

Chinese in the age of the Han, for the name *ta hwan* occurs on one of the wooden tablets of that period discovered in Turkistan by Sir A. Stein and deciphered by CHAVANNES.¹

Abu Mansur, as cited above, is the first Persian author who speaks of Chinese rhubarb. He is followed by a number of Arabic writers. It is therefore reasonable to infer that only in the course of the tenth century did rhubarb develop into an article of trade from China to western Asia. In 1154 Edrīsī mentions rhubarb as a product of China growing in the mountains of Buthink (perhaps north-eastern Tibet).² Ibn Sa'id, who wrote in the thirteenth century, speaks of the abundance of rhubarb in China.³ Ibn al-Baiṭār treats at great length of *rawend*, by which he understands Persian and Chinese rhubarb,⁴ and of *rībās*, "very common in Syria and the northern countries," identified by LECLERC with *Rheum ribes*.⁵

MARCO POLO relates that rhubarb is found in great abundance over all mountains of the province of Sukchur (Su-čou in Kan-su), and that merchants go there to buy it, and carry it thence all over the world.⁶ In another passage he attributes rhubarb also to the mountains around the city of Su-čou in Kiañ-su,⁷ which, Yule says, is believed by the most competent authorities to be quite erroneous. True it is that rhubarb has never been found in that province or anywhere in middle China; neither is there an allusion to this in Chinese accounts, which restrict the area of the plant to Šen-si, Kan-su, Se-č'wan, and Tibet. Nevertheless it would not be impossible that at Polo's time a sporadic attempt was made to cultivate rhubarb in the environs of Su-čou. Friar Odoric mentions rhubarb for the province Kansan (Kan-su), growing in such abundance that you may load an ass with it for less than six groats.⁸

Chinese records tell us very little about the export-trade in this article. Čao Žu-kwa alone mentions rhubarb among the imports of

¹ Documents chinois découverts dans les sables du Turkestan oriental, p. 115, No. 527.

² W. HEYD, Histoire du commerce du levant, Vol. II, p. 665. See also FLÜCKIGER and HANBURY, Pharmacographia, pp. 493-494.

³ G. FERRAND, Textes relatifs à l'Extrême-Orient, p. 350.

⁴ LECLERC, Traité des simples, Vol. II, pp. 155-164.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 190. This passage was unknown to me when I identified above the Persian term *rīwand* with this species, arriving at this conclusion simply by consulting Boissier's Flora.

⁶ YULE, Marco Polo, Vol. I, p. 217.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 181.

⁸ YULE, Cathay, Vol. II, p. 247.