Title:
Golden Peaches of Samarkand

The Golden Peaches of Samarkand

A STUDY OF T'ANG EXOTICS

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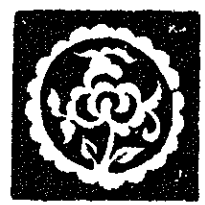
Your riches, your wares, your merchandise,
Your mariners and your pilots . . .
When your wares came from the seas,
You satisfied many peoples;
With your abundant wealth and merchandise
You enriched the kings of the earth.

Ezekiel 27:27–33

1 The Glory of T'ang



Historical Matters

THE TALE is of the T'ang empire, ruled by dynasts of the Li family, famous throughout Asia in the Middle Ages, and still famous retrospectively in the Far East. Let us look at it hurriedly. The three centuries of the empire's formal existence were not all alike: we must distinguish them somehow, and fashion a chronological skeleton on which to hang the flesh of our story, acknowledging readily that the framework is arbitrary, taking too much account of what is radically changed, and too little of what remains the same, or is changed only subtly. Fortunately, since we care chiefly about commerce and the arts, we can make easy divisions, roughly according to century. These fit the facts not too badly.

The seventh century was the century of conquest and settlement. First the Li family subverted the Chinese state of Sui and destroyed equally ambitious rivals, then subjugated the Eastern Turks in what is now Mongolia, the kingdoms of Koguryŏ and Paekche in what are now Manchuria and Korea, and finally the Western Turks, suzerains of the ancient city-states of Serindia, that is, of Chinese Turkestan.[1] Chinese garrisons in these regions made possible the steady flow of their men and goods onto the sacred soil. For the most part it was a century of low prices and of economic stabilization, made possible by the distribution of plots of farm land to the peasants and by the institution of a firm new tax system, the famous triple

system of grain tax paid by each adult male, family tax in silk cloth or in linen woven by the women of the household (with a portion of silk floss or hemp), and *corvée,* a period of service at public works, again by the men of the family.[2] It was an age of movement, when settlers migrated in great numbers into what are now central and south China, as lands of new opportunity and possible fortune—but also to escape conscription, floods, and barbarian invasions in these underdeveloped areas.[3] It was an age of social change, in which the new provincial gentlemen from the south were established in positions of political power *via* the official examination system, at the expense of the old aristocracy of the north with its traditional ties to Turkish culture. This revolution reached its climax with the reign of the Empress Wu and her transitory empire of Chou in the last decades of the seventh century.[4] It was an age when Indian culture made great inroads, when Buddhist philosophy, accompanied by the Indian arts of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and philology, permeated the higher levels of Chinese life. It was an age, finally, when a taste for all sorts of foreign luxuries and wonders began to spread from the court outward among city dwellers generally.

The eighth century includes the "Fullness of T'ang" of the literary critics (Tu Fu, Li Po, and Wang Wei), extending until about 765, and also most of "Middle T'ang," a period of slow recovery from many disasters, running until the second decade of the ninth century, and culminating in a real revival of literature (Han Yü, Po Chü-i, and Liu Tsung-yüan).[5] Great changes took place after mid-century, and truly the century can be divided into equal halves, the first climactic and magnificent, the second convalescent and eccentric. The first of these halves, the "Fullness of T'ang," corresponds to the glorious reign of Hsüan Tsung, a long epoch of wealth, safety, and low prices, when "there was no costly thing in the Subcelestial Realm,"[6] when one could ". . . visit Ching or Hsiang in the South, go to T'ai-yüan or Fan-yang in the North, or go to Szu-ch'uan or Liang-fu in the West, and everywhere there were shops and emporiums for supplying merchant travelers. Though they should go as far as several thousand *li,* they need not carry even an inch-long blade."[7] Mules and horses were available to travelers on these secure roads,[8] and an intricate system of canals devised to provide water transport for tax silks from the mouth of the Yangtze River to the capital was now so improved that it could also be used to bring luxury goods from foreign countries.[9] Fine highways and waterways fostered overseas trade, but so did a change in the taste of the young sovereign Hsüan Tsung, who, at the beginning of his reign had an immense pile of precious metals, stones, and fabrics burned on the palace grounds to signalize his contempt for such expensive trifles. But a few years later, seduced by the tales of wealth from abroad accumulating in Canton, the emperor began to relish expensive imports, and to watch jealously over the condition of foreign trade.[10] The old natural economy, under which pieces of taffeta were the normal measure of value and could be used for the purchase of anything from a camel to an acre of

land,[11] creaked and finally gave way, in 731, to an officially recognized money economy, the result of unprecedented prosperity, especially at commercial centers like Yang-*chou* and Canton.[12] Cash was the oil of commerce, and its acceptance was a boon to the rising merchant class. It was inevitable that the tax system of the seventh century should be superseded: in 780 the new "Double Tax" reform went into effect, replacing the taxes in kind and labor with a semiannual tax payable in cash. This change too was in response to the developing money economy, and the merchant class was vastly encouraged by it.[13] The new world of finance represented not only the heyday of businessmen and entrepreneurs but also the collapse of the independent farmers, and the disappearance of the little fields granted them at the foundation of the dynasty. Therefore, beyond its midpoint, the century was an age of landless men and hapless tenants replacing free farmers and set against wealthy landowners and great manors. This was the result of war, the *corvée,* and the weight of taxes.[14]

The reign of Hsüan Tsung had been a time of triumph for the new literary class, exemplified by the phenomenal career of the statesman Chang Chiu-ling, a native of the tropical south, an enemy of soldiers and aristocratic politicians, a friend of southerners and merchants. But in the same reign came the final triumph of the privileged classes, with the dictatorship of Li Lin-fu, supported by the monarch's hopes for a strong administration.[15] On his death, the dictator's client, Rokhshan "the Bright,"[16] encouraged by families of "pure" Chinese blood in Hopei, set himself against a new upstart government, and led his veterans from the northeastern frontier into the valley of the Yellow River, and the loot of the two capitals.[17] So the second half of the century was also an age of decline and death, and enormous reduction of population.[18] It was a century too of change on the frontiers: warriors of the new state of Nan-chao (later Yünnan Province) straddled the direct western route to Burma and India, and would not give up their independence. The Uighur Turks rose to power on the northwestern frontier in mid-century as haughty friends and rivals of the Chinese. In Manchuria the burgeoning race of Khitans (not a great menace for two centuries to come) sapped the strength of the Chinese garrisons. The Tibetans harassed the trade routes to the West, until put down by the great general Kao Hsien-chih, of Korean origin. But in 751 this hero saw his armies in turn dissolve under the onslaughts of the Abbāsid hosts by the Talas River. Then the Muslims took control in Central Asia, and indeed they began to appear in every quarter: Arab troops aided the government in the suppression of Rokhshan the Bright, and (contrariwise) Arab pirates were involved in the sack of Canton a few years later.[19] It was a century of tolerated foreign faiths, when Buddhists of every sort, Nestorians of Syrian origin, and Manichaeans of Uighur nationality performed their mysteries and chanted their prayers in their own holy places, protected by the government within the cities of China.

