

The descriptions given of cinnamon and cassia by Theophrastus¹ show that the ancients did not exactly agree on the identity of these plants, and Theophrastus himself speaks from hearsay ("In regard to cinnamon and cassia they say the following: both are shrubs, it is said, and not of large size. . . . Such is the account given by some. Others say that cinnamon is shrubby or rather like an under-brush, and that there are two kinds, one black, the other white"). The difference between cinnamon and cassia seems to have been that the latter possessed stouter branches, was very fibrous, and difficult to strip off the bark. This bark was used; it was bitter, and had a pungent odor.²

Certain it is that the two words are of Semitic origin.³ The fact that there is no cinnamon in Arabia and Ethiopia was already known to GARCIA DA ORTA.⁴ An unfortunate attempt has been made to trace the cinnamon of the ancients to the Chinese.⁵ This theory has thus been formulated by MUSS-ARNOLT:⁶ "This spice was imported by Phoenician merchants from Egypt, where it is called *khisi-t*. The Egyptians, again, brought it from the land of Punt, to which it was imported from Japan, where we have it under the form *kei-chi* ('branch of the cinnamon-tree'), or better *kei-shin* ('heart of the cinnamon') [read *sin*, **sim*]. The Japanese itself is again borrowed from the Chinese *kei-ši* [?]. The *-t* in the Egyptian represents the feminine suffix." As may be seen from O. SCHRADER,⁷ this strange hypothesis was first put forward in 1883 by C. SCHUMANN. Schrader himself feels somewhat sceptic about it, and regards the appearance of Chinese merchandise on the markets of Egypt at such an early date as hardly probable. From a sinological viewpoint, this speculation must be wholly rejected, both in its linguistic and its historical bearings. Japan was not in existence in 1500 B.C., when cinnamon-wood of the country Punt is spoken of in the Egyptian inscriptions; and China was then a small agrarian inland community restricted to the northern part of the present empire, and

¹ Hist. plant., IX. v, 1-3.

² Theophrastus, IX. v, 3.

³ Greek *κασι* is derived from Hebrew *qesî'ā*, perhaps related to Assyrian *kasu*, *kasiya* (POGNON, *Journal asiatique*, 1917, I, p. 400). Greek *kinnamomon* is traced to Hebrew *qinnamōn* (Exodus, xxx, 23).

⁴ MARKHAM, *Colloquies*, pp. 119-120.

⁵ Thus also FLÜCKIGER and HANBURY (*Pharmacographia*, p. 520), whose argumentation is not sound, as it lacks all sense of chronology. The Persian term *dar-čīnī*, for instance, is strictly of mediæval origin, and cannot be invoked as evidence for the supposition that cinnamon was exported from China many centuries before Christ.

⁶ *Transactions Am. Phil. Assoc.*, Vol. XXIII, 1892, p. 115.

⁷ *Reallexikon*, p. 989.