The Golden Peaches of Samarkand

A STUDY OF T'ANG EXOTICS

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DAUPHIN: *Le cheval volant, the Pegasus, chez les narines de feu! When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air; the earth sings when he touches it; the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes.*

William Shakespeare, *King Henry V,*
Act III, scene 7

III. Domestic Animals

Horses

Horses were of tremendous importance to the rulers of T'ang, whose high estate and far-flung majesty among the peoples of Asia depended in large measure on the availability of quantities of horses to carry soldiers and supplies against mobile enemies, especially the nomadic peoples, their voracious rivals. The doctrine of the final dependence of the state upon a huge number of war horses is plainly pronounced in the *Book of T'ang,* which states, in connection with the death of 180,000 government horses by disease, "Horses are the military preparedness of the state; if Heaven takes this preparedness away, the state will totter to a fall."[1] When the dynasty was founded early in the seventh century, the victors found themselves in possession of only five thousand horses pastured in the grasslands of Lung-yu, that is, in modern Kansu. Of these, three thousand were inherited from the fallen house of Sui, and the rest were booty taken from the Turks.[2] Through the care of the magistrates charged with carrying out government policy on horses, the nation could claim, in the middle of the same century, 706,000 horses, divided among the eight great pasturelands north of the Wei River, in the countryside above the Western Capital.[3] From then on every effort was made to keep the horse population at this high level. The only important change came after the reign of Hsüan Tsung, in the middle of the eighth century, when the disasters of war left the countryside waste. After these calamities, which

accompanied the breakdown of central authority, the great nobles and high provincial officials acquired enormous holdings in livestock, which finally outnumbered those of the imperial government.[4]

The paramount need for horses did not, however, make it necessary for the sovereign to accept any gift of them. He might, out of conviction or expedience, reject an expensive present, whether dancing girl or dancing horse, as unworthy of his virtuous and incorruptible reign. The first three rulers of T'ang frequently did so.[5] Or again, the princes of foreign nations often sought the advantage of a family alliance with T'ang during the seventh century, and accordingly sent herds of the much-desired horses to accent a suggestion of marriage with a Chinese princess. Therefore, for the Chinese monarch to accept the gift was to announce a foreign policy. Consider, for example, the difference in the treatment of two Turkish governments: the Tölös sent three thousand horses in 642, asking a royal wedding, but after protracted argument T'ang rejected the humiliating concession.[6] But the very next year an alliance was contracted with the Sir-tardush Turks, who had sent a royal prince with fifty thousand of their grizzled black-maned horses,[7] along with great numbers of oxen, camels, and goats.[8]

Coupled with the notion of the horse as an instrument of diplomatic and military policy was the conception of horsemanship as an aristocratic privilege—a prejudice which the government tried to enforce by edict in 667, in prohibiting artisans and tradesmen from riding horseback.[9]

Still, this patrician animal owed his unique status to more than his usefulness to the lords of the land. He was invested with sanctity by ancient tradition, endowed with prodigious qualities, and visibly stamped with the marks of his divine origin. A revered myth proclaimed him a relative of the dragon, akin to the mysterious powers of water. Indeed, all wonderful horses, such as the steed of the pious Hsüan-tsang which, in later legend, carried the sacred scriptures from India, were avatars of dragons, and in antiquity the tallest horses owned by the Chinese were called simply "dragons."[10]

Most honored of all antique horses were the uncanny mounts of Mu, Son of Heaven, named the "Eight Bayards."[11] "Bayard" represents the Chinese designation of any pure-bred and magnificent horse, and has the frequent implication of supernatural origin or enigmatic parentage from the divine horses of the West and even, metaphorically, a human hero. Artistic representations of the abnormal but angelic animals which accompanied the great king through the wastes of hallowed K'un-lun were an important theme in the fantastic art of medieval China, and their grotesque images, painted in the fifth century, were treasured by T'ang connoisseurs, who explained their bizarre appearance by pointing out that the holy sages of antiquity, even Confucius himself, did not look like natural men. Divine creatures, whether human or equine, must not only be, but look, weird and otherworldly.[12]

In the Far West lived the great Horses of Heaven, "bayard-boned dragon-

decoys," that is, with bones made to carry the wings of an ideal Western bayard, and precursors and inviters of dragons.[13] This is how Li Po described them:

> The Horses of Heaven come out of the dens of the Kushanas,
> Backs formed with tiger markings, bones made for dragon wings.[14]

The belief in the dragon-horses of the West goes back to the second century before the Christian era, when Wu Ti of Han, seeking to guarantee his own divinity and immortality, whether by magical foods prepared by alchemists or by elaborate rituals of incredible (and dubious) antiquity, longed for a set of unearthly steeds to draw him up into Heaven.[15]

The legend of water-born horses was known in various parts of Turkestan. In Kucha, for instance, when that city was visited by Hsüan-tsang in the seventh century, there was a lake of dragons in front of one of its temples. "The dragons, changing their form, couple with mares. The offspring is a wild species of horse (*dragon-horse*) difficult to tame and of a fierce nature. The breed of these dragon-horses became docile."[16] This story must have had its origin farther west in Iranian lands, where winged horses were familiar in art and myth.[17] Even the long-legged small-bellied horses of the "Tajik," that is, of the Arabs, were said to have been born of the conjunction of dragons with mares on the shores of the "Western Sea."[18] By Wu Ti's time the exemplars of the divine horses had been placed in Farghāna on the Jaxartes, cousins of the Nisaeans bred in Medea for the kings of Persia, "blood-sweating horses" renowned both East and West.[19] It is quite likely that the envoy who opened up the West to Chinese penetration in the second pre-Christian century, the famous Chang Ch'ien, was in fact a personal envoy of the emperor, charged with finding the wonderful horses which would usher in the Age of the Dragon for the people of Han.[20]

Though Chang Ch'ien may not have brought them, the Chinese had, by the second century of our era at least, obtained a fine, handsome kind of horse from the West,[21] which they identified with the dragon-horses of legend. Even if these steeds did not have wings, they had "bones made for dragon-wings." Though larger than the Mongolian pony and its domestic varieties familiar in China, these were perhaps not great battle chargers, but delicately nurtured animals kept for ritual purposes.[22] The zoölogical identity of these wonder-horses is uncertain. They have been described by one authority as "Aryan horses," a large, fast breed known around the Caspian Sea in antiquity.[23] Perhaps we can recognize their descendants in the modern Turki horse:

> The Turkoman, or Turki, horse takes its name from Turkestan, its original home, although it has spread into Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor. There are several strains, of which the finest inhabit the country to the south of Lake Aral and the Sir Daria, or Oxus. Standing from 15 to 16 hands in height, and capable of great endurance, these horses have large, Roman-nosed heads, ewe-necks, slender bodies, and long limbs. Although generally bay or grey in colour, some of them are black with white feet. The speed of these horses

> and such beauty as they possess are due to Arab parentage, grafted on an original stock, doubtless more or less nearly akin to the Mongolian tarpan . . .[24]

The Arab element is revealed in the "double spine," observed by the Chinese in Han times[25]—two ridges of muscle on both sides of the backbone, which made bareback riding more comfortable, a much admired feature in classical antiquity in the West.[26] The "tiger markings" of Li Po's poem, on the other hand, reveal an atavistic element; "eel marking," that is, a dark stripe down the back, is characteristic of many primitive horses, like the Norwegian dun, and is very pronounced in the Asiatic onager.

The people of T'ang believed that the horses which they imported from well-watered Samarkand as breeders for their battle steeds were of the stock of the original bayards of Farghāna,[27] and they had heard of horses of the "dragon seed" in the snowy, windless valley of Kashmir.[28] In a story told at the beginning of the eleventh century we learn that six of the true blood-sweating horses were sent from Farghāna to the court of Hsüan Tsung in the middle of the eighth century. These were named "Red *Cherpādh*," "Purple *Cherpādh*," "Scarlet *Cherpādh*," "Yellow *Cherpādh*," "T-aromatic [clove] *Cherpādh*," and "Peach Flower *Cherpādh*," *cherpādh* meaning "quadruped" in the language of the Sogdians. The sovereign received them with delight, gave them new and less barbarous names, and had their pictures painted on the walls of one of his great halls.[29] It would be tempting to attribute this pretty tale solely to the nostalgic fancy of its author, Ch'in Tsai-szu, a literary man who lived three centuries after the alleged event. He has used, for instance, the romantically archaic name Ta-yüan for the homeland of the colored horses. But his story cannot be rejected outright. For one thing, the Chinese were prone to cherish obsolete names for foreign countries, and for another, there is an authentic account of a gift of horses (unfortunately not described or named) from Farghāna to Hsüan Tsung in an historical record.[30] Moreover, the epithet "red *cherpādh*" appears more than once in eighth-century literature—indeed, it was even applied to a unique variety of Chinese cat, bred at Ling-wu in Kansu.[31] I am inclined to believe in these T'ang blood-sweaters, and in the equestrian murals of Hsüan Tsung. But real or not, horses of that lineage inevitably had a dreamlike character.

The horse familiar to the Chinese since antiquity was the big-headed pony with erect mane, shaggy in winter, which once ranged most of Northern Asia and Europe, and was familiar to the Stone Age men of France and Spain. It is the wild horse of the steppes of Asia, whose bones have been discovered in Pleistocene deposits of the Ordos of north China,[32] but which is now restricted to Dzungaria,[33] and on the verge of extinction.[34] This tarpan (*Equus przewalskii*) also has domestic relatives scattered about the world, either relatively pure, like the Norwegian dun, or much altered by admixture of Arab blood.[35] The domestic Mongolian pony, on which the Chinese chiefly rely, is mainly tarpan but has a long flowing mane, a forelock, and a thick tail, again presumably the result of interbreeding with the Arab.[36]

From this basic stock, possibly with the help of other unknown races, many varieties of color and pattern were developed in ancient times, such as the white horse with a black mane traditionally associated with Hsia, the black-headed white of Shang, and the red-maned yellow horses of Chou. The richness and complexity of the vocabulary of horse types even in Chou and Han times testify to the high state of the art of breeding in Chinese antiquity.[37]

Despite the greed of the men of T'ang for the larger Western horses, they seem to have retained some admiration for the wild pony, for in 654 the Tibetans considered the gift of a hundred wild tarpans to be suitable for the reigning Son of Heaven.[38] From the same primitive stock, with greater or lesser admixture of Far Western strains, came also the few distinctive types of medieval China, such as a white horse with "vermilion" mane, bred in Shensi in T'ang times [39] and possibly a relic of the classic horse of Chou, and the wiry pony of Szechwan, a specialty of Sui-*chou* under the T'ang but known many centuries earlier to China's Western neighbors.[40] Many of the "national horses," that is, the government's breeding stock —post horses, war horses and the like—were hybrids of tarpan and Arab, some predominantly Arab. Sometimes there were too few of these carefully tended horses for the purposes of the nation, and then it became necessary to replenish them from abroad, as when Hsüan Tsung, early in the eighth century, issued an edict authorizing trade in horses with the "Six Western Barbarian Tribes." [41] But Arab blood was at a disadvantage in China, and hard to maintain against the flood of Mongolian ponies close at hand. The strains of Western steeds began to disappear after the end of T'ang, and vanished in early modern times with the great influx of ponies during Yüan and Ming.[42]

Foreign horses of these two sorts, then, Northern ponies and Western chargers, and many intermediate blends and varieties, poured into China during the rule of the T'ang empire. The Chinese loved and admired them. Part of their exotic taste in horses can be attributed to the tradition of the dragon-horses of the West, and part to the Turkish and distantly nomadic affinities of the ruling clan. Moreover, since there were never enough horses pastured in China for the needs of a great empire and of an equestrian, polo-playing aristocracy, the preference for foreign varieties followed naturally from the necessity for them.