The cultural and economic resurrection following the harrying of the north

by the well-beloved Rokhshan lasted into the first two decades of the ninth century. That century begins, for our purposes, about 820, and ends with the obliteration of the dynasty in 917. The period of deflation following the promulgation of the Double Tax law was followed by an era of gradually rising prices, beginning in the third decade of this unhappy century. Natural calamities, such as droughts and plagues of locusts, along with disasters of human origin, led to a scarcity of essential goods and costly imports alike, and to universal suffering.[20] Most fatal of the human disasters of this century was the rebellion of Huang Ch'ao, who ravaged the whole country in the seventies and eighties, but was especially calamitous in his massacre of the foreign merchants in Canton in 879, thus doing serious injury to trade and cutting off the revenues derived from it.[21] It was an age of shrinking Chinese authority among erstwhile tributary and client states, and of the appearance of new rivals, such as the men of Nan-chao, invaders now of the ancient Chinese protectorate in Vietnam,[22] and the Kirghiz, conquerors of the powerful and sophisticated Uighurs. The decline of the Uighurs left their religion, Manichaeism, defenseless in China, and in 845 it suffered with Buddhism during the great persecution of foreign faiths, aimed at the secularization of the clerical classes for tax purposes, and at the conversion of a multitude of holy bronze images into copper coins.[23] These economic motives could only be effective in a generation of fear and attendant xenophobia.[24] It was also a century when the power of the state was fatally weakened by centrifugal forces. The headquarters of great provincial warlords became royal courts in miniature, and finally, in the tenth century, the house of Li and its great state of T'ang disappeared.

Foreigners in T'ang

Into this wonderful land, during these three kaleidoscopic centuries, came the natives of almost every nation of Asia, some curious, some ambitious, some mercenary, some because they were obliged to come. But the three most important kinds of visitors were the envoys, the clerics, and the merchants, representing the great interests of politicis, religion, and commerce. Greatest among the envoys was Pērōz, son of King Yazdgard III and scion of the Sāsānids, a poor client of the Chinese sovereign in the seventh century.[25] But there were many lesser emissaries, like him soliciting favors to the advantage of the dynasties, rising or declining, which they represented. There were Indian Buddhists in abundance, but also Persian priests of varying faith: the Magus for whom the Mazdean temple in Ch'ang-an was rebuilt in 631; the Nestorian honored by the erection of a church in 638; the Manichaean who proposed his outlandish doctrines to the court in 694.[26] Turkish princelings pondered the ways of gem dealers from Oman; Japanese pilgrims stared in wonder at Sogdian caravaneers. Indeed, hardly any imaginable combination of nationality

and profession was absent. All these travelers brought exotic wares into China, either as sovereign gifts or as salable goods, or simply as appendages to their persons. In return, some found glory there, as the Sogdian merchant who was designated Protector of Annam.[27] Some found riches, as the Jewish merchant of Oman who brought back a vase of black porcelain, gold-lidded, in it ". . . a golden fish, with ruby eyes, garnished with musk of the finest quality. The contents of the vase was worth fifty thousand *dinars*."[28] Some came, possibly more humbly, in search of wisdom, as did the aristocratic Tibetan youths sent by their fathers for reliable interpretations of the Chinese classics.[29]

Ships and Sea Routes

There were two ways to China: overland by caravan, overseas by argosy. Great ships plied the Indian Ocean and the China Seas, carrying eager Westerners to the glittering Orient. In the north, the art and trade of navigation was chiefly in the hands of the Koreans, especially after the destruction of the kingdoms of Paekche and Koguryŏ by Silla during the 660's. Then ambassadors, priests, and merchants from the victorious state, and refugees from the vanquished nations too, came in quantity.[30] The Korean vessels usually coasted around the northern edge of the Yellow Sea, and made port on the Shantung Peninsula. This was also the normal route of ships from Japan, setting sail from Hizen, at least until the end of the seventh century, when Japan and Silla became enemies.[31] In the eighth century the Japanese were forced to come across the open sea from Nagasaki, avoiding Silla, heading for the mouth of the Huai or of the Yangtze River or even for Hang-*chou* Bay.[32] But in the ninth century, to avoid these voyages, which had proved exceedingly dangerous, Japanese pilgrims and emissaries preferred to take better navigated Korean ships and come via Shantung to the mouth of the Huai, or even to risk Chinese ships, which made land further south in Chekiang and Fukien, instead of at Yang-*chou*.[33] Though the ships of Silla dominated these waters, merchant vessels of the Manchurian state of P'o-hai, culturally dependent on T'ang, also navigated them,[34] and there were government inns for the accommodation of the ambassadors of P'o-hai, as well as those of Silla, at Teng-*chou* in Shantung.[35] But the Koreans were in the majority; indeed, they formed a significant alien group on Chinese soil, living in large wards in the towns of Ch'u-*chou* and Lien-shui, on the system of canals between the Yangtze and the Yellow rivers, enjoying, like other foreigners, some extraterritorial rights.[36]

But most of China's overseas trade was through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, and it was governed by the periodic shifts of the monsoon. Ships outbound from Canton sailed before the northeast monsoon, leaving in late autumn or winter.[37] The northeast monsoon was also the wind of departure from the great

ports of the Persian Gulf, thousands of miles to the west of China, and even before the merchant vessels were leaving Canton, the ships of Islam were under way: if they left Basra or Sīrāf in September or October, they would be out of the Persian Gulf in time for the fair monsoon of winter to carry them across the Indian Ocean, and could expect to catch the stormy southwest monsoon in June to carry them northward from Malaya across the South China Sea to their destinations in south China. The rule, both east and west, was "southward in winter, northward in summer." [38]

From the seventh to the ninth century, the Indian Ocean was a safe and rich ocean, thronged with ships of every nationality. The Arabian Sea was protected by the power of Islam, and after the Abbāsid capital was moved from Damascus to Baghdad at the head of the Persian Gulf, the eastern trade flourished greatly.[39] Basra, an Arab city, was the port nearest to Baghdad, but it could not be reached by the largest ships. Below Basra, at the head of the Gulf, was Ubullah, an old port of the Persian Empire. But richest of all was Sīrāf, on the Persian side of the Gulf, below Shīrāz. This town owed all its prosperity to the Eastern trade, and it dominated the Gulf until destroyed by an earthquake in 977.[40] Its inhabitants were Persians in the main, but there were also Arab pearl divers, and merchant adventurers who came from Mesopotamia or from Oman to take ship for India and China.[41] The decline of Sīrāf was a disaster for the trade with the Far East, already reduced by the sack of Basra and Ubullah by revolted African slaves in the 870's.[42]

From these ports, then, the ships of many nations set sail, manned by Persian-speaking crews—for Persian was the *lingua franca* of the Southern Seas, as Sogdian was the *lingua franca* of the roads of Central Asia.[43] They stopped at Muscat in Oman, on the way out into the Indian Ocean; maybe they risked the coastal ports of Sind, haunted by pirates, or else proceeded directly to Malabar,[44] and thence to Ceylon, also called "Lion Country" and "Island of Rubies," where they purchased gems.[45] From here the route was eastward to the Nicobars, where they bartered, perhaps, with naked savages in canoes for coconuts or ambergris. Then they made land on the Malay Peninsula, in Kedah it is thought, whence they cruised the Strait of Malacca toward the lands of gold, Suvarnabhūmi, the fabulous Indies. Finally they turned north, impelled by the moist monsoon of summer, to trade for silk damasks in Hanoi or Canton, or even farther north.[46]

