of Indian ebony, a rare and nobler one, and a common variety of inferior wood. According to Pliny,<sup>7</sup> it was Pompey who displayed ebony in Rome at his triumph over Mithridates; and Solinus, who copies this passage, adds that it came from India, and was then shown for the first time. According to the same writer, ebony was solely sent from India, and the images of Indian gods were sometimes carved from this wood entirely, likewise drinking-cups.<sup>8</sup> Thus the ancients were acquainted with ebony as a product of Africa and India at a time when Indo-China was still veiled to them, nor is any reference made to the far east in any ancient western account of the subject. The word itself is of Egyptian origin: under the name *heben*, ebony formed an important article with the country Punt. Hebrew *hobnīm* is related to this word or directly borrowed from it, and Greek *έ'βερος* is derived from Semitic. Arabic-Persian *'abnūs* is taken as a loan from the Greek, and Hindī *ābanūsa* is the descendant of *abnūs*.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. c, p. 1 b. The product is described as coming from Kiao-čou, being of black color and veined, and also called "wood with black veins" (*wu wen mu*).

<sup>2</sup> AYMONIER and CABATON, Dictionnaire čam-français, p. 366.

<sup>3</sup> HANDCOCK, Mesopotamian Archæology, p. 349.

<sup>4</sup> Herodotus, III, 97.

<sup>5</sup> XXVII, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Hist. plant., IV. IV, 6.

<sup>7</sup> XII, 4, § 20.

<sup>8</sup> Solinus, ed. MOMMSEN, pp. 193, 221.