Stories about the excellent horses of far countries were welcome to the men of T'ang, the believable along with the barely credible. They had heard, for instance, of a "Dappled Horse Country" (*Po ma kuo*) far to the north, where the snow was always heaped high upon the ground. The Chinese name of the nation seems to translate the name of a Turkish tribe, Ala-yondlu, "Those with piebald horses." [43] We do not know whether any of these spotted beasts, which in their homeland were subject to the indignity of being hitched to plows, ever reached the soil of T'ang.[44] Even more remote were the lands of the Arabs, whose admirable destriers could understand human speech.[45] Envoys of the Muslims brought some of these pure-

blooded steeds to China in 703,[46] but we know nothing of their later adventures.

More dependable supplies of horses came from the northeast, from Tungusic and Mongolic peoples, such as the Mo-ho of P'o-hai,[47] who ranged south of the Amur; [48] the Shih-wei,[49] who dwelt to the west of the Mo-ho people; [50] the Hsi of southern Manchuria, who sent a gift of their agile horses in 816, and regular tribute missions after that year; [51] the Khitans, also in Manchuria and the destined conquerors of north China, who sent many embassies with their small horses, adept at forest-coursing, in the seventh and eighth centuries.[52]

To the north were the Turkish peoples, the chief source of T'ang's horses. They supplied a versatile and cunning breed, close to the ancient tarpan stock, hardy for long journeys and peerless as hunters, tamed long ago by the pristine masters of the steppe, the Hsiung-nu.[53] So important was the Turkish stock to the proud Chinese that they were obliged to humble themselves in many little ways to obtain badly needed animals. On one occasion, during the dynasty's early years, a Chinese prince demeaned himself by calling in person on the Turkish Khan in his distant camp, and was received with a display of haughty and imperious manners until the prince revealed his rich gifts (bolts of silk and jugs of wine were surely among them), at which the reception suddenly became ceremonious and warm, and a return mission was sent to the T'ang court with a herd of horses.[54] There were other little favors which could be done for the Turks. Material gifts were not always needed to elicit the desired return of well-bred horses. When, in the winter of 731–732, Bilgä Qaghan, the mighty lord, sent fifty fine horses to the T'ang capital, they were in the nature of a thank offering. The Qaghan's younger brother had recently died, and a band of six Chinese painters had gone to the tent-city on the steppes, there to render a likeness of the dead prince, which moved the lord to tears. His welcome herd accompanied the happy artists back to T'ang.[55] So, by one means or another, the Turkish tribes of the North, whether the Sir-tardush or the Toquz-Oghuz—the "Nine Tribes"—or some other group, were induced to send enormous numbers, sometimes as many as five thousand at once, to the imperial corrals.[56] But greatest and most arrogant of the suppliers of horseflesh to the Chinese were the Uighur Turks, who dominated the horse market after the middle of the eighth century, when incessant wars, both domestic and foreign, had created an insatiable demand in the shrinking T'ang empire. The Uighurs and the Tibetans had become the chief foreign enemies of T'ang and natural rivalry and Chinese diplomacy had turned the former against the latter. After the Tibetans had herded off all of the thousands of Chinese horses from the government ranges in Lung-yu [57] and even captured the capital city of Ch'ang-an, those insolent Turks, who had driven out the highlanders only to their own advantage, were deferred to in countless ways by the humiliated Chinese. Despite endless complaints about the Uighurs' haughty manners, extending even to attacks on the persons of Chinese on their own soil, the foreigners were rewarded for their services by a monopoly of the lucrative trade in

horses.[58] No longer did an obsequious Turkish embassy bring a free gift of blood horses to Ch'ang-an, hoping for the good will of the masters of the East. Now it was hard-headed business, with the cultivated but effeminate Chinese (as they appeared to the outlanders) showing proper deference, and paying the seller's price. In the last decades of the eighth century, the ordinary price of a Uighur horse was forty bolts of Chinese silk, a stupefying expenditure.[59] In the early part of the ninth century, it was not unusual for the shattered nation to pay out a million bolts of taffeta in a year in exchange for a hundred thousand decrepit nags, the dregs of the northern marches.[60] Once in a while the Chinese emperor would attempt to limit this exhausting commerce. In 773 the Uighurs sent a special agent with ten thousand horses for sale. Their cost was more than the annual income of the government from taxes. Therefore Tai Tsung, a thoughtful monarch, ". . . not wishing to double the afflictions of the people, ordered that the authorities calculate an import budget, after which he allowed the purchase of six thousand of them." [61]

Hovering dangerously on the northern edges of the Turkish lands were the Kirghiz,[62] bane of the Uighurs in the ninth century, described as large men with pale faces, green eyes, and red hair.[63] They managed to get their horses across hostile territory to the Chinese frontier in the last half of the seventh and first half of the eighth century.[64] And all across Central Asia, from the Jade Gate of China to the Aral Sea, were the Western Turks and their Aryan subjects, and they too sent horses to the grand stables of T'ang.[65]

From the broad plains and rich cities of Transoxania and the nearby mountains came horses rich in Arab blood, especially in the eighth century during the vivid reign of Hsüan Tsung: from Samarkand,[66] Bukhāra,[67] Farghāna,[68] Tukhāra,[69] Chāch,[70] Kish,[71] Kabūdhān,[72] Māimargh,[73] and Khuttal.[74]

From the borders of Tibet the Mongolic T'u-yü-hun, much reduced from their former proud state, sent a gift of horses in 652,[75] and the Tibetans themselves sent a hundred two years later.[76] But the Tibetans did not become an important source of horses until the early decades of the ninth century, after they had been humbled by the Uighurs,[77] and even then they sent very few in comparison with those haughty Turks.

The city-states of Serindia also sent fine specimens to China, Kucha on several occasions,[78] and Khotan at least once.[79] The victorious Arabs sent their elegant steeds once later in the seventh century,[80] and once early in the eighth, as we have seen, and several times during Hsüan Tsung's golden reign.[81] Even distant Kapiśa (ancient Gandhāra), a hot rice-growing country on the northwestern frontier of India, rich in elephants and Buddhism but ruled by Turks, sent horses to China in 637, when T'ai Tsung, the Tängri Qaghan, dominated the world.[82] The rising state of Nan-chao in the Southwest too sent a gift of sixty horses of unknown breed to the Chinese in 795.[83]

The important trade in horses with the nomads of the North was systematized in 727 by the authorization of "exchange marketing" (*hu shih*) under government supervision on the frontier in the Ordos region. The purpose of this policy was to increase the number of horses in China and to improve the quality of the "national horses" by interbreeding with desirable foreign stock.[84] The immediate occasion of its establishment was the receipt of a friendly gift of thirty fine horses from Bilgä Qaghan, along with a letter which had come to him from the Tibetans, urging him to join in raids on Chinese territory, but which was now handed over to Hsüan Tsung by the Turkish envoy. The sovereign was delighted with these tokens of friendship, loaded the envoy with rich gifts, and also

> . . . authorized that a place for "exchange marketing" be created at the Walled Town for Receiving Surrender in the West, under the Army of the Boreal Quarter. Here several tens of myriads of bolts of heavy taffeta and other silks were delivered each year . . .[85]

This became the regular point at which the horses of the Northern tribes were brought to China. Henceforth we can read in the Chinese histories such statements as the following, which is appended to the notice of the presentation of sixty-four horses by the Toquz-Oghuz, the Kirghiz, and the Shih-wei early in 748: "The Commissioner at the Walled Town for Receiving Surrender in the West was ordered to brand them and take them in." [86] A similar trading post was established on the Tibetan frontier, at the Red Mountain Pass, in 729.[87]

But there was brisk private trading, too. The Tangut settlements along the northwestern marches in particular enriched themselves at it. Early in the ninth century ". . . itinerant merchants from far and near delivered silks and other commodities to them, taking sheep and horses in exchange." [88] Prosperity was an uncertain thing, however, for in the third decade of the same century the settlements were impoverished by avaricious Chinese officials, who compelled the enterprising Tangut to sell their livestock at ruinously low prices. This led naturally to Tangut banditry along the roads on the southern fringe of the Ordos.[89]

At the great government trading post, camels, asses, and sheep as well as horses were received and examined and registered by the imperial superintendent, and sent on to the appropriate pasture or to the imperial stables. On the road from the frontier the horses went by groups of ten, each group under a single herdsman.[90] From then on the horses were tenderly watched by the state, and the greatest care was taken lest any be injured, lost, or stolen. The person in charge of a government horse at any moment was responsible for its safety and welfare. Horses were not to die, but if one did, the procedure for establishing proof of its death, and for the degree of responsibility of the agent using it, was prescribed in the smallest detail. For instance, if a horse was being used for a long journey, that is, not as a regular post horse, and it died on the road, the meat was sold and the skin sent back to a

government warehouse. But if the death occurred in the desert, where no buyer or storehouse was at hand, the rider need only bring back (if he could get back himself) a piece of skin bearing the government brand as evidence.[91]

Once received in the imperial pasture, the foreign horse was assigned to a herd (*ch'ün*) of 120 animals in one of the great pastoral "inspectorates" (*chien*), each of which cared for as many as 5,000. There the animal was looked after until it was wanted for state service, either as a war horse, as a post horse, or as a mount for a member of the ruling family or a favored courtier. The horse was branded on many parts of his body, to show his ownership, age, type, quality, and condition. All state horses bore the character *kuan,* "official," on their right shoulders, and the name of the inspectorate to which they were assigned beside their tails. There were brands to show the nation of origin of a horse; brands to show his agility and stamina, such as "flying," "dragon," and "wind"; and brands to show his proper work, as the word "sent forth" branded on the right cheek of army and post horses on duty, or the word "bestowed" on the right cheek of official horses given to private persons.[92] The herdsmen and officers set over them were required to maintain their quotas of animals at the proper level, and were expected to increase them. Severe punishment was inflicted on the officer whose register showed fewer horses than required by his quota: thirty blows of a bamboo staff was the certain penalty for the shortage of a single horse.[93]

If an imported horse merited the attention of the magistrates who tended the palace horses, the beast was sent from the pasture to the capital city, and assigned to one of the corrals (*hsien*) or stables (*chiu*) attached to the palace itself. According to his type and quality, the horse was enclosed in the "Horse Corral of the Flying Yellows," the "Horse Corral of the Auspicious and Well-Bred," the "Horse Corral of the Dragon Decoys," the "Horse Corral of the *T'ao-t'u,*" the "Horse Corral of the *Chüeh-t'i,*" or the "Horse Corral of the Heavenly Park."[94] Five of the corrals were named for noble horses of the past, remembered through literature and tradition,[95] while the "Heavenly Park" was a poetical name for the park of the Son of Heaven, where he hunted with his dragon-horses. From these corrals exotic steeds could be taken for the use of great warlords, for imperial hunts, for aristocratic polo games, for ceremonial processions, or for other splendid and noble purposes.