The sea-going merchantmen which thronged the ports of China in T'ang times were called by the Chinese, who were astonished at their size, "Argosies of the South Seas," "Argosies of the Western Regions," "Argosies of the *Man*-Barbarians," "Malayan Argosies," "Singhalese Argosies," "Brahman Argosies," and especially "Persian Argosies." [47] But it is by no means certain that *Chinese* vessels of this age made the long and hazardous voyage to Sīrāf. The great ocean-going ships of China appear some centuries later, in Sung, Yüan, and early Ming.[48] But in T'ang times, Chinese travelers to the West shipped in foreign bottoms. When the Arab writers of the ninth and tenth centuries tell of "Chinese vessels in the harbors

of the Persian Gulf, they mean "ships engaged in the China trade," as when we speak of "China clippers" and "East Indiamen"; the cinnamon and sandalwood of Indonesia were called "Chinese" by the Arabs and Persians because they were brought from lands near China, or possibly in Chinese vessels.[49] Similarly, the "Persian Argosies" of the Chinese books must often have been only "ships engaged in trade with the Persian Gulf," often with Malay or Tamil crews.[50]

Chinese sources say that the largest ships engaged in this rich trade came from Ceylon. They were 200 feet long, and carried six or seven hundred men. Many of them towed lifeboats, and were equipped with homing pigeons.[51] The dhows built in the Persian Gulf were smaller, lateen-rigged, with their hulls built carvel-fashion, that is, with the planks set edge to edge,[52] not nailed but sewed with coir, and waterproofed with whale oil, or with the Chinese brea which sets like black lacquer.[53]

Caravans and Land Routes

The wealth of the Oriental nations was brought by land too, from the North and East, from the Northwest, and from the Southwest, in carriage or on camel, by horse or by ass. The products of the peoples of Manchuria and Korea came through the forests and plains of Liao-yang, where Tungusic and proto-Mongolic tribes lived, and down the coast of the Gulf of P'o-hai to the critical spot where the Great Wall ends at a narrow passage between mountains and sea. Here was a township named "Black Dragon" (Lu lung), and a stream named Yü, which has disappeared since T'ang times; and here were a Chinese frontier fortress and a customs station.[54]

The great silk roads, leading in the end to Samarkand, Persia, and Syria, went out from the northwestern frontier of China, along the edge of the Gobi Desert. Beyond the Jade Gate there were alternative roads, none of them attractive. The caravan route could sometimes be identified by the skeletons of men and pack animals. Such was the terrible road direct from Tun-huang to Turfan, which crossed the White Dragon Dunes, part of the salt crust left by the ancient lake Lop-nor. This absolute desert was also haunted by goblins, so that caravan leaders preferred to take the road through I-wu (Hami),[55] so reaching Turfan by a northerly detour.[56] From Turfan the traveler could go westward through the lands of the Western Turks, north of the Mountains of Heaven, or cut southwestward, south of those mountains, and proceed through Kucha and the other oasis cities of Chinese Turkestan. Then there was the parallel road from Tun-huang, the Southern Road, along the northern edge of the mysterious K'un-lun Mountains, and so through Khotan to the Pamirs.[57] These roads were passable only because of the peculiar virtues of the Bactrian camel, which could sniff out subterranean springs for thirsty merchants, and also predict deadly sandstorms:

When such a wind is about to arrive, only the old camels have advance knowledge of it, and they immediately stand snarling together, and bury their mouths in the sand. The men always take this as a sign, and they too immediately cover their noses and mouths by wrapping them in felt. This wind moves swiftly, and passes in a moment, and is gone, but if they did not so protect themselves, they would be in danger of sudden death.[58]

Another overland trade route, very old, but little used in pre-T'ang times, passed from Szechwan, through what is now Yünnan Province, split into two roads through the frightful chasms of the upper Irrawaddy in Burma, and led thence into Bengal. Yünnan was then a region of barbarians, whom the T'ang government tried in vain to subdue. The efforts to reopen this ancient route to Burma were finally frustrated by the rise of the new state of Nan-chao in the eighth century, friendlier to the border-raiding Tibetans than to the Chinese. But after Nan-chao had invaded Tongking in 863, the Chinese were finally able to break its military power. By then the foreign trade of China was declining, so that what was won could be little used. One of these Burma roads passed near the amber mines of Myitkyina, not far from the locality where, in modern times, the popular jadeite of kingfisher hue was mined. This too was sent back over the old route through Yünnan to the lapidaries of Peking.[59]

Finally, Buddhist pilgrims sometimes took the circuitous and difficult route through Tibet to India, usually descending by way of Nepal.[60]

Foreign Settlements in T'ang

Let us now look at the cities and towns of China where foreigners congregated, and at the roads they traveled when moving about within the country. We shall begin in the south. Before T'ang, seafarers coming up the South China Sea usually made port in Tongking, in the vicinity of modern Hanoi. But after the T'ang settlement the merchants of Arabia and the Indies pointed their argosies at Canton or even further north.[61] At this time Chiao-*chou* was the seat of the Chinese protectorate over the betel-chewing Annamese in Tongking, and its port was Lung-pien.[62] Though the overseas trade of Chiao-*chou* fell off with the rise of Canton in the seventh century, it never became entirely extinct. It even increased somewhat after the middle of the eighth century, and during the final decades of that century, because of the exactions of rapacious officials and agents in Canton, foreign traders preferred to go to Chiao-*chou*.[63]

But of all the cities of the south, and of all the towns where foreign merchants congregated, none was more prosperous than the great port of Canton, the Khanfu of the Arabs, the "China" of the Indians.[64] Canton was then a frontier town, on the edge of a tropical wilderness populated by savages and wild beasts, and plagued with unpleasant diseases, but handsomely set among lichees, oranges, bananas, and

banyans. During the reigns of the T'ang emperors it became a truly Chinese city, even though a large part of its population of 200,000 was "barbarian."[65] It was a wealthy city, but a flimsy one: its triple wall surrounded a crowded mass of thatch-roofed wooden houses, which were repeatedly swept by disastrous fires, until, in 806, an intelligent governor ordered the people to make themselves roofs of tile.[66] In the estuary before this colorful and insubstantial town were ". . . the argosies of the Brahmans, the Persians, and the Malays, their number beyond reckoning, all laden with aromatics, drugs, and rare and precious things, their cargoes heaped like hills."[67] In exchange for their fragrant tropical woods and their almost legendary medicines, these dark outlanders sought bales of silk, boxes of chinaware, and slaves. They enriched the Chinese businessmen who were willing to give up the comforts of the north for the profits of the south, and made possible the high state of the governor of the town and province, ". . . who carries six yaktails, with an army for each yaktail, and who in his majesty and dignity is not to be distinguished from the Son of Heaven."[68]

