

AINSLIE,¹ the plant was brought to India from Persia, where it is common, by Sir John Malcolm. This is quite possible; but the fact cannot be doubted that the basil was known in India at a much earlier date, for we have a variety of Sanskrit names for it. Also G. WATT² holds that the herb is indigenous in Persia and Sind. It is now cultivated throughout tropical India from the Panjab to Burma.

The Chinese name of *Ocimum basilicum* is *lo-lo* 羅勒 (*la-lak). It is first described in the *Ts'i min yao šu* of the sixth century, where it is said that Ši Lo (273–333) tabooed the name (on account of the identity of the second character with that in his own name, cf. above, p. 298) and changed it into *lan hian* 蘭香; but T'ao Huñ-kiñ (451–536) mentions it again as *lo-lo*, and gives as popular designation *Si-wañ-mu ts'ai* 西王母菜 ("vegetable of the goddess Si-wañ-mu"). The *Ts'i min yao šu* cites an older work *Wei huñ fu sü* 韋弘賦叙 ("Preface to the Poems of Wei Huñ") to the effect that the plant *lo-lo* grows on the hills of the K'un-lun and comes from the primitive culture of the Western Barbarians (出西蠻之俗). This appears to be an allusion to foreign origin; nevertheless an introduction from abroad is not hinted at in any of the subsequent herbals. Of these, the *Pen ts'ao* of the Kia-yu period (1056–64) is the first which speaks of the basil as introduced into the materia medica. The name *lo-lo* has no meaning in Chinese, and at first sight conveys the impression of a foreign word. Each of the two elements is most frequent in transcriptions from the Sanskrit. In fact, one of the Sanskrit names of the basil is *karālaka* (or *karāla*), and Chinese *la-lak (*ra-lak) corresponds exactly; the first syllable *ka-* is sometimes dropped in the Indian vernaculars.³ If this coincidence is fortuitous, the accident is extraordinary; but it is hardly possible to believe in an accident of this kind.

There is, further, a plant 浮爛羅勒 *fou-lan-lo-lo*, *fu (bu)-lan-la-lak, solely mentioned by Č'en Ts'an-k'i of the eighth century as growing in Sogdiana (K'an) and resembling the *hou-p'o* 厚朴 (*Magnolia hypoleuca*), Japanese *hō-no-ki*.⁴ The *Pen ts'ao kan mu* has therefore placed this notice as an appendix to *hou-p'o*. This Sogdian plant and its name remain unidentified. At the outset it is most improbable that a *Magnolia* is involved; this is a typical genus of the far east, which to my knowledge has not yet been traced in any Iranian region. BOISSIER'S

¹ *Materia Indica*, Vol. II, p. 424.

² *Dictionary*, Vol. V, p. 441.

³ Cf. for instance *kakinduka* ("Diospyros tomentosa")—Uriya *kendhu*, Bengal, *kend*.

⁴ Č'en lei *pen ts'ao*, Ch. 12, p. 56 b; *Pen ts'ao kan mu*, Ch. 35 A, p. 4; STUART Chinese *Materia Medica*, p. 255.