Polo, introduced from Iran by way of Serindia at the beginning of T'ang[96] or a little earlier, and transmitted from China to Korea and Japan, was called simply "hit-ball"[97] and was played with curved sticks, their ends shaped like crescent moons, and net bags as goals. Emperors, courtiers, ladies, and even scholars played the game, and the palace had its own polo field.[98] We do not know what horses were accounted best for polo playing by the men of T'ang, but the records show that a pair of polo ponies was sent to China by the city of Khotan in 717.[99] We may guess that the superior ponies came from lands where polo was played with enthusiasm,

such as Turkestan and Iran; the Tibetans were also held to be exceptionally skillful players.[100]

But the Chinese could dazzle the Tibetans in return:

> In the time of the Central Ancestor [Chung Tsung], a banquet was spread for the Tibetans in the basilica, and a performance by the curvetting horses presented. These were all fitted and caparisoned with silk thread, pigmented in the five colors, with garnishings of gold. Unicorn heads and phoenix wings had been applied to the tops of their saddles. When the music was played, each of the horses followed it, fluently responsive, and when they came to the middlemost stanza, the performers of the music gave them wine to drink, at which they took up the cups in their mouths; then they lay down, and got up again. The Tibetans were greatly astonished.[101]

Even more celebrated than Chung Tsung's horses, which disported themselves to musical measures at the beginning of the eighth century, were the dancing horses of Hsüan Tsung, which performed some decades later. These last numbered a hundred, and were recruited from among the most talented of the tribute horses sent from abroad. They were dressed in rich embroideries, fringed with gold and silver, and wore precious stones in their manes. Divided into two troops, they danced their intricate maneuvers, with tossing heads and beating tails, to the music of the "Song of the Overturned Cup" (*ch'ing pei ch'ü*), played by two bands of handsome young musicians, clad in yellow shirts and jade-studded belts. They could dance on three-tiered benches, and would stand stock still when their benches were heaved up by athletes. It became the custom for these beautiful animals to perform annually at the Tower of Zealous Administration (*Ch'in cheng lou*) on the fifth day of the eighth month in honor of the sovereign's birthday, a holiday styled the "Period of a Thousand Autumns" (*Ch'ien ch'iu chieh*). The horses shared the limelight on these auspicious occasions with a battalion of guards in golden armor, the ceremonial orchestra, barbarian mountebanks, performing elephants and rhinoceroses, and a great bevy of palace girls in richly embroidered costumes, who played the eight-faced "thunder drums.[102]

When Hsüan Tsung was driven from his throne, the famous dancing horses were dispersed. Some were sent to the northeastern frontier by Rokhshan, and a few were assigned to military duties there, but could easily be distinguished from the other war horses by their tendency to begin dancing when martial music was played in the camp.[103]

Lu Kuei-meng, the ascetic poet of the ninth century, wrote of them, linking them with the almost fabulous dragon-horses of Farghāna:

> Grandchildren of Dragons from the Dens of the Moon, four hundred hooves,
> Proud prancers, lightly pacing, responsive to the golden war drums:
> When the tune is done, seeming to want the affection of their sovereign lord,
> They look back at the Red Tower—but do not dare to neigh.[104]

Lu Kuei-meng's "Dens of the Moon" are Li Po's "Dens of the Kushanas" in Western Turkestan,[105] and these dancers belong to the exotic wonders of mid-T'ang.

A recurrent theme in the puritanical edicts which appeared from time to time during the T'ang regime, especially during virtuously warlike and ostentatiously solemn reigns, was the interdiction of gifts to the throne of small and delightful things, which were regarded as trivial, since they did not serve the state. Such was the ban on small horses which was handed down during the first year of the dynasty [106] and rejected pretty ponies in favor of stalwart steeds. Nonetheless, three years later the same monarch, Kao Tsu, accepted miniature "**ķuâ-ha* horses" from Paekche, in the southwestern part of the Korean peninsula.[107] Evidently the inaugural gesture of grave sincerity had been forgotten. When the stern and militant regimes of the seventh century gave way to the milder and more frivolously "cultured" reign of Hsüan Tsung in the eighth, little horses, along with other delicate rarities, were welcomed by the court. In this century the ponies came from the dominant Korean kingdom of Silla.[108] But they must have been of the same race as the ponies of Paekche, diminutive tarpan stock, evolved on an island—the island of Quelpart in Korea Strait—like our familiar Shetland ponies and the "fairy ponies" of Öland.[109] Small horses of this name had been known to the Chinese since the first century B.C., when they were hitched to the carriage of a dowager empress.[110] In the second century of the Christian era these ponies were sent by the central Korean kingdom of Wei,[111] but a later tradition identified them with the horses of the hero Chu Mong, the legendary archer who founded the kingdom of Koguryŏ.[112] Whether all these ponies came from the stunting environment of Quelpart is conjectural. In T'ang times their name, **ķuâ-ha,* was written with Chinese characters meaning "beneath a fruit-tree," and the explanation then current was that it signified that one could ride them without mishap under the lowest branches of a fruit tree.[113] But the name must originally have been a word from some northeastern language, whose meaning was forgotten and then rationalized by the Chinese.[114] In the twelfth century it was even possible to apply the name to small horses from the tropical south of the empire.[115] It was also customary in T'ang times to say that Korean ponies were three feet high,[116] but this must have been a symbolic number for the height of all diminutive creatures; it had been applied to dwarfish men since antiquity,[117] and so we cannot tell the size of the little animals with precision. It is easy to guess that they were used in T'ang in much the same way as in Han—to pull carts for royal ladies, to grace formal processions, and to embellish the public appearances of all effete young persons. It is likely that these were the gaily decorated dwarf ponies which carried the gilded youth of T'ang to drinking parties in the gardens of the capital during the height of the spring flower-viewing season.[118]

Celebrated above all other exotic horses in the age of T'ang were the "Six Bayards" which carried T'ai Tsung through dangerous campaigns against rival claimants to the throne of China. These paragons are known to us through both

literature and art. The sovereign himself, in his deep affection for them, wrote a short prose description of each of the six, or rather of their effigies, and a poetic eulogy of each.[119] Here is one of them:

The *Cherpādh* Red: its color pure red, ridden at the time of the putting down of [Wang] Shih-ch'ung and [Tou] Chien-te; [120] hit by four arrows from the front and by one arrow from the back. The Eulogy goes:

Where Ch'an and Chien [121] were still unquiet,
There ax and poleax extended my majesty;
Vermilion sweat—impetuous feet!
Blue banners—triumphant return! [122]

Poetry and sculpture commemorated this charger, but a war horse ridden by T'ai Tsung in this same campaign, named "Yellow Grizzled Roan," [123] had a different role in the arts: after it died in the Korean wars, T'ai Tsung had music composed in its honor, called "The Doubled Song of the Yellow Grizzle," apparently in imitation of an old tune of Han times.[124]

By means of the image "vermilion sweat," the beloved *"Cherpādh* Red" was linked, at least in fancy, with the blood-sweaters of Farghāna. Though the imperial six all had Western blood in their veins, it is certain, in view of some of their names, like "Tegin Roan," that they came to T'ai Tsung from the Turks.[125] The renowned images of these renowned steeds, done in stone relief at the emperor's command in the winter of 636–637,[126] were based on drawings by the great Yen Li-pen. After T'ai Tsung's death the sculptures were installed next to his "Radiant Tumulus" in Shensi, but they have since been transferred to museums.[127] The stone horses have their manes cut or tied in bunches, like crenellated battlements, an ancient fashion in Central Asia and Siberia, though probably of Iranian origin, but obsolete in China since the days of the Han emperors. Its reappearance testifies to the Turkish origin of T'ai Tsung's steeds, and certifies the nobility of both horses and rider.[128] But the ideal pedigree of the Six Bayards goes back beyond the famous horses of Han to the Eight Bayards of King Mu of Chou, whose wonderful lineaments were still preserved, a model for great barbarian-subduing kings, in an old painting, a kind of T'ang national treasure.[129]

Not so well known as the Six Bayards, but marvels of their age, were the "Ten Chargers" [130] of T'ai Tsung. These rare and beautiful steeds came to the monarch late in his life, and therefore lacked the intimate relationship with him which gave special dignity and glory to their six predecessors in the old days of bitter trials and uncertain success. The new horses were personally chosen by the monarch from among a hundred sent by the Turkish Qurïqan nation in 647.[131] The boreal herdsmen who raised them, dwellers in a land full of lilies north of Lake Baikal, bred them as sinewy and powerful horses, similar to those of the Khirghiz, and sent them unbranded, but with oddly docked ears and marked noses, to the great ruler of China.[132] T'ai Tsung himself chose names for the elect ten: [133] "Frost

Prancing White," "Shining Snow Grizzle," "Frozen Dew Grizzle," "Suspended Light Grizzle," "Wave Plunging Bay," "Sunset Flying Roan," "Lightning Darting Red," "Flowing Gold Yellow," "Soaring Unicorn Purple," "Running Rainbow Red."[134]

Although we may imagine that the horses of Qurïqan must have been painted by some seventh-century master to delight the eyes of their lord, there is no record of such a project. This was before the time of the most eminent of all Chinese painters of horses, Han Kan, who lived in the next century, during the reign of Hsüan Tsung, himself a fancier of exotic horses. Han Kan prided himself that his vigorous representations were based directly upon nature, rather than on traditional pictures of regal horses.[135] From what we may read of older horse paintings, the preferred pre-T'ang style was symbolic and even fantastic, with the divine parentage of royal horses shown plainly in eccentric line and color. Han Kan, it seems, was the first great painter to adopt the principle of uncompromising realism in horse painting. This was a great change. The supremacy of the horse among the foreign domestic animals was due not only to its role in the security of the nation but equally to its affinities with legendary and supernatural creatures of the venerated past. In a sense, then, Han Kan brought it down to earth forever, and the Chinese of the eighth century were the last to see the dragon-horses of Heaven as stupendously believable animals. Naturalistic exoticism had triumphed forever over reverent symbolism.

Camels

At the beginning of T'ang rule the domestic form of the two-humped Bactrian camel had been known to and used by the northern Chinese for at least a thousand years. In Han times they had been used by the thousands in the commercial and military caravans which penetrated the newly won lands of Serindia.[136] In those classic days the Chinese had to depend on such pastoral outlanders as the Hsiung-nu to replenish their supply of these valuable animals, treasured for their reliability in transporting men and merchandise through the high desert wastes of Gobi and Tarim.[137] So also in T'ang times, when the empire extended once more far across Central Asia, the need for camels was equally great, and they, like horses, had to be found abroad to meet the enormous demands at home. Camels came as presents to the throne, as tribute, as commodities, and as war booty. The Uighurs[138] and the Tibetans[139] sent camels to T'ang; camels came with a mission from Chumul on the Manas River,[140] and from the Turgäch,[141] and Khotan sent a "wind-footed wild camel."[142] Indeed, among the Turkish tribes generally, camels were enumerated among things of the greatest worth, like gold, silver, virgins, and slaves,[143] and they appeared in omen lore and poetry as beneficent and noble animals.[144] They could be obtained in the city-states of the Tarim, along the old caravan roads; Kao Hsien-chih seized

many camels, along with other treasures, at Chāch.[145] Fighting camels were a noted feature of the great festivals of Kucha,[146] and the Kirghiz, too, used camels in various sporting events.[147]

The vast camel herds of the Chinese government, enriched from these foreign sources, were presided over by hordes of officials, as were the imperial horses. The chief herdsman of each herd was in charge of only seventy camels, however, while the standard herd of horses was made up of 120 animals.[148] Along with the other large domestic animals, they were kept in the grassy provinces of Kuan-nei and Lung-yu, that is, in modern Shensi and Kansu. The exact size of the imperial herds is not known, but in 754 there were 279,900 cattle, sheep, and camels in the official herds of Lung-yu.[149] Private gentlemen of means also kept camels as riding animals and as beasts of burden. It is probable that most of the herdsmen, trainers, and cameleers, both in public and private employ, were foreigners from Mongolia, Central Asia, and Tibet, in accordance with Tu Fu's dictum, "Western boys have power over camels."[150]

Very fast and dependable camels, especially white ones, were assigned to officials entitled "Emissaries of the Bright Camels," for emergency use on state business, and in particular to bring news of a crisis on the frontier.[151] But these excellent post camels might be diverted to less serious ends, as in a tale about Yang Kuei-fei, the consort of Hsüan Tsung. The monarch, so the tale goes, gave ten pieces of Borneo camphor, which he had received as tribute from Chiao-chih in Indochina, to the Lady Yang. She secretly dispatched them by "Bright Camel Emissary" to Rokhshan, her lover (as he appears to have been), on a remote and dangerous frontier.[152]

There were also "Flying Dragon Camels" in the imperial stables. Late in the eighth century it was not deemed too ignoble to employ these fine animals to bring rice to the capital, when the supply of grain in the metropolis proved insufficient for the brewing of wine for the Son of Heaven.[153] Camels seemed destined for anomalous and bizarre purposes on Chinese soil.