Many of these visitors settled in the foreign quarter of Canton, which by imperial sanction was set aside south of the river for the convenience of the many persons of diverse race and nationality who chose to remain in Canton to do business or to wait for favorable winds. They were ruled by a specially designated elder, and enjoyed some extraterritorial privileges.[69] Here citizens of the civilized nations, such as the Arabs and Singhalese, rubbed elbows with less cultured merchants, such as the "White *Man*-barbarians and the Red *Man*-barbarians."[70] Here the orthodox, such as the Indian Buddhists in their own monasteries, whose pools were adorned with perfumed blue lotuses,[71] were to be found close to the heterodox, such as the Shī'ah Muslims, who had fled persecution in Khurāsān to erect their own mosque in the Far East.[72] Here, in short, foreigners of every complexion, and Chinese of every province, summoned by the noon drum, thronged the great market, plotted in the warehouses, and haggled in the shops, and each day were dispersed by the sunset drum to return to their respective quarters or, on some occasions, to chaffer loudly in their outlandish accents in the night markets.[73]

This thriving town had a mottled history, spotted with murders, pirate raids, and the depredations of corrupt officials. Such evils tended to be self-perpetuating, since one gave rise to another. For instance, in an otherwise placid century, the captain of a Malayan cargo vessel murdered the governor Lu Yüan-jui, who had taken advantage of his position to plunder him. This was in 684. The central government appointed a virtuous man to succeed the wretch,[74] but in the years which followed many other silk-robed exiles from the gay life of the capital repaid themselves fully for their discomfort at the expense of the luckless merchants. It was precisely for the purpose of bringing some order and discipline to Canton, and to ensure that the court got its luxuries and the government its income, that, early in the eighth century, the important and sometimes lucrative post of "Commissioner

for Commercial Argosies," a kind of customs officer in that difficult city, was established.[75] This was done partly at the instance of the plundered foreigners who had addressed complaints to the throne.[76] But the agents of the city's misfortunes were not always Chinese: in 758 it was raided by a horde of Arabs and Persians, who expelled the governor, looted the warehouses, burned dwellings, and departed by sea, perhaps to a pirate haven on the island of Hainan.[77] This disaster made the city negligible as a port for half a century, and foreign vessels went instead to Hanoi.[78]

Another difficulty which plagued this jeweled frontier town was the practice, which developed during the second half of the eighth century, of appointing eunuchs from the imperial palace to the crucial post of "Commissioner for Commercial Argosies," a custom which led to the evil then euphemistically called "palace markets," that is, interference in trade by these haughty palatines.[79] In 763, one of the gorgeous rascals went so far as to rebel against the throne. The eunuch's insurrection was quelled only with great difficulty. Meanwhile trade had come to a virtual standstill. The poet Tu Fu remarked in two poems the discontinuance of the flow of luxury wares northward from Canton at this time: "about the luminous pearls of the South Seas, it has long been quiet," [80] and "recently the provision of a live rhino, or even of kingfisher feathers, has been rare." [81] Even an honest governor like Li Mien—who ruled the port for three years beginning in 769 without mulcting the hapless foreigners, so that the amount of overseas trade increased tenfold under his administration [82]—could not prevent lesser officials from looting.[83] Small-scale robberies multiplied a thousand times, with an occasional great robber clothed in the robes of office—like Wang O, who, in the last years of the eighth century, collected a private as well as a public tax, and sent endless boxes of ivory and pearls to his family in the north, so that his own resources surpassed those of the public treasury.[84] These chronic and acute diseases led to the diversion of some of the city's commerce to Chiao-*chou* in the south, and some to Hai-yang, the port of Ch'ao-*chou*, further north.[85] But somehow the city and its prosperity could not be permanently destroyed: there were governors of rectitude and intelligence in the early decades of the ninth century,[86] and things went fairly well until, in the final quarter of the century, the death throes of the dynasty began. In 879 the prince of rebels, Huang Ch'ao, sacked the city, slaughtered the foreign traders, destroyed the mulberry groves which fed the silkworms, producers of the nation's chief export, and so brought about the great decline of Canton's wealth and prestige, which, despite a brief rejuvenation at the end of the century, she never completely recovered.[87] Under the Sung empire, the argosies from the South China Sea began more and more to turn to the ports of Fukien and Chekiang, and although Canton remained important, her monopoly was broken forever.

An Indian monk or a Javanese ambassador or a Cham merchant who wished to journey northward from Canton to the fabulous capital of China or to some other great city had a choice of two ways to cross the mountain barrier to the north. One

possibility was to travel due north on the Chen River, now called "North River," until he reached Shao-*chou*, whence he turned to the northeast, crossed the "Mountain Pass of the Plum Trees," [88] and descended into the valley of the Kan River, by which he could easily proceed through what is now Kiangsi Province, through Hung-*chou*, where many Persians were to be found,[89] and on to the Long River, the great Yangtze, and so arrive at the commercial city of Yang-*chou*, or elsewhere in the heart of China. The way over the pass could not accommodate the greatly increased trade and traffic of early T'ang, but the great minister Chang Chiu-ling, himself a southern parvenu with bourgeois sympathies, had a great new road built through the pass as a stimulus to overseas trade and the development of Canton city. This great work was achieved in 716.[90]

The other possibility, less used though very old, was to take a northwesterly course up the Kuei ("Cassia") River, through the eastern part of modern Kwangsi Province, and follow it to its source at an altitude of less than a thousand feet. Here is also the source of the great river Hsiang, which carried the traveler northward through T'an-*chou* (Ch'ang-sha) in Hunan Province, and on into the watery lowlands of central China. At its source, the Hsiang is called the Li River, and it is actually connected with the source of the Kuei by an ancient canal, no longer identifiable as such by T'ang times, so that the sources of the northward- and southward-flowing rivers are now identical. It was therefore possible for small boats to travel continuously from Canton to the great waterways of central and north China, and even all the way to the capital.[91]

Both of these routes are referred to in a couplet by the ninth-century poet Li Ch'ün-yü:

> Once we were moored on the Cassia River—
> there was rain by the deep bank;
> And again, there, at the Plum Pass—
> our homeward course was blocked.[92]

But whichever route he took, the traveler could proceed with ease through the great lakes south of the Yangtze, propelled by sail or by oar or by sweep or even, from the late eighth century, by paddle wheel, toward his destination,[93] which usually was the magnificent city of Yang-*chou*.