But their association with the ruffianly nomads across the northern frontier could also make camels seem terrible animals. Early in the eighth century they appear in a street song of the capital as the "golden camels from north of the mountains," and represent the marauders from Mongolia with their pack animals laden with the rich spoils of T'ang.[154] Later in the century they became specific symbols of the barbarous rebels who followed Rokhshan: "They brought the Two Capitals low, and made a practice of loading the rarities and treasures of the Tabooed Repository on camels for storage in heaps and hills in Fan-yang."[155] The classic expression of this attitude toward the northern captains and their camel transports is in Tu Fu's poem "Lament for a King's Grandson," whose picture is of a prince of Hsüan Tsung's scattered household, hoping to escape death at the hands of Rokhshan's men; the poet tells him of the accession of Su Tsung, whose "sapient virtue" has obtained the aid of the Uighur Turks against the insurgents. The poet affirms that the sacred emana-

tions from the tombs of the imperial ancestors give perpetual hope of the preservation of dynasty and prince alike.

> At the head of Ch'ang-an's wall is a white-headed crow,
> Which flies by night to the Autumn-Inviting Gate, and on it cries;
> And on it goes to the people's homes, and pecks at the housetops of the great;
> From under these housetops successful officials run out to escape the outlanders.
> Their golden whips are sheared and broken, their ninefold horse teams dead;
> Bone waits not for family flesh, but goads alike and gallops away.
> With precious bangles hung from his waist, made of blue coral,
> How pitiable is this king's grandson, weeping at the flank of the road.
> When I ask him, he will not tell his clan or name,
> But will tell only of affliction and torment, and beg to be made my slave.
> Already he has undergone a hundred days of skulking through thorn and bramble;
> On his body there is no skin or flesh left whole.
> But the sons and grandsons of the High Theocrat have all, like him, been high-beaked—
> So the Dragon Seed in this one marks him off from ordinary men.
> Now dhole and wolf are in the city, while these Dragons are in the wild,
> And this king's grandson will do well to preserve his thousand-metal-piece body.
> I dare not talk long here, close by the crossroads,
> But for the king's grandson I stand for just this moment:
> "Yesterday night a wind from the East blew us the stink of blood,
> Camels coming from the East filled the Old Metropolis.
> Our lusty youths from the boreal quarter, fine bodies and hands,
> Once brave and keen, but now how foolish!
> For my part, I hear that the See has now passed to the Grand Heir;
> His Sapient Virtue in the North has humbled the Khan of the South,
> Whose men of the Flower Gate gash their faces, and ask that they may purge our shame snow-white!
> But take care lest any of this come from your mouth, for hostile men go by.
> Alas! king's grandson! Take care that you do not let go,
> For the Excellent Inspiration from the Five Barrows will at no time cease to be!" [156]

Along with his value as a beast of burden, the camel made other contributions to civilized living. His hair made an excellent cloth, often very soft, which was later much admired by Marco Polo. In T'ang times, such camlets were manufactured at Hui-*chou* in Kansu and Feng-*chou* out in the Ordos—both of them on the northwestern frontier, the chief source of raw materials—and sent regularly to the imperial court.[157]

Moreover, camels could be eaten, and the hump in particular was regarded as a delicacy. Tu Fu has written of "the hump of a purple camel emerging from a blue cauldron," and Ts'en Ts'an, telling of a feast at the frontier station of Chiu-ch'üan, wrote,

> The Tibetan lads and Western boys blend their chants and songs,
> They broil yaks whole, and cook wild camels . . .[158]

Stewed or broiled camel could not have been an ordinary dish in the cuisine of north China, except where both camels and foreign fashions were common.

Cattle

We do not easily think of cattle as important on the list of exotic goods needed or desired by the men of T'ang. Since antiquity the Chinese had had many varieties of oxen, including fantastic races with motley hides, developed for the manifold sacrifices to the archaic gods, most of them hardly remembered in T'ang times. But under this multiplicity lay the comparative simplicity of three great varieties. These three primordial types were recognized in T'ang, as they are now: the great eighth-century pharmacologist Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i called them the "yellow cow," the "raven-black cow," and the "water cow," [159] this last being the carabao or "water buffalo." The yellow cow is thought to be a hybrid of the European cow and the Indian zebu.[160] It is of southern origin and remains most characteristic of the south, though it has spread all over China. Where its range overlaps that of the magnificent carabao, the yellow cow turns water wheels and plows light ground, while the buffalo turns up the thick clayey soils of the rice fields.[161] In T'ang times the yellow cow was even more important on the island of Hainan, a savage land then, newly under Chinese administration; there were no asses or horses there, so the people rode about on yellow cows saddled, bridled, and decorated like horses elsewhere.[162] The black ox of north China is something of a mystery; it may share the blood of one of the wild races of oxen native to the Far East, such as the gaur or banting.[163] At any rate, cattle of one kind or another were to be found everywhere in the lands of T'ang.

The Chinese had also had their dwarf breeds of cattle, comparable to the "fairy cattle" of Corvo in the Azores,[164] since very remote times. The "millet ox" [165] and *gieu*-ox [166] of the Chou kingdom were supposed to have been miniature sacrificial animals.[167] Another kind of tiny cattle, called *p'i*-cattle, or "cattle under a fruit tree," like the fairy horses of Korea and Kwangtung, had been produced since early times at Kao-liang, southwest of Canton.[168] T'ang Kao Tsu's edict, published late in 618,[169] against the offering of dwarf cattle and other tiny beings to the throne, may have been aimed against the presentation of such Chinese pygmies as these, and possibly against foreign ones too, such as the beautiful little gynees of Bengal.[170]

Stories about the oxen of foreign countries, some colorful, some fairly prosaic, circulated among the men of T'ang. They knew that the red-haired, white-faced Kirghiz people, disavowing descent from wolves (a peculiarity of the Turks), claimed to be the issue of the mating of a god with a cow in a mountain cave.[171] But what sort of beast that totemic ancestor was, or whether the race of domestic cattle herded by the Kirghiz [172] resembled it, is not on record. The Chinese knew too that the natives of Kucha held ceremonial contests between fighting oxen (and horses

and camels as well) during their New Year's festival. The outcome of these ritual battles gave the prognosis of the increase, or decrease, of their herds during the coming year.[173] But no one has made note of these gallant cattle in China. Nor is there any report that the giant wild oxen of Central Asia, white-haired, with tails like deer and the space of ten feet between the tips of their horns, was ever seen by a Chinese traveler, though their existence was authoritatively reported.[174]

But indeed, nothing reliable can be said about the character of even such plainly visible cattle as the thousands sent to T'ang by a Turkish Qaghan in 628.[175] As for the herds of "cattle" submitted by the rulers of the T'u-yü-hun [176] and of the Tibetans,[177] it appears that these must have been yaks, the only cattle reported among the domestic animals of these people in this age.[178] To be more precise, they were zobos, hybrid offspring of male yaks and female zebus. The large, brownish-black wild yak and its half-tame brother, which resembles it but is somewhat smaller, thrive only in the frigid air of the alpine massif. Only the shaggy little half-breed zobos, of variable color, can endure the oppressive lowlands.[179]

From the homeland of the T'u-yü-hun, rich in parrots and useful metals, around the great blue lake Kokonor,[180] had come tribute of yaks, unambiguously named, from the beginning of the sixth century, and also gifts of their famous grizzled colts. The Tibetans, who required their guests to shoot their own yaks before a great banquet,[181] also sent specimen yaks to the Chinese court early in the eighth century.[182] I take it that these solitary beasts were not the docile little zobos, but the dark and proud ancestral types,[183] sent for the admiration of the sophisticates of the capital.

The image of the yak in Chinese literature did not reflect the dangerous character of the wild type. Tu Fu wrote:

> Blue-green grass was rank and rife—is withered dead and gone;
> Horses of Heaven, with shambling feet, follow after the yak-cattle.
> So, from ancient days, our noble and honest ones were thinly treated by fate,
> While wanton cockerels and vicious youths all were patent-sealed as lords.[184]

In these lines the noble horses of divine blood are shown stricken by drought and famine (symbolizing the poor spiritual sustenance given the good-hearted in those trying days), and can only shuffle along with the humble zobos, pictured as dull-witted, cloddish beasts (symbolizing men of like temperament).

Since antiquity, when barbarians brandishing wands adorned with yaktails entertained the guests of the king,[185] yaktails had been greatly desired in the Chinese lowlands as standards and banners, as decorations for hats, and as ornaments for the carriages of the nobility.[186] Under the rulers of T'ang, they were sent to the court as regular annual tribute by the westernmost towns of Szechwan, where the great mountains rise into Tibet.[187] These tails were the bushy ones of the zobo, which also provided the chowries of India.[188] In T'ang, having been delivered at the palace, the tails might eventually come under the delicate care of the "Supervisor of Carriages," who tended the vehicles of the ladies of the imperial seraglio and the costly

animals which pulled them: "he has carriages and chaises in charge, and umbrellas and fans for them, and decorative objects, feathers, and yaktails, which he must put out in the sun at the proper season." [189]

Sheep and Goats

Many wonderful kinds of exotic sheep (or, it may be, goats, since these animals were classified together by the Chinese, as is entirely reasonable) were known by repute in the lands of T'ang. Probably the most astonishing were the "earth-born sheep" of Rome:

> The lambs of certain sheep are born from within the earth. The people of that country wait until they are about to sprout, and then construct a wall with which to enclose them and prevent them from being eaten by wild beasts. But their navels are attached to the ground, and if they cut them they would die. However, if men clothed in armor run their horses there, with the beating of drums, and so startle them, these lambs will cry out in fright, at which the navels are separated, and they go off after water and herbs.[190]

One scholar has hoped to see in this an echo of the legend of the Argonauts (armed men) and the Golden Fleece, but the story has been confused with that of the pinna mussel, so that the men in armor might represent the crustacea which war on the mollusks and sever their lifelines. But we shall hear more of the pinna later. The "earth-born sheep" is also, in part, the story of the "planted sheep," that is, of the cotton plant which produces vegetable wool.[191]

It was also reported in China that sheep with great heavy tails, weighing as much as ten catties, were raised in Samarkand.[192] They are no myths, but are the fat-tailed dumba of Bukhāra and the Kirghiz steppe, whose young are the source of the famous astrakhan fur. These animals spread from this center through Persia and Syria at a very early date.[193]

A wild sheep of bluish tint was also reported from Kapiśa, with a "kingfisher-colored" tail. This must have been a variety of the great bharal or "blue sheep," of the strangely twisted horns.[194] This fine animal, whose slate-blue coloration serves as camouflage against the bare rocks of the high mountains, ranges from Baltistan through the K'un-lun Mountains, at altitudes of over ten thousand feet, to the confines of China.[195]

It is not easy to identify the huge sheep reported by the famous traveler Hsüan-tsang as being raised by villagers high in the snowy Pamirs.[196]

A prince of the Turks offered ten thousand sheep, along with a great herd of horses, to the Chinese emperor in 626, but the gift was not accepted, and indeed, quite aside from political reasons, it appears that the Chinese of this age stood in no great need of foreign sheep and imported very few. Goats they had known from early times, but sheep were more appropriate to the stinking nomads. We must guess

that the rejected sheep of the Turks were the steatopygous breed with drooping ears characteristic of Central Asia and Siberia, and well-known to the Chinese.[197]

Asses, Mules, and Onagers

The ass, like the camel, appeared on the Chinese horizon only in late classical times, that is to say, toward the end of the Chou dynasty, having been transmitted by slow degrees from its North African homeland. But for the men of T'ang, a millenium later, it was a native domestic animal, not to be wondered at, and not, it seems, an article of import, unless we count the ass fifty feet tall, reported in a credible source to have been sent by the Tibetans in 654, along with a hundred horses.[198] But this gigantic donkey seems to have been born from an overexcited rumor or a copyist's pen, unless a myth has somehow become entangled with a real event. The pharmacologist Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i also told of "asses of the sea," as well as horses and cattle of the sea, whose hair would rise on end when they felt the sea wind, but what traveler's tale he had heard I do not know. It must have been of some distant sea creature, whose hair was not wetted by water, like the sea elephant and the sea otter.[199]

Mules, like their paternal ancestors, were post-archaic introductions into China and even somewhat odd in Han times, but by T'ang they were so common that it was possible to mount an army on mules in a province which was deficient in horses.[200]

Cousin to the ass and the mule was an equine animal known to the Chinese only from specimens sent as token tribute from the Far West in the eighth century. These strange beasts had the name *lou*, which registered a linguistic affinity with both the ass (*lu*) and the mule (*lo*). The Chinese lexicographers have been at a loss to classify these creatures, which were sent from Tukhāristān in 720,[201] and from Persia in 734,[202] the latter being a land in which they were said to abound.[203] Some say it was a kind of horse, and some say a kind of ass, but indeed it must have been a variety of the almost intractable onager, the miscalled "wild ass" of Turkestan, Persia, and the Near East, related to the chigetai of Central Asia and Mongolia, and to the kiang of Tibet.[204]

Dogs

It has been thought that all varieties of domestic dogs descend from five ancient types.[205] Several of these primeval ancestors had descendants in China. The "chow," for instance, derives from the spitz prototype, which also has many offspring among the Samoyeds and the Tungus peoples, and even in the tropical lands of Indonesia.[206]

The greyhound, a very old kind of dog, is shown in stone reliefs of the Han dynasty; its forefathers surely came from Egypt in long-forgotten times.[207] Most popular of all in ancient China was the snub-nosed mastiff, with its tail curled up over its back, in the lineage of the Tibetan wolf, *Canis niger*, which also bred the hound of the Assyrians, the Roman *molossus*, the Saint Bernard, the Newfoundland, the bulldog, and especially the miniature breeds of China, such as the pug.[208] Even the great Yen Li-pen painted a mastiff brought as tribute in the seventh century, perhaps a gift from Tibet, the motherland of the breed.[209]

The nations of Turkestan also sent dogs to China: Samarkand in 713,[210] and again in 724;[211] Kucha in 721.[212] Presumably these were hunting hounds, which were in great demand among the Chinese courtiers, though we know nothing specific about them. If so they found their way into the imperial kennels of the palace at Ch'ang-an.[213] There were useless curiosities too, like the two-headed dog, a monstrous birth, sent to the court of the Empress Wu in 697.[214]

A breed of spotted dog which came from Persia was called simply the "Persian dog" by the Chinese, but its ancestry is a mystery.[215] The dogs known by this epithet in the sixth century were large, ferocious animals, capable of killing and eating human beings.[216] Presumably the spotted Persians of T'ang times were the same.

Another dog imported from Western Asia in T'ang times was the "dog of Hrom,"[217] that is, a "Roman dog," which first appeared early in the seventh century, the gift of the king of Kao-ch'ang, or Qočo. Here is the story:

> He presented male and female dogs, one of each, six inches high, and a foot or so long. They were most clever. They could lead horses by their reins and carry candles in their mouths. It is said that they were originally bred in the Country of Hrom.[218]

Nothing certain can be said of the appearance of these small animals, but it has been proposed that they were none other than the classic lap dogs par excellence, of the ancient Maltese race,[219] and it may well be so. Those intelligent toys, ultimately of the spitz family, with their shaggy hair and pointed faces, were the favorites of Greek hetaerae and Roman matrons alike.[220] The strain had been remarkably conservative, a white variety being still extant today. It may be such a white dog of Melita which we see in a painting of the Sung dynasty, though there is no certainty of the identification.[221] Indeed, it is not at all certain that the pair of small dogs sent by Qočo had any descendants in China at all, though perhaps others like them came to replenish the stock in the Far East. Consider this story of Hsüan Tsung and his beloved:

> One summer day His Highness was playing at *go* with a Prince of the Blood, and he had ordered Ho Huai-chih to strum a solo on the lute. The Precious Consort stood before the gaming board and watched them. At a point when several of His Highness' men were about to be carried off, the Precious Consort released a toy dog from the country of Samarkand from beside the seats. The toy dog accordingly went up on the board, and the men on the board were disarranged. His Highness was greatly pleased.[222]

The hero of this tactful enterprise was probably a Roman dog. We may see him again (but with no hint of his ancestry) in the words to a song by an anonymous T'ang poet, written to the tune of "The Drunken Lordling."[223] The verses show a light-of-love, perhaps a courtesan, expecting her young gentleman's arrival:

> Outside the gate the toy doggy barks—
> I know that it's Master Hsiao who's here.
> With socks peeled off I go down the scented staircase,
> But—my dear oppressor is drunk tonight.[224]

The Chinese word which I have translated "toy dog" in these passages is related to the word for "dwarf,"[225] and so gives us no clue to the geographic origin of the creatures. The Samarkandian origin of the Consort's dog points to Rome and thence to Malta;[226] we cannot be so positive about the lap dog which announced Master Hsiao, though some authorities have thought that all dogs called "dwarf dogs" (my "toy dogs") were of "Roman" origin. In any case, the modern snub-nosed toys of China do not seem to show Maltese blood, but perhaps unnoticed traces of it remain.[227] But these dwarfish pets, whether native or not, were favorite subjects for poems, or favorite images in them, from T'ang times down to the seventeenth century.[228]

For I pray God for the introduction of new creatures into this island.
For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the beavers of the Medway & silver fish of Thames.

Christopher Smart, *Rejoice in the Lamb*

IV. Wild Animals

Elephants

The elephant was not always an exotic animal to the Chinese. In the Age of Bronze, when the kings of Shang ruled in the valley of the Yellow River, it was one of the commoner wild animals, and was evidently captured and tamed for useful purposes.[1] But as the forest cover of north China was reduced and the human population increased, the great beasts retreated toward the south, and during historical times were to be found only in pockets in the remoter parts of the Yangtze watershed, and south of there. They were still abundant in the mountainous parts of Kwangtung in the ninth century,[2] and on the warm coasts of that province in the tenth:[3] an inscription of 962, in a pagoda at Tung-kuan, east of Canton, commemorates the trampling of the peasants' crops by a herd of elephants.[4] These Cantonese elephants were noted both for the pink color of their tusks, well suited to the manufacture of ceremonial writing tablets, and for the delicate flavor of their trunks, which were prized by native cooks.[5] More interesting, because more mysterious, was a black race of elephants, sometimes described as "blue-black," denizens of the Yangtze valley, where they were given the humiliating name of "river pigs."[6]

During these centuries from the fall of Shang to the rise of Sung, the elephant, though only an occasional spectacle for the people of the north, was sometimes useful to the people of the south, but only in warfare, and that rarely. The warriors of Ch'u sent elephants against their enemies in 506 B.C.; the southern state of

("Country Stabilizing") temple by the Emperor I Tsung in 871, to be used by lecturers on the sutras. The seats were twenty feet high and framed in sandalwood and aloeswood.[53] Of the same magnificence was the meditation platform at the T'ien-t'ai monastery on Mount Wu-t'ai in the ninth century; it was covered with a sandal paste, so that the breezes blew its fragrance over a considerable distance.[54]

Sandal also supplied the poets with an easy, even rather ordinary, exotic image: such a pairing as "modeled in *candana* aromatic" and "copied on *pattra* leaves"[55] (the second of these, intended for "palmyra palm leaves," being literally redundant) gave an automatic picture of an Indian or a Hinduized milieu. A much greater rarity is the metaphor "sandal mouth" in the erotic verses of the talented harlot Chao Luan-luan,[56] clearly meaning "her mouth fragrant as sandal."

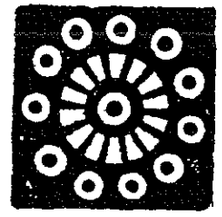
Ebony

Many trees of genus *Diospyros,* relatives of the persimmon and natives of India and the Indies, yield the handsome black hardwoods collectively named "ebony."[57] Some kinds of ebony, under the name of "raven wood," were imported into China by Persian argosies as early as the fourth century.[58] Again, in the twelfth century, we hear of imported ebony; one writer, for instance, describes the distinctively shiny black surface of antique zithers as ". . . like the raven wood which is brought for trade by overseas argosies."[59] But no direct evidence of the importation of ebony in T'ang appears, though the period is straddled by the eras just mentioned. We might reasonably expect to find objects of ebony in the Shōsōin, if it were important among exotic woods used in eighth-century China. The catalogues of that treasury allude frequently to elegant cabinetwork—a hexagonal stand and a cabinet with hinged doors are instances—[60] of "black persimmon," but this does not seem to be a proper ebony but rather a paler *Diospyros,* stained with sapan juice.[61] The question is open.

Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, everyone,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

John Keats, *The Eve of St. Agnes*

IX=Foods



Just as no hard and fast line can be drawn between cosmetics and drugs in the civilization of the medieval Far East, so any attempt to discriminate precisely between foods and drugs, or between condiments and perfumes, would lead to frustrated misrepresentation of the true role of edibles in T'ang culture. This role was not simple but complex.[1] Every food had medicinal properties, which were carefully studied by learned doctors, and especially by the Taoists, for whom diet was closely related to the fight against time, and who aimed at prolonging ruddy and robust youth. Spices in particular—and exotic ones above all—because of their aromatic nature, infusing their wonder-working properties by means of unmistakable effluvia, were ranked high among the useful drugs, and were no mere taste-sharpeners for Lucullan banquets, though they were that too. But it is important to remember that even this statement oversimplifies the picture: spices and perfumes had their parts to play in religion as well as in medicine, and also in daily life, to preserve food, to repel unpleasant insects, to purify noxious airs, to clean the body and beautify the skin, to evoke love in an indifferent beloved, to improve one's social status, and in many other ways.[2] The variety and multiplicity of these purposes, rather than some easy and condescending characterization such as the "luxury trade," as if only the rich desired health and beauty, must be taken as the real basis of the great medieval commerce in exotic seasonings and relishes. They were at once charms and panaceas, and much else besides.[3] So saying, I will perversely proceed to divide up these edible aromatics or aromatic edibles quite arbitrarily, and treat them under separate rubrics, according to whether they seem to be most important in cookery, in perfumes and incenses, or in medicine. Sometimes the catalogu-

ing will seem strange, not only because it is arbitrary and one-sided, but because it defies modern usage and belief. Cloves and nutmegs can be given as examples: these will be discussed in the next chapter, on "Aromatics," rather than here under "Foods," where we should be most inclined to put them. There is no evidence that these spices were much used in T'ang cookery, but a great deal of evidence that they were important in the manufacture of perfumes and drugs.

The monkish traveler, I-ching, who had much experience with the cookery of Indonesia and India, reported, with evident relish, on the richly prepared fare available in those lands, as contrasted with his own: ". . . in China, people of the present time eat fish and vegetables mostly uncooked; no Indians do this. All vegetables are to be well cooked and to be eaten after mixing with the assafoetida, clarified butter, oil, or any spice."[4] Probably we should accept this account of the character of the Chinese cuisine in the seventh century, since it is given by an excellent observer. But it goes against contemporary opinions of Chinese cooking, especially that of the south. I-ching's description makes T'ang cookery sound like modern Japanese cookery —plain food, sometimes raw, with few savory mixtures or interesting sauces, we would guess. If so, the best of modern Chinese cooking has developed in relatively recent times, and we easily suppose, if that is so, that the rich character we find in it was only beginning to appear in T'ang times, undoubtedly under the influence of foreign taste and custom in foods, in particular those of India and the Indianized lands of the Desert and the Isles.

But, to tell the truth, very little is yet known about T'ang eating habits. In the sentences which follow it is not possible to do more than suggest, largely by giving examples, what sorts of things were usually or sometimes eaten. But nothing as to how they were prepared will be forthcoming—this important task remains for a future historian.