Yang-*chou* was the jewel of China in the eighth century; a man might hope to crown his life by dying there.[94] The city owed its wealth and beauty to its location at the junction of the Yangtze River, which drained all central China, with the Grand Canal (called by the Chinese "River of Transport"), which carried the produce of the whole world to the great cities of the north. Therefore the imperial agent in charge of the national salt monopoly, a very lordly personage, had his headquarters there, and the merchants of Asia congregated there, at the hub of the great network of T'ang waterways, where all goods brought by Chinese and foreign

vessels were transshipped to northbound canalboats.[95] The citizens of the city were made rich by its focal position in the distribution of salt (which everyone needed), of tea (which by now had become popular in the north), of precious stones, aromatics, and drugs brought up from Canton, and of costly damasks and tapestries brought down the Yangtze from Szechwan.[96] Moreover, Yang-*chou* was a banking center and a gold market, where the financier was as important as the merchant. In short, it was a bustling, bourgeois city, where money flowed easily.[97] Yang-*chou* was also an industrial town, famous for its beautiful metalwork, especially its bronze mirrors, for its felt hats, in the mode among the young men of Ch'ang-an, for its silk fabrics and embroideries and fine ramie linens, for its refined sugar, made here since the seventh century by a process brought from Magadha, for boatbuilding, and for excellent cabinetwork.[98] Yang-*chou* was a gay city, a city of well-dressed people, a city where the best entertainment was always available, a city of parks and gardens, a very Venice, traversed by waterways, where the boats outnumbered the carriages.[99] It was a city of moonlight and lanterns, a city of song and dance, a city of courtesans. "Yang is first and I is second," went the epigram, placing the reputed elegance and bright frivolity of Ch'eng-tu in Szechwan, along with its solid prosperity, in an inferior position.[100]

It was inevitable that foreign merchants should establish their shops here.[101] We know that their numbers were considerable, for the hordes of the rebel T'ien Shen-kung killed several thousand Arabian and Persian businessmen when they looted the city in 760.[102] Despite this disaster, the city retained its riches and splendor until the last decades of the ninth century, when it was laid waste by such rival captains as Pi Shih-to and Sun Ju, jackals following the trail of the great tiger, Huang Ch'ao. Its glory was partly restored by the new kingdom of Wu, arisen from the ruins of T'ang at the beginning of the tenth century, but it was destroyed again in mid-century by the northern kingdom of Chou, when the latter invaded Wu's successor state, Southern T'ang.[103] The scene of desolation presented by Yang-*chou* in early Sung times was aggravated by the policy of the emperors of the new dynasty, who encouraged the development of trade, transportation, and finance in the village of Yang-tzu, later called Chen-*chou*, which was nearer the Long River, and directed the transfer of industries elsewhere.[104] Hung Mai, writing in the twelfth century, expressed astonishment at the enthusiasm for Yang-*chou* which had been displayed by the poets of the eighth and ninth centuries. In his own day the place could only "sour one's nostrils."[105]

The greatness of Yang-*chou* and of the Grand Canal alike were the work of the emperors of Sui, but their true flowering came in the eighth century. With the phenomenal increase in population and material wealth in that era, the farmlands of the Yellow River watershed could no longer provide for the two capitals and the other northern cities, so that cereals had to be imported from the Yangtze region. These new demands put an unforseen strain on the old canal system. A remedy

was found in 734: granaries were built along the route from Yang-*chou* to Ch'ang-an at critical points where grain might be properly stored whenever the system could not provide for its transfer beyond such a point. This prevented delays and stoppages, and rot and pilfering, and permitted the transshipment of rice and millet at leisure to vessels of appropriate size. In this way a steady flow northward was assured. Unanticipated, or at least not openly advocated, were the burdens imposed on the boats and waterways of the new relay system by the transfer of increasing quantities of luxury goods from the far South:[106] ivory, tortoise shell, and sandalwood were heaped into lighters originally designed to receive bags of grain.

The traveler then, as well as the barge captain, unaware of these grave economic problems, could leave Yang-*chou* (unless he preferred to travel by horse or carriage) and proceed north- and westward up the "River of Transport," marveling at the great flocks of ducks and geese which whirred up around his boat.[107] He would pass the barges of the salt bureau, glittering like snow in the sunlight, and stop perhaps at the thriving towns of Sui-yang and Ch'en-liu, both of which had considerable foreign settlements, especially of Persians, and at Pien-*chou* (K'ai-feng), which also had its temple to the Sacred Fire,[108] a city of more than half a million inhabitants, but whose glory as a metropolis was still in the future. Finally, the traveler came to the Eastern Capital, the ancient city of Lo-yang.

Foreigners who visited China, or settled there, tended to congregate in the vigorous commercial cities of the south, like Canton and Yang-*chou*. But they also came together in the venerable cities of the north, the centers of political power, the homes of the nobility, where a great bibliophile or a great soldier counted for more than a successful merchant. Of the two great capitals, Lo-yang was the second in rank, and it was the second city of the empire in population, having more than a million inhabitants.[109] It had its holy traditions of a thousand years, was not second in pride even to Ch'ang-an, and was endowed with a spiritual atmosphere somewhat milder and more elegant than its western rival. It was the "Godly Metropolis"[110] of the Empress Wu, well on its way to becoming what it became in the eleventh century, the proudest and most beautiful city of China. It had palaces and parks and throngs of officials. It was noted for its fine fruits and flowers, its patterned damasks and fine silk crepes, and its ceramic wares of all kinds.[111] It had a great market place, the Southern Market, occupying two blocks (*fang*), with a hundred and twenty bazaars, or streets given over to the sale of a single type of ware, and thousands of individual shops and warehouses.[112] For the aliens there on business, there were the usual temples to alien gods, among them three shrines to the Sacred Fire, attesting to the presence of a Persian colony.[113]

In 743 an artificial lake, a transshipment pool, was built east of Ch'ang-an, the Western Capital. In that year, the fascinated northerner, accustomed to speaking the proverb "Boats in the south, horses in the north," could see the boats of every part of the empire gathered on this pool, loaded with the tax goods and local tribute

destined for the palace: scarlet felt saddle covers from the north, vermilion bitter tangerines from the south, pink silk-fringed druggets from the east, crimson alum from the west. These goods were transferred to lighters, whose crews were specially garbed in bamboo rain hats, sleeved smocks, and straw shoes, in the fashion of the boatmen of the Yangtze.[114] This was the terminus of a continuous waterway from Canton to the greatest city of the age.

With almost two million taxable residents, Ch'ang-an was ten times as populous as Canton at the other end of this long net of rivers and canals. The capital's foreign population was proportionally large.[115] This international element had a rather different cast from that of the southern port. It was chiefly made up of men from the North and West: Turks, Uighurs, Tocharians, and Sogdians, in contrast to the Chams, Khmers, Javanese, and Singhalese who crowded into Canton. In both places, however, there were many Arabs, Persians, and Hindus. The Iranian population must have been most important. The T'ang government even had an office "of the Sārthavāk" (literally, "of the Caravan Leader") to watch over their interests.[116]

Ch'ang-an had two great markets, the Eastern and the Western, each with scores of bazaars. The Eastern Market was the less crowded of the two, and quieter and richer, being situated near the mansions of the nobles and officials; the Western was noisier, more vulgar and violent (malefactors were punished there), and more exotic. Each bazaar, with its unique kind of merchandise, was surrounded by warehouses, and each had a headman (*hang t'ou*). Each was required by law to display a sign naming its specialty. Proceeding through the Western Market, where most of the foreign merchants displayed their wares, one might see in succession the butchers' bazaar, the ironmongers' bazaar, the clothing bazaar, the bazaar of saddlers, the silk bazaar, and the bazaar of the druggists.[117] After the middle of the eighth century, the tea merchants were particularly popular. The new vogue for tea drinking was not restricted to the Chinese: it is reported that Uighur visitors to the capital, before doing anything else, spurred their horses to the shops of the dealers in tea.[118] Prominent in the Western Market, among the foreign tradesmen, were the fellow-countrymen of these tea enthusiasts, the Uighur usurers, to whom numberless debt-ridden Chinese businessmen and young Chinese wastrels pledged land, furniture, slaves, and even sacred relics, as security for ready cash. These moneylenders began to be regarded as a plague in the early decades of the ninth century, when prices were rising steadily and everyone was in debt. Indeed, the arrogance of these Turks was limitless: one of them was imprisoned for stabbing a merchant in broad daylight, and was rescued by his chief, without any Chinese inquiry into the event.[119] Popular feeling against them mounted until finally, in the year 836, all private intercourse with the "various colored peoples" was prohibited.[120] The insufferable haughtiness of the Uighurs was an important factor in the outburst of xenophobia in mid-century, and the persecution of foreign religions.