We know then that certain staples, such as millet, rice, pork, beans, chicken, plums, onions, and bamboo shoots were very widely used. We may also read of local specialties, and suppose that T'ang gourmets sampled these village dishes in the course of their travels for business and pleasure—such delicacies as frogs, a favorite food in Kuei-yang, far in the south (though it is reported that sophisticated northerners ridiculed the natives for this preference).[5] And there were the sago cakes of Kwangtung,[6] the dried oysters taken with wine in the same region,[7] and the "ground-chestnuts" of Chekiang.[8] When a local dainty attracted favorable attention at court and capital, it was added to the lists of local tribute and thereafter was received regularly by the imperial kitchens: the summer garlic of southern Shensi, the deer tongues of northern Kansu, the Venus clams of the Shantung coast, the "sugar crabs" of the Yangtze River, the sea horses of Ch'ao-*chou* in Kwangtung, the white carp marinated in wine lees from northern Anhwei, the dried flesh of "white flower snake" (a pit viper) from southern Hupeh, melon pickled in rice mash from southern Shensi and eastern Hupeh, dried ginger from Chekiang, loquats and cherries from southern Shensi, persimmons from central Honan, and "thorny limes" from the Yangtze Valley.[9]

As the expansion of imperial T'ang brought new lands and diverse cultures under her control, it was natural that the lists of comestibles demanded in Ch'ang-an (and certainly elsewhere too, as the court set the fashion for the provinces) were lengthened to include new and strange delicacies, such as the aromatic jujubes of Hami,[10] the "thorn honey" which exuded from a leafless desert plant[11] and was sent by Qočo, the almonds of Kucha,[12] and the bananas and betel nuts (their Malay name of *pinang* was adopted in Chinese) of Annam.[13] These foods, and others like them, constituted a transitional group of "semi-exotics," being, so to speak, culturally foreign but politically Chinese. In due time they became culturally Chinese as well. And following them came the true exotics.

The importation of food (which was handled in the same way as drugs) was under strict government supervision. Each foreigner who entered the frontier had the wrapping or box of his "gift" of medicine or victuals sealed and stamped by the competent magistrate at the frontier post, the contents being described plainly for the information of court officials or market authorities, to aid in fixing their value.[14] The best of these exotic delicacies were turned into viands for the imperial tables under the supervision of a dignitary styled the "Provost of Foods" (*shang shih*). Assisted by eight dieticians and sixteen butlers, he provided the necessaries for the feasts and fasts of the Son of Heaven in strict accordance with seasonal taboos, and meals of appropriate character for state banquets, informal entertainments, and the like:

> When he submits the food, he is obliged first to taste it. He must discriminate the names and quantities of all the sweets and nutriments, rarities and oddities, submitted by the several *chou* ("island-provinces") of the Subcelestial Realm, and prudently conserve and supply them.[15]

As the knowledge of these rarities spread outwards from the palace, the taste for them grew in town and city, and the commerce in them increased. Let us look at some of them.

Grapes and Grape Wine

The Chinese, like the other peoples of the earth, had, since they first brought cereals under cultivation, been familiar with the fermented drinks extractable from them—beer comes with bread. They had their beers (or "wines," as we like to call them) of millet and rice and barley, plain drinks for daily use; they had fruit drinks, and kumiss of fermented mare's milk;[16] they had delicacies like ginger wine and mead,[17] and several kinds of perfumed hippocras, dedicated to the gods. Some of these ancient brews were still made in T'ang; some were long obsolete. But in the main rice had become the staple source of alcohol.

By reputation, at least, a variety of exotic beverages were known: it was reported that the Chams made a wine of betel sap;[18] a toddy was made in Kalinga from juice extracted from the coconut flower;[19] the Tanguts brewed a beer of rice, which they had to import for the purpose.[20] But there is no evidence that any of the cheering foreign liquids were drunk in China, with the sole exception of the grape wines of the West.

Chang Ch'ien, the heroic traveler of early Han times, introduced grape seeds to China, where they were planted in the capital and the fruit grown on a small scale for eating purposes.[21] According to one T'ang tradition, these were of three kinds, yellow, white, and black.[22] They were reported to have been doing well in the vicinity of Tun-huang in the fifth century.[23] But grapes were not an important crop, and the wine made from them remained a rare and exotic drink.

So it was until the beginning of the rule of T'ang, when suddenly, as a result of rapid T'ang expansion into the Iranian and Turkish lands of the West, grapes and grape wine alike became well known in China. Even then, the fruit retained spiritual affinities with the West: clusters of grapes had been used as exotic decorative motifs in polychrome damasks for centuries, and "Hellenistic" grape patterns on the backs of T'ang mirrors are familiar to everyone.[24] Moreover, the Romans, the Arabs, and the Uighur Turks of Serindia were all known as great grape growers and drinkers of wine.[25] But after the T'ang conquest of Serindia, some of the exotic flavor of the grape and its juice was lost, like that of the "semi-exotic" almonds and betel nuts. Quite a variety of the products of the grape were demanded from Qočo by way of annual tribute to the great court at Ch'ang-an: "dried," "crinkled," and "parched" were three distinct varieties of raisins; a sirup was also imported, and, of course, wine.[26]

But most important of all, a new wine-making grape was introduced to China, and with it, knowledge of the art of making grape wine, and the foundation of a new industry. This was the famous "mare teat" grape. Our first dated reference to this variety tells of a gift from the Turkish Yabghu, who sent a bunch of these long purple grapes to the emperor in the spring of 647.[27] The name indicates their elongated shape, as distinguished, for instance, from a spherical variety called "dragon beads (or pearls)."[28] It has an imagistic parallel in one of the five poems describing vividly the more bewitching parts of a woman's body, written by the Ch'ang-an courtesan Chao Luan-luan; the five are "Cloudy Chignons," "Willow Brows," "Sandal Mouth," "Cambric Fingers," and "Creamy Breasts." In the last of these, the nipples appear under the metaphor "purple grapes," but respectful courtesy demands that we see in some other kind of grape the original underlying the tasty image, smaller and better proportioned than the "mare teat."[29]

Cuttings of the Western "mare teat" grapevine were brought to China after the conquest of Qočo in 640, though the exact date of the introduction is unknown.

They were successfully planted in the imperial park,[30] and we may presumably discern their progeny in the two "Grape Gardens" in the Tabooed Park at Ch'ang-an, toward the end of the seventh century.[31] In due course they spread beyond the holy premises, so that we find them in a poem of Han Yü, who reproaches the owner of a dilapidated vineyard:

> The new twigs aren't yet everywhere—half are still withered;
> The tall trellis is dismembered—here overturned, there uplifted.
> If you want a full dish, heaped with "mare teats,"
> Don't decline to add some bamboos, and insert some "dragon beard."[32]

We do not know where this vineyard was, but vines were extensively grown in arid Kansu, and we shall tell presently of the wines of Western Liang in that province. The other paramount grape-producing region of T'ang China was the T'ai-yüan district of northern Shansi, "where charmers of Yen offer goblets of grape."[33] Local varieties were developed in these much-praised vineyards; in addition to wine grapes, we read of a large edible grape of Ho-tung (Shansi) in the tenth century, so delicate that it became worthless when transported to the capital.[34]

Grapes were sufficiently well known in the seventh century to deserve the published opinions of professional dieticians: Meng Shen avowed that eating too many produced symptoms of anxiety and darkened the eyes, though grape juice was useful in lowering a fetus which was pressing against the heart.[35]

But grapes were still not quite familiar fruits. Even in the eighth century, when they were well established in Chinese soil, Tu Fu could employ them in a series of images of a strange, non-Chinese country, pairing "grapes ripening" with "alfalfa abounding" (both rather classical figures, as both had been introduced by Chang Ch'ien in the second century B.C.); these were matched in turn with "Tibetan women" and "Western lads."[36] Probably Tu Fu was writing of some frontier town like Liang-*chou*. And indeed the wine of Liang-*chou* (an exotic enclave in T'ang, like Chinatown in San Francisco) was regarded as a fine, rare drink with glamourous associations. Even in Tun-huang, however, further out on the camel road, grape wine was an expensive addition to an important celebration, like champagne for our festivals.[37] The unofficial life of Yang the Precious Consort shows her drinking grape wine, the gift of the town of Liang-*chou*, from a glass cup decorated with "the Seven Gems."[38] A cup of this admirable wine was given to the emperor Mu Tsung early in the ninth century, and he remarked of it, "When I drink this, I am instantly conscious of harmony suffusing my four limbs—it is the true 'Princeling of Grand Tranquillity'!"[39] The title is suggestive of the honorific name of Lao Tzu, and also seems to echo the Greek notion that wine is a god.

The admiration for the wines of the West had a respectable history: some were imported during the Han-T'ang interval,[40] and the old encyclopedia, *Po wu chih*, which is full of third- or fourth-century wonders, says:

The Western Regions possess a grape wine which is not spoiled by the accumulation of years. A popular tradition among them states that it is drinkable up to ten years, but if you drink it then, you will be drunk for the fullness of a month, and only then be relieved of it.[41]

In T'ang times there was the strange wine made from the myrobalans of Persia, available in the taverns of Ch'ang-an; [42] the "dragon fat" wine, as black as lacquer, brought from Alexandria(!) at the beginning of the ninth century,[43] was, however, probably a product of the fertile mind of the romancer Su O. Grape wine, made in the Iranian fashion, undoubtedly came from Chāch in the eighth century,[44] when grape wine technology was already established in China.

When the king of Qočo, along with such other trophies as his best musicians, was brought captive before T'ai Tsung early in 641, a three-day drinking holiday —a kind of public bacchanal—was declared in the capital.[45] The character of the celebration was well adapted to the occasion, for it was from the new dependency of Qočo, renamed "Island-Province of the West" (Hsi-*chou*), that the art of making grape wine was introduced to T'ang and the eight "colors" (varieties) of this highly pungent and aromatic beverage became known to the people of north China.[46] The "mare teat" grapes seem to have been important to the new industry, and the manufacture of wine was an appendage of the vineyards of T'ai-yüan, which submitted quantities of the delicious drink annually to the imperial court.[47] The high repute of the wines of T'ai-yüan, made from "mare teat" grapes, appears in a poem of Liu Yü-hsi, charmingly rendered into English by Theos. Sampson in 1869 as "The Song of the Grape." The "men of Tsin" are the men of the T'ai-yüan region in Shansi.

The grape vine from untrodden lands,
Its branches gnarled in tangled bands,
Was brought the garden to adorn
With verdure bright; now, upward borne,
The branches climb with rapid stride,
In graceful curves, diverging wide;
Here spread and twin, there languid fall,
Now reach the summit of the wall;
And then with verdure green and bright,
Enchanting the beholder's sight,
Beyond the mansion's roof they strive,
As though with conscious will alive.
And now the vine is planted out,
It climbs the wooden frame about,
The lattice shades with tender green,
And forms a pleasant terrace screen.
With dregs of rice well soak the roots,
And moisten all its leafy shoots,
The flowers like silken fringe will blow,
And fruit like clustered pearls hang low.
On "mare's milk" grapes the hoarfrost gleams,
Shine "dragon scales" like morning beams.
Once hither came a traveling guest;
Amazed his host he thus addressed,
As strolling round he chanced to see
The fruit upon th' o'er-hanging tree:
We men of Tsin, such grapes so fair,
Do cultivate as gems most rare;
Of these delicious wine we make,
For which men ne'er their thirst can slake.
Take but a measure of this wine,
And Liang-chow's rule is surely thine.[48]

The new art of making grape wine was even transferred to a small wild Chinese grape, which has purplish black fruit and still grows in Shantung. Its name is *ying-yü*. The herbals of T'ang tell of a wine made of this fruit, just like that from the exotic grapes of Kansu and Shansi.[49] It may be that these very grapes are the ones of which Tuan Ch'eng-shih tells in an anecdote about "Grape Valley" (but he uses the imported word for "grape"). The valley was apparently in Shantung; [50] there the fruit could be picked freely, but the eater was likely to lose his way. The fruits were known as "grapes of the Royal Mother," linking them with the fruits of immortality on the world mountain. In the middle of the eighth century, a certain Buddhist monk, who had converted a piece of this vine into a temporary staff, planted it at his temple, where it flourished mightily and produced an arbor studded with purple fruits, which was called "Canopy of the Vegetable Dragon Pearls." [51]

Myrobalans

In 746 a joint mission from the Turgäch, Chāch, Kish, Māimargh, and Kapiśa brought to the T'ang court, among other valuables, an offering of emblic myrobalans.[52] More usually, however, these fruits were imported by the sea routes of the South, especially on Persian ships.[53]

The three classical myrobalans of India were collectively called *triphalā*, the "Three Fruits," in Sanskrit; [54] in Chinese they were named the "Three Fruits" and also the "Three **-raḳs*," **-raḳ* being the final syllable of each of their names in the Tocharian tongue,[55] an important Indo-European language of Central Asia; it was from this direction, it seems, that the Chinese obtained their names. The three are "emblic myrobalans," Sanskrit *āmalaḳī;* [56] "belleric myrobalans," Sanskrit *vibhītaḳī;* and "chebulic myrobalans," Sanskrit *harītaḳī*.[57]

To these three astringent fruits the Indians and Tibetans, and other peoples under Indian influence, ascribed the most wonderful properties. A Tibetan text describes them collectively as an elixir of life, and says of the chebulic myrobalan, which grows on the Perfumed Mount of the God Indra, and is everywhere the one

most extravagantly admired,[58] that ". . . when ripe, it has six tastes, eight efficacies, leaves three (tastes) upon digestion, accomplishes the seventeen qualities, and dispels all varieties of illness." [59] The belleric kind, however, is in India thought to be inhabited by demons; but all have genuine worth in tanning and in medicine, especially as purgatives when ripe, and as astringents when unripe.[60]

The pharmacologists of T'ang, especially the official reviser of the pharmacopoeia, Su Kung, state that all three of these important drug plants grew in Annam, then under Chinese control, and that the emblic and belleric, at least, also grew in Lingnan.[61] The Sung pharmacologist, Su Sung, states that in his time, the eleventh century, the chebulic myrobalan also grew in south China, especially around Canton.[62] It seems likely, however, that, though the classical "Three Fruits" were imported by Indian ships on the Persia run, other species, peculiar to Indochina and possessing the same essential properties, were imported from close at hand. But perhaps we must accept the identifications of the learned Su Kung, and concede that the three fruits were also cultivated in the environs of the great southern port. The sea-roving monk, Chien-chen, also tells that he saw a *harītaḳī* tree, with fruits like large jujubes, at the Buddhist office-temple of the Great Cloud at Canton,[63] and it may be that he was right in his identification. But it seems likely that related species from closer at hand were often confused with them, both preserved fruit and transplanted tree.

Whatever their source, the natural properties of the fruits, and the complex of beliefs about them, brought from India with Buddhist civilization, made them important in Chinese medicine. We are not surprised to find them, much shriveled, among the medicinal treasures preserved from the eighth century in the Shōsōin in Nara.[64] The emblic myrobalan will blacken the hair, wrote Chen Ch'üan, a doctor of the early seventh century; [65] this was clear evidence of its youth-restoring properties. Foreigners make a hot liquor of the peachlike fruit of the belleric myrobalan, wrote the eminent Su Kung; [66] this may refer to a drink, apparently alcoholic since it was classified as a "wine," which enjoyed some popularity in northern China; the art of making it was said to have been learned from the Persians.[67] "Astringent gaffer" was a playful name given to the chebulic myrobalan early in the tenth century [68]—"gaffer" must refer to the wrinkled skin of the commercial product. Perhaps the name was an allusion to ripe old age; the eighth-century poet Pao Chi, when he was taken ill, received merely the leaf of the tree which bears that fruit as a gift from a sympathetic friend, and wrote a set of extravagant verses praising its divine qualities, "age- and ill-dispelling." [69]

Vegetables

A number of vegetables, leafy and otherwise, were introduced into China in the

of a number of rare transplants sent in 647 by the king of Nepal—known to the men of T'ang as a cold country inhabited by perfidious men.[70] The plant seems ultimately to have been of Persian origin, and indeed was called by the Taoists "Persian herb," as a kind of cabalistic name, though this may not have been until after T'ang.[71] The Taoists do seem to have taken a special interest in this novelty, for Meng Shen, the specialist on dietary problems, says of it that ". . . it releases the poisons of wine, and men who dose themselves with cinnabar stone do very well to eat it." [72] That is to say, Taoist adepts who try to make themselves immortal by taking cinnabar elixirs may counteract the unpleasant effects of ingesting a mercury compound by eating spinach. In any case, say the histories, the taste of spinach is improved by cooking.[73] The name given the new vegetable by the Chinese seems to register a foreign name like **palinga,* and pseudo-Kuo T'o-t'o's *Book of Planting Trees* says that this is the name of a country.[74]

Then there was the kohlrabi, a kind of cabbage, which Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i calls both "sweet indigo" and "indigo from Western lands," having observed something about the broad leaves which reminded him of the Chinese indigo plant. He recommends it as a general tonic.[75] Kohlrabi is ultimately a European plant, and clearly came to China by way of the Serindians, the Tibetans, and the Kansu corridor.[76]

Among the new plants sent from Nepal in the seventh century were a white plant "like the onion" (possibly a leek or shallot),[77] a "bitter leaf vegetable" resembling lettuce,[78] another broad-leafed vegetable called "vinegar leaf vegetable," [79] and an aromatic "Western celery." [80] None of these are really Nepalese plants; all were evidently fancy exotics passed on by the king of Nepal to his distant cousin of T'ang.

The "rattan worth a thousand metal-pieces" brought by the composite mission from the Turgäch and others in 746 is a mystery now—Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i tells of a number of Chinese plants known by the same complimentary name.[81]

A modern scholar thinks that the sugar beet, under a Persian name, may have been introduced to China during T'ang, ". . . perhaps by the Arabs." [82]

None of this practical greenery was noticed by the poets.

Delicacies

The large, sweet, and aromatic seeds of the Korean pine,[83] called "sea pine seeds," or "Silla pine seeds," were imported, peeled, and eaten.[84]

The pistachio, a favorite nut in Sogdiana, Khurāsān, and Persia, where several species grow, was also imported and, from about the ninth century, was grown in Lingnan.[85] It was styled "hazelnut of the Westerners" by the men of T'ang,[86] though strange-sounding Iranian names for it were sometimes heard. It was not only tasty but was reputed to increase sexual vigor, and the glow of health generally.[87]

like a proper walnut; it was sometimes styled "seed of the rattan from among the *Man*." [88] The true walnut was called "peach of the Westerners."

The olive was known in China, at least by reputation, under the Persian name *zeitun*, as a fruit of Persia and Rome, where it yielded a useful cooking oil,[89] but there is no proof that either fruit or oil was ever brought to T'ang. The so-called "Chinese olive" is, of course, no olive at all, but the fruit of two native trees; [90] the sap of one of them (*Canarium pimela*) yields a black brea or elemi, which was used in varnishes and for calking ships.

From Sumatra came an aromatic and acrid kind of seed, apparently the dill.[91] It was known in T'ang by the name *jila*, which is either Sanskrit *jīra* or Middle Persian *žīra*.[92] Indeed, Li Hsün the pharmacologist quotes an old book which says that it came from Persia, but this was often said of things formerly brought in Persian ships. Li Hsün reported that dill seeds were wonderfully stimulating to the taste, but that ". . . they should not be eaten at the same time as asafetida, for they will rob it of its flavor." [93]

The chieftain of the Tsang-ko tribe in what is now Kweichow, then a mountainous wilderness, sent a gift of pickled meat.[94] Lacking further information about it, I have optimistically included it here among the "delicacies."

Seafoods

The striped mullet,[95] which lived both in rivers and seas and is a favorite food of the otter, was well known to and liked by the medieval Chinese. In T'ang times it was netted off the coast,[96] but it must be counted also among the exotic foods of T'ang, since the P'o-hai Mo-ho sent envoys from Manchuria in 729 with a gift of this fish for the emperor.[97] The Chinese of the south made from the striped mullet a kind of sauce or relish which had the curious name of "leaping fish sauce" (*t'iao t'ing*). The salted fish were "touched with vinegar and dipped in wine," which gave the preparation a delicious taste. One explanation given for the name was that the mullets traveled in enormous shoals, ". . . like clouds in battle array," so that it was not necessary to put out the nets, for the fish leaped into the fishing boats in great numbers, even endangering them with their weight.[98]

Some years later, the same Manchurian fisherfolk sent a hundred dried "striped fish." [99] The name has a mythological ring to it: it appears in the *Li Sao*, the great epic of the soul in flight: "Riding the white turtle, ah! chasing the striped fish!" We find it again early in the third century of our era, in Ts'ao Chih's "Rhapsody on the Goddess of the Lo":

> There is prancing of striped fish to warn that she rides by,
> There is calling of jade simurghs as they go away together.

(The "jade simurghs" are harness bells.) But a connection between these classical swimmers and the anonymous preserved fish from the Northeastern barbarians can be shown only in fancy.

Finally, the medicine men, at any rate, knew of and could probably obtain a kind of Korean bivalve mollusk from Silla, where it was an article of diet. Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i recommends a soup made of these and the edible laver called *kompo* [100] as a remedy for "knotted-up breath." [101] This is undoubtedly a Korean recipe, but we do not know whether it was eaten except on the advice of a physician. The name of the shell is **tâm-lâ*, which is evidently the old name of Quelpart Island, or Cheju, that is, *Tamna*.[102] The island is famous for its shellfish, and the Chinese have plainly transferred the name of the place of origin to the tasty mollusk itself.

Condiments

Before the Chinese had pepper they had their own pungent condiment, fagara.[103] Various kinds of fagara take the place of true pepper in India, China, and Japan, where the fruit wall, sometimes along with the seed, is used both in cookery and in medicine.[104] "Fagara of Ch'in," [105] the variety used in antiquity, had a number of applications in medieval medicine. It could, for instance, help delayed menstruation, cure certain dysenteries, and grow hair; [106] Tuan Ch'eng-shih says that it also had the rather peculiar virtue of attracting quicksilver, but how this was put to use is not stated [107]—perhaps it was a mineral prospector's indicator. Closely allied to it was "fagara of Shu," the Szechwanese fagara, which grew as far north as the Ch'in-ling, south of the capital, but one authority states that the best of this kind was brought in from the "Western Regions." [108]

This familiar seasoning, like other aromatic herbs, was added to sacrificial wines and meats, both to preserve them and to make them attractive to the gods.[109] In particular, a nectar spiced with fagara was an ancient and medieval libation appropriate to the rites of the New Year.[110] But drinks and dishes seasoned with fagara and other aromatics were gradually secularized, and went from the altars of the gods to aristocratic tables,[111] and even to quite ordinary tables. It is reported that the emperor Te Tsung (late in the eighth century) used curds and fagara in his tea,[112] and the mysterious Buddhist poet Han-shan (also of the eighth century), describing with scorn the viands on a selfish gourmand's table, writes of

> Steamed shoats dipped in garlic sauce,
> Roast duck tinctured with fagara and salt.[113]

This makes good sense to us, attuned as we are to pepper and salt together. The combination may have been especially characteristic of southern cooking then, anticipating the rich preparations we now recognize as "Cantonese." Han Yü, poetizing on his first introduction to the southern cuisine, wrote:

Coming here I fended off goblins,
So it's right that I taste southern cookery—
Blended with saline and sour,
Mixed with fagara and oranges.[114]

Pepper did not come as a complete novelty, then, but as an exotic and probably expensive substitute for fagara. Indeed, the name created for it emphasized its proxy status: "fagara of the Westerners."[115] At the same time, just as "fagara of Shu" (as opposed to the homely old fagara of Ch'in) was regarded as an excellent variety, so *"hu* fagara" was even better—but all were used for the same purposes. But the new variety probably brought new dishes with it; we read, for instance, of the pepper ". . . which comes from the country of Magadha, where they call it *maricha*[116] . . . the seeds are shaped like those of the fagara of Han, but it is acrid and pungent in the extreme. It is gathered in the sixth month. Men of our time always use it when they make 'Western plate' meat dishes."[117] Foreign recipes demanded foreign spices.