But a citizen could console himself in a hundred ways, and accumulate more

debts in so doing. He might, for instance, attend any of a great variety of fetes, dances, and dramatic spectacles at the wealthy Buddhist temples scattered about the city. Among these would be novel entertainments originally devised in the Buddhist nations of India and Turkestan, at once alluring and edifying.[121] Or the citizen might, if lonely, find a different kind of consolation among the whores of the P'ing-k'ang Quarter, between the Eastern Market and the imperial palace. Here he could find famous courtesans, skilled in music, dancing, and flattery, and could expect to enjoy her favors for the night by paying about 1,600 cash to her "stepmother."[122] A young aristocrat, enjoying his father's reputation, or a young scholar seeking success in the examinations as the only road to public office, could easily fall in love with one of these charmers. If he had some literary talent he surrounded her with an aura of glamour in his poems and stories.[123] Less expensive but more exotic were the pleasures of the taverns in a zone extending along the east edge of the city, southward from the "Gate of Spring Brightness," a good place to entertain a friend departing on a trip to Lo-yang and the east. Here an enterprising taverner could better his income by employing an exotically handsome Western girl, a Tocharian or a Sogdian say, to serve rare wines in cups of amber or agate, and to increase sales by means of sweet singing and seductive dancing to the accompaniment of the flutes of Western boys—and especially by means of friendly manners: "a Western houri beckons with her white hand, inviting the stranger to intoxicate himself with a golden beaker."[124] These compliant green-eyed beauties, some golden-haired, confounded the poets, and left their mark on literature. Consider the words of Li Po:

> The zither plays "The Green Paulownias at Dragon Gate,"
> The lovely wine, in its pot of jade, is as clear as the sky.
> As I press against the strings, and brush across the studs, I'll drink with you, milord;
> "Vermilion will seem to be prase-green" when our faces begin to redden.
> That Western houri with features like a flower—
> She stands by the wine-warmer, and laughs with the breath of spring
> Laughs with the breath of spring,
> Dances in a dress of gauze!
> "Will you be going somewhere, milord, *now*, before you are drunk?"[125]

Let us leave Ch'ang-an on this pleasant note, and consider briefly the remaining Chinese towns where foreigners were wont to come together. Foreign merchants could, of course, be found anywhere where profits might tempt them. You might find them looking for taffetas in the rich, high valleys of Szechwan, or in the moist lowlands about Tung-t'ing Lake.[126] But of all the regions unconnected with the major cities by water, that in which aliens tended most to settle was the corridor of the caravans, leading westward into Turkestan. Here along the margin of the Gobi were Chinese towns, spaced at regular intervals, and equipped with caravanserais. Iranian fire worshipers and musicians were to be found in all of them, and all were of doubtful allegiance: one year the Chinese mandarins were in resi-

dence, quoting the sages and counseling virtue; the next year the Turks rode in, waving their bows; often Tibetan princes were their lords. Typical of these multilingual outposts was the old town of Liang-*chou*, once subject to the Hsiung-nu and their pastoral successors. Here the regal warlord Ko-shu Han held sway for a time, entertaining fortunate guests with lion pantomimes, saber dances, and the thoughtful attentions of red-lipped cupbearers.[127] In the eighth century, Liang-*chou* had more than a hundred thousand permanent residents, reputed to be of hard and unyielding temperament, since they lived under the influence of the White Tiger and Sign of Metal.[128] Some of these citizens were Chinese, but many were of Indian extraction, surnamed in the Chinese fashion, according to their ethnic origin, *Shindu*, and many could trace their origin to the nations bordering the Oxus and Jaxartes.[129] Here were prime grazing lands for horses, especially along a river which still retained its archaic Mongolian name of Tümigen, meaning "bone marrow" in the Hsien-pi language. It was so named for the fertility of the lands thereabout.[130] Here also were produced fine damasks, mats, and wild horse hides, not to mention an excellent headache remedy.[131] This Liang-*chou* was a true melting pot, a kind of homely symbol of the exotic to the Chinese, as Hawaii is to the American of the twentieth century. The hybrid music of Liang-*chou*, at once foreign and familiar, since it was not entirely either, was in fashion in the early Middle Ages of the Far East.

Treatment of Foreigners

Chinese attitudes and policies toward foreigners were not simple. Even at the height of the vogue for the exotic, the best course for an alien was to adopt Chinese manners and habits of thought, as indeed many did. Sometimes, however, the government made it impossible to do this. For instance, an edict of 779 compelled Uighurs resident in the capital, of whom there were then about a thousand, to wear their native costume, and forbade them to "lure" Chinese women into becoming their wives and concubines, or to pass themselves off as Chinese in any way at all.[132] This law may have been the outcome of popular resentment against Uighur usurers, but other such laws may have had no other basis than the zeal of a pious magistrate to protect the purity of Chinese custom, as when Lu Chün, who became governor of Canton in 836, found foreigners and Chinese living together unsegregated, and intermarrying freely. He forced them to separate, forbade further marriages between them, and even prohibited aliens from owning land and houses. Lu Chün regarded himself as a man of upright principles, engaged in policing a dissolute port: he was, in short, a kind of ethnic puritan.[133]