Black pepper is prepared from the berry spikes of *Piper nigrum* ". . . piled into heaps for fermentation, during which they turn black, and are then spread on mats to dry." White pepper is made from the same berries, the largest and best being soaked in water until the outer surface sloughs off.[118] The pepper plant is native to Burma and Assam, and has been introduced into India, Indochina, and Indonesia,[119] and from India into Persia, whence Persian ships carried it, along with sandal and drugs, to all parts of medieval Asia.[120] The T'ang pharmacopoeia says simply that it grows among the Western *Jung,*[121] that is, among the barbarians, but we have already noticed that it had an especial association with Magadha, and indeed "Magadha" is an epithet of "pepper" in Sanskrit,[122] and we must suppose that the region was a great center of production. The immense value of pepper in late medieval and early modern times, bringing wealth to the merchants who monopolized its trade, is now a familiar fact of history. But the spice appears to have been very costly in the eighth century too, for when the confiscated property of the disgraced minister Yüan Tsai was registered in 777, it was found that he possessed, among other rich goods (such as five hundred ounces of stalactite, a powerful medicine), one hundred piculs of true pepper—a tremendous quantity, and evident index of his riches.[123]

In the main, the medicinal value of pepper, once nearly as important as its worth as a condiment, depends on its irritant action, which stimulates secretion in the intestines, and so helps digestion.[124] Meng Shen recommends taking it in pure wine for "coldness and pains in heart and belly."[125] But it had its drawbacks too, for, writes another expert, ". . . if eaten in quantity it damages the lungs, and makes people spit blood."[126]

The Chinese of T'ang also knew another pepper, "long pepper."[127] They called it by its Sanskrit name *pippali*[128] or, more commonly, shortened this to *pippal* (mispronounced *pitpat* or *pippat*). Our word "pepper," of course, comes from the same source.[129] Long pepper spread through southern Asia even before ordinary black pepper,[130] and in Rome of Pliny's time it was more valuable than black pepper.[131] Tuan Ch'eng-shih tells us that it grew in Magadha, like black pepper,[132] but Su Kung calls it a product of Persia, because of its importance in the "Persia clipper" trade. He adds that ". . . the Westerners bring it to us; we use it, for its flavor, to put in food."[133] It seems not to have been planted in China during T'ang, and does not appear in T'ang poetry, but it was grown in Lingnan in the eleventh century,[134] and the great Sung poet Su Shih mentions it frequently because of its aroma. In fact, long pepper is even more fiery than betel pepper, which it resembles, and in consequence was regarded as a more potent drug than the other peppers. It was prescribed as a tonic for loins and legs, as a digestive aid, to abolish coldness in the stomach, and so forth.[135] After T'ai Tsung himself, suffering from an intestinal affliction, had tried the recipes of his doctors in vain, a concoction of long pepper simmered in milk, suggested by an officer of his guards, proved efficacious.[136]

The leaves of the betel pepper[137] are widely chewed in Southeast Asia, normally along with a slice of the nut of the betel palm,[138] as a mild stimulant and a sweetener of the breath. The commercial product was sometimes called "betel sauce" in T'ang, referring to the way it was prepared in Lingnan, where betel-chewing was an ancient custom;[139] but sometimes it was called "earth *pippala.*"[140] It was taken as a condiment in wine and in food, and was also prescribed for stomach disorders, like the other peppers.[141] Su Kung states that it also grew in Szechwan, and that foreigners from Western countries sometimes brought it in.[142]

Another pepper known to the men of T'ang was the cubeb,[143] a native of the Indies. In T'ang times it was brought from Śrivijaya,[144] and it was in Indonesia that the medieval Arab traders obtained it; in India it came to be called *ḳabab chini,* that is, "Chinese cubeb," possibly because the Chinese had a hand in the trade,[145] but more likely because it was important in the "China trade," vaguely so-called. Cubebs were also used as a spice in early medieval Europe.[146] In China this pepper was called both *vilenga* (apparently the name of an adulterant of black pepper in an Indic dialect, transferred to this Malayan plant)[147] and *viḍaṅga,* the cognate Sanskrit word. Li Hsün thought it grew on the same tree as black pepper.[148] In any event, the physicians of T'ang administered it to restore the appetite, to cure "demon vapors," to darken the hair, and to perfume the body.[149] There is no evidence of its use as a condiment, but I include it here to keep it with the other peppers.

The Chinese have a native mustard,[150] but in T'ang times a Western species of this plant, which is closely related to the cabbage and turnip, was brought in by foreign traders. This was "white mustard,"[151] which they called by that name, and also "mustard of the Westerners."[152] It is a native of the Mediterranean world, but

was being grown in Shansi by the eighth century.[153] The large, very pungent white grains were given in warm wine for respiratory disorders,[154] but, as with cubebs, their role in cookery is unknown.

Sugar

Sweets were very popular in T'ang times, and honey was commonly used to make them. Southern Shensi produced honeyed bamboo shoots,[155] and honeyed ginger was made in both Yang-*chou* and Hang-*chou* near the mouth of the Yangtze.[156] A honey-water potion, taken over a long period of time, was thought to impart an admirable rosy glow to the face.[157] Yet, despite its antiquity and familiarity in China, a superior kind of honey was imported from the Tibetan peoples.[158]

Cereals were another familiar source of sugar in China. Such grains as glutinous millet and rice provided the ancients with tasty sirups and confections, and "barley sugar" was made at least as early as the second century B.C.[159] By T'ang times these must have seemed rather tasteless, inferior products, since they are not mentioned in the tribute lists. An important reason for this was that the juice and crystals extracted from the sugar cane had long since been introduced to the Chinese, and welcomed.

Cane sugar is the most widely popular of all plant sugars, although the extract of the sugar beet, sorghum, and palmyra have their many devotees. Innumerable races of the sugar cane grow in tropical Asia and Oceania. From this vast region the plant was transmitted westward, reaching Persia, it seems, by the fifth century, Egypt by the seventh, and Spain by the eighth.[160] Sugar could be extracted from the cane in several ways. The simplest way was to chew it, or to crush it to make a pleasant drink. On a more sophisticated level, the juice could be boiled down to make a solid substance, suitable for sweetening foods. Finally, impurities could be removed by a refining process, to prevent deterioration.[161] Each of these three stages is represented in Chinese cultural history.

Sugar cane was known to the people of late Chou and Han as a product of the warmer parts of the South, especially of Annam.[162] The "sugar liquor" mentioned by Szu-ma Hsiang-ju may even refer to a drink fermented from it by the southerners. At any rate, the Chinese liked the juice, and in time learned to grow the plant, so that by T'ang times it was growing well in central Szechwan, northern Hupeh, and coastal Chekiang.[163] Even so, it was not an everyday sort of plant, and stalks of sugar cane remained costly in the north. This was so even as late as the eighth century; we may read how Tai Tsung gave twenty sticks of sugar cane to a subject as a rare and wonderful gift.[164] Moreover, the sugar cane was one of the many natural things, like the peacock and lotus, which were involved in complicated imagery surrounding the Buddha: Shakyamuni was surnamed *Iksvāku*, "sugar cane," since one

of his ancestors was said to have been born from that plant,[165] and Wei Kao, conqueror of the Tibeto-Burman tribes on the Burmese frontier, sent to the court of T'ang, along with other dances of Nan-chao, one called "King of the Sugar Cane," ". . . which means that the instruction of the people by the Buddha is like the sugar cane in its sweetness, and all rejoice in its flavor."[166]

One form in which sugar was prepared for everyday consumption was as little cakes or loaves which passed under the name of "stone honey." These were made in Tongking as early as the third century from sugar produced by drying the juice of the cane in the sun.[167] Sometimes these were shaped into little men, tigers, elephants, and the like. The "lion sugars" of Later Han are an example of these sweet figurines,[168] but it is not certain that the sugar in them came from the Southern cane. In T'ang times this "stone sugar" was manufactured in several towns; sugar cakes destined for the imperial tables came from Lu-*chou* in southeastern Shansi, which sent them northward, along with ginseng, linen, and ink;[169] they also came from Yüeh-*chou* in northern Chekiang, along with cinnabar, porcelain, and damasks,[170] and from Yung-*chou* in southern Hunan, along with kudzu, arrow shafts, and interesting fossils.[171]

Though the source of sugar in these preparations differed from place to place, milk was a constant ingredient. A good, lasting variety was made near the capital from white honey and milk curds;[172] in some places it was prepared by boiling rice powder in carabao milk, which produced a hard, heavy cake;[173] but the finest and whitest was made from sugar cane and milk, a process employed exclusively in Szechwan and among the "Persians."[174] These "Persians" must have been east Iranians generally, since there were gifts of "stone honey" to the emperor from Bukhāra and Khwārizm in the eighth century.[175] Samarkand had it too, for we read of that place:

> The people are addicted to wine, and like to sing and dance in the streets. Their king has a hat of felt, decorated with gold and various jewels. The women have coiled chignons, which they cover with a black kerchief sewed with gold foil. When one bears a child, she feeds it with stone honey, and places glue in its palm, desiring that it speak sweetly when grown up.[176]

The superior quality of the "stone honey" from the Far West induced T'ai Tsung to send envoys to Magadha to learn its secret, which seemed to depend on a superior ingredient. The art was accordingly imparted to the sugarmakers of Yang-*chou*. They prepared a sugar by boiling the juice of the cane, which ". . . was in color and taste far beyond that which was produced in the Western Regions."[177] It was called *sha t'ang*, "sandy (or granular) sugar."[178] This seems to have been no more than a rather good "brown sugar," granular, but not truly refined. Sugar cakes made of unrefined sugar contain much else besides sucrose, and will decompose into a sticky mess fairly soon.[179] A pure, white, crystalline sugar must be made by repeatedly and efficiently removing the scum from the boiling liquid. It does not

seem that this was done in T'ang times, even by the methods imported from Magadha.[180] Refined crystalline sugar was called in Chinese *t'ang shuang*, "sugar frost," and seems to have been a development of Sung times.[181] But tradition tells that one man knew the method in T'ang, and he may well have been the father of the Sung refining industry. In the sixties or seventies of the eighth century, a certain monk named Tsou came to live on Umbrella Mountain, just north of the town of Hsiao-ch'i ("Little Torrent") in central Szechwan. He knew the art of making "sugar frost" and passed it on to a farmer named Huang; in time there were many sugar refiners operating by the cane fields about the mountain.[182]

Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness
like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all powders of the merchant?

Song of Solomon 3:6

x=Aromatics

Incense and Braziers

It is worth saying again that in the medieval world of the Far East there was little clear-cut distinction among drugs, spices, perfumes, and incenses—that is, among substances which nourish the body and those which nourish the spirit, those which attract a lover and those which attract a divinity. In this chapter we are concerned with those substances whose most important feature was their odor, whether this appealed primarily to man or to god. In T'ang, a man or woman of the upper classes lived in clouds of incense and mists of perfume. The body was perfumed, the bath was scented, the costume was hung with sachets. The home was sweet-smelling, the office was fragrant, the temple was redolent of a thousand sweet-smelling balms and essences.[1] The ideal and imaginative counterparts of this elegant world were the fairylands, paradises, and wonder-worlds of folk tale and poetry, especially those inspired by Taoism (but Buddhist legend is richly perfumed too). These dreamlands are always revealed suffused with marvelous odors, which were conceived as a kind of sustenance of the soul, and therefore uplifting and purifying in their effects, and making for the spiritualization of life and the expansion of the higher faculties.

The holy atmosphere which invested the rites of the Confucian cult was accordingly strengthened by the liberal use of odoriferous gums and resins and of compound perfumes. The center of the cult was the "emperor," that is (more rightly considered), the divine king, nexus of the spiritual forces emanating from Heaven, and responsible for the well-being of all creatures. An illustration: in 775, a certain