Such Chinese stereotypes as the rich (and therefore enviable) Persian,[134] the black (and therefore ugly) Malay, and the naked (and therefore immoral) Cham belong to the world of vulgar images, and played little part in official policies. And

even popular attitudes were ambiguous, to say the least. The same young poets who languished over the pretty Iranian waitresses in the metropolitan wineshops laughed at the little puppets representing drunken Westerners, with their peaked caps, blue eyes, and high noses, with which they played in houses of prostitution—when the ridiculous puppet fell over, the guest at whom it pointed had to empty his cup.[135] The eighth was a century when Central Asiatic harpers and dancers were enormously popular in Chinese cities, but it was also the century of the massacre of thousands of harmless (but wealthy) Persian and Arab traders in Yang-*chou*. In the ninth century, when exotic things were not so easily and cheaply come by, exotic literature, full of romantic reminiscence, became popular. It is curious that this period, when tales about benevolent millionaires from the Far West were being told everywhere,[136] was also an age of suspicion and persecution of foreigners. In this same age of ambivalent attitudes, it was possible for foreigners to rise to high position in the government, especially if they allied themselves with the new gentry, which had been created by the examination system, against the hereditary aristocrats; we have, for instance, the example of an Arab who gained distinction with the degree of "Advanced Gentleman" (*chin shih*) in the middle of the ninth century. Many factors were at work, separating the mental image of the "ideal" foreigner from the real one: rising prices, accompanied by resentment against wealthy merchants, and weakening political authority, which allowed foreigners to raid the Chinese soil.[137] Distrust or hatred of foreigners was, in short, not at all incompatible with a love of exotic things. This love was realistic in the fine new days of the seventh and eighth centuries, and embalmed in the literature of the ninth and tenth centuries. Then it recalled the fine old days, when foreigners universally recognized the superiority of Chinese arms and Chinese arts, and when the ordinary Chinese citizen might expect to enjoy the rare goods of distant places. Just so, in our times, a former German soldier might regret the days when he could drink freely of French wines without admitting the equality of the French, or a former English civil servant remember wistfully the treasures of barbaric India under the Empire. Foreign luxuries were too good for foreigners.

There was also something ambiguous about Chinese attitudes toward commerce. Trade was never free from political entanglements. The more necessary the goods were to the general welfare, or the more desirable they were to the upper classes, the more likely it was that the state would take a part in their distribution. Traditional government monopolies on domestic goods, such as those on salt, iron, metal currency, and sometimes on wine and other products of universal consumption, were models for the control of luxury goods from abroad. The new office of "Commissioner for Commercial Argosies," created at Canton in the eighth century, had the ancient office of "Commissioner for Salt and Iron" as its ideal and prototype. Its incumbent bought up such imports as the government desired to control (especially those in demand by the court and by groups favored by the court), prevented smuggling, and followed the pattern of an old-style internal monopoly.[138] This attitude had

the corollaries that commerce should be entangled with diplomacy and that the gifts of foreign nations to the imperial court, consisting often of great quantities of costly goods and regarded as tokens of submission to the universal authority of the Son of Heaven, should be, in fact, an important part of international trade.[139] To say that "tributary nations" were compelled to offer tribute, is only part of the story. Foreign nations, both those which trembled close at hand and those whose distance made them truly independent of T'ang, sent their goods out of sheer self-interest, and received desirable "gifts" from the Chinese for their trouble.[140] There were certainly drawbacks for the foreign merchant in this system. He was hardly a free agent: he was expected to present certain of his wares formally at the imperial capital, or else to hand them into a government warehouse at the port of entry. If he attempted private enterprise, he was likely to invite official interference or even disaster. A local mandarin was more likely to go too far in the strict interpretation of the government's restraints than to risk his neck by being too liberal.[141] Even those goods which the alien was permitted to sell freely to the public [142] had to be sold in one of the great markets, closely supervised by government agents. To make matters worse, it was precisely those goods which the outlander most desired to take back to his own country which were most jealously watched by the mandarins, lest the government lose its share of the profit. We may judge the nature of these goods from an edict of 714 forbidding the export or the sale to foreigners of tapestries, damasks, gauzes, crepes, embroideries, and other fancy silks, or of yaktails, pearls, gold, or iron.[143] Contrariwise, there were erratic government restrictions on the import and sale to Chinese of items conceived to be frivolous and detrimental to the national morals, though these might prove to be the most profitable wares in the merchant's cargo. Indeed, even the sale of counterfeits of luxury goods and adulterated substances, though it made the importer liable to a prison sentence,[144] was, if undetected, a profitable industry, as was discovered by an unlucky Persian priest in Canton, who specialized in manufacturing exotic "rarities" for the sophisticated imperial court.[145] But if he were wise, and knew what could be imported and what could be exported, and under what conditions, even an honest mechant could do very well for himself, as the thousands of foreign merchants on Chinese soil attest. But even the wisest had other hazards to contend with: he was likely, if the local magistrates were not too attentive to the moral principles expected of a Chinese official, to be despoiled of a considerable part of his goods in the name of "customs duty." Even if the inspector at the customs barrier were a person of integrity, the requirements of the government were likely to be excessive. An Arab geographer reports that his compatriots were obliged to surrender one-third of their cargo into the imperial warehouses on arrival in China.[146] But nothing was permanent and predictable. Last year's caprice was next year's policy. From time to time relief came in the form of a fiat from the court which made the merchant's condition more bearable and his hope for great profit more reasonable. Such a one was the edict handed down by Wen Tsung in 834, on the

occasion of the sovereign's recovery from an illness. This mandate amnestied various classes of criminals, and at the same time expressly extended the imperial protection to strangers from overseas engaged in commerce in Kwangtung, Fukien, and Yang-*chou*, instructing the local magistrates to allow them to trade freely without intolerable tax burdens, since they had placed themselves under the monarch's loving care.[147]

But the foreigner resident in China had other problems. He faced social and economic disabilities unconnected with commerce. If he were unlucky enough to die in China, his goods were sealed and, unless a wife or heir could readily be found, were confiscated by the state.[148] The search for an inheritor could not have extended very far. Moreover, if an alien took a Chinese wife or concubine, he was required to remain in China; in no case could he take a Chinese woman back to his homeland with him. This was ordered in a decree of 628, particularly designed to protect Chinese women from temporary marriages with the envoys of foreign countries and with members of their suites, who required casual comforts while away from home.[149] The rule did not, of course, apply to the gift of a royal princess to a nomadic chieftain. The lady would be sent off to the steppes without a murmur if the good will of her future husband was important to Chinese policy. Such a one was the lady sent to marry the Khan of the Uighurs in the heyday of their power early in the ninth century, in exchange (as it were) for the gifts presented by the envoy sent to fetch her away: camlets, brocades, sable furs, girdles of jade, a thousand horses, and fifty camels.[150] Whether in obedience to the decree, or by free choice, we read of many foreigners of the eighth century who had lived in Ch'ang-an more than forty years, all of them with wives and children.[151] Moreover, as we have noticed, the foreigner was liable to arbitrary segregation laws, which were only partly mitigated by other laws allowing foreign colonies in Chinese cities to elect their own headmen and to settle litigation between members of the colony according to the laws and customs of their native country.[152]

Tribute

Once an ordinary merchant had obtained official permission to trade in the Chinese markets, he took up quarters among his compatriots and went about his business. But an envoy, representing a foreign government, even though he might be primarily interested in commerce or at least in a profitable exchange of lordly gifts, had yet to face the vexatious splendors which awaited all representatives of tribute nations. His nation was bound to be tributary, of course, though the envoy might wink at the deception when closeted with his boon companions. Some cases were exceptional: one cannot guess what token tribute was brought, or what symbols of submission were offered to the Chinese emperor by the fugitive Sāsānid Prince Pērōz, last scion

of his house, when he came to Ch'ang-an to seek the protection and assistance of T'ai Tsung against the victorious Arabs.[153] But the average ambassador was an ordinary politician, or a close relative of a king, or a distinguished priest, or perhaps a rich merchant, and ordinarily he made no difficulties about submission. A very distant country interested in encouraging trade might, rather than send its own ambassador, request representation by the envoys of a friendly neighbor. As a case in point, the kingdom of Bali sent an emissary with samples of its native products in the suite of a Cham embassy to the Chinese court in 630.[154]

To gain his rightful privileges when he arrived at the Chinese capital, the envoy needed official credentials. When a foreign potentate sought the favor or protection of T'ang, he would send a petition asking for a golden girdle and a robe of state in many colors, or for a Chinese mandarin to act as his resident adviser, or for a copy of one of the Chinese classics, or for all these things. But most of all he required the gift of a handsome wallet in which his ambassador might carry his official token.[155] This token had the form of a fish of bronze, or rather, of half of such a fish. To each country that maintained regular diplomatic relations with T'ang were assigned twelve such bifurcated fishes, each numbered in sequence, and each inscribed with the name of the nation to which it was allotted. The "male" halves remained in the Chinese palace; the "female" halves were sent to the "tributary" country. An ambassador sent to China had in his brocaded wallet the fish talisman whose number was the number of the month in which he would arrive in Ch'ang-an. If this matched the corresponding piece in the capital, he was accorded those rights and benefits to which he was entitled by nationality.[156] These prerogatives were by no means the same for all envoys. Their food allotments, for instance, were proportional to the distance of their homelands from China. Therefore the representatives of India, Persia, and Arabia were given rations for six months; the envoys from Cambodia, Sumatra, and Java had four-month rations; and the envoys from Champa, whose borders were coterminous with China, got only three.[157] Nor did the agents of great powers yield precedence easily: when, on June 11, 758, the ambassadors of the Uighurs and of the Abbāsid Caliphate arrived simultaneously with "tribute" at the Chinese court, they fought with each other for priority at the palace gate. A special decree from the throne was required to determine the protocol for the occasion: both embassies were allowed to enter at the same time, through gates to right and left.[158]

On first arriving at the capital, the embassy was put up for a while at one of the hostels situated at each of the four major gates of the city, facing the cardinal directions.[159] From this time on, the ambassador's activities were directed by officials of the Hung-lu Office,[160] which was responsible both for the funerals of members of the imperial family and for the reception and entertainment of foreign guests.[161] This important office, quite aside from its basic responsibilities, served also as a

clearinghouse of information about foreign countries which was of great value to the nation, especially to the strategists of the army. A special agent of the Department of Arms was sent to interview the envoy immediately upon his arrival. He was interrogated about the geography and customs of his native country, and a map was constructed from the information supplied.[162] The great geographer Chia Tan was head of this office for a period in the second half of the eighth century. It is said that his remarkable knowledge of world geography was derived from personal interviews with visiting diplomats.[163]

The greatest day of the ambassador's period of sojourn in China was the day of his reception by the emperor. On this occasion, everything was calculated to impress the foreigner with the majestic state and awesome power of the ruler of T'ang. If the ambassador was of sufficiently high rank to attend the great reception for tributary princes held on the day of the winter solstice, he found himself face to face with twelve ranks of guards arrayed before the hall of audience. There were swordsmen, halberdiers, lancers, and archers, each group wearing splendid capes of a distinctive color, and each with its appropriate banner—a pennon of parrot or peacock feathers, or a flag embroidered with the image of a wild ass or a leopard, or another symbol of valor. Even a lesser envoy saw before him the household guards, on duty at all audiences. These were divided into five troops, of which four wore scarlet shirts and caps decorated with the tail feathers of the Manchurian snow pheasant, and the fifth wore tabards of scarlet taffeta, embroidered with the figures of wild horses. All carried staves and wore swords at their belts.[164] Dazzled by this spectacle, the foreign delegation approached, and after suitable prostrations had its gifts displayed in front of the audience hall. The chief envoy then approached the throne, and, following advice given in whispers by the Chinese official[165] who attended him, bowed toward the sovereign and said, "Your bulwark-vassal so-and-so, of such-and-such a nation, presumes to offer up these oblations from its soil."[166] The emperor continued to sit in stately silence, but the Officer of Protocol accepted the gifts in his name, and received from the ambassador other presents for distribution among his assistants.[167] In return, the tributary king and his ambassador were awarded nominal but resounding titles in the T'ang administration, in accordance with the doctrine that they were vassals of the Son of Heaven, and rich gifts were awarded them as "salary."[168] Thus, when the king of Śrībhoja[169] sent tokens of tribute to Hsüan Tsung, the monarch handed down a patent of recognition, stating, ". . . and it is fitting that there should be a robe-of-state conferred on him, and that he should be awarded, from afar, [the title of] Great Army Leader of the Militant Guards of the Left, and that we should bestow on him a purple caftan and a belt inlaid with gold."[170] After accepting these honors in the name of his lord, the envoy was shown the way out. Now he could expect a more relaxing reward for his labors, as a Japanese ambassador did in the early part of the eighth century:

The Japanese Nation, though far away beyond the seas, has sent its envoys to our levee. Now since they have traversed the glaucous waves, and have also made us presents of articles from their quarter, it is fitting that these envoys, Mabito Makumon and the others, should assemble for a feast at the [Office of] Documents of the Penetralia on the sixteenth day of the present month.[171]

Exotic Taste

Such was the manner of receiving the men who brought the delightful rarities which the aristocrats and their imitators desired. The Chinese taste for the exotic permeated every social class and every part of daily life: Iranian, Indian, and Turkish figures and decorations appeared on every kind of household object. The vogue for foreign clothes, foreign food, and foreign music was especially prevalent in the eighth century,[172] but no part of the T'ang era was free from it. Some individuals, like the poet Yüan Chen, who wrote at the end of the eighth century, lamented these innovations:

> Ever since the Western horsemen began raising smut and dust,
> Fur and fleece, rank and rancid, have filled Hsien and Lo.
> Women make themselves Western matrons by the study of Western makeup;
> Entertainers present Western tunes, in their devotion to Western music.[173]

Hsien and Lo are the two capitals Ch'ang-an (under the nominal guise of its vanished precursor Hsien-yang) and Lo-yang, where these fashions were epidemic.

Some Chinese, at any rate, knew the language of the Turks.[174] There was a Turkish-Chinese dictionary available for serious students,[175] and some Chinese poems of T'ang show the influence of Turkish folksongs in their prosody.[176] Many devoted Buddhists learned some Sanskrit. But the extent of such learning, as also of the study of other foreign languages, such as Korean, Tocharian, Tibetan, or Cham, we do not know.

Fashions in the two capitals tended to follow Turkish and East Iranian modes of dress. In T'ang times, men and women alike wore "barbarian" hats when they went abroad, especially when on horseback. In the early part of the seventh century aristocratic ladies favored a hat and veil combination, a kind of burnoose called a *mi-li*. This mantle enveloped the face and most of the body, and helped a haughty lady to preserve her anonymity and to avoid the curious stares of the vulgar.[177] But modesty suffered a decline after the middle of the century, when the long veil was abandoned for a "curtain hat,"[178] a broad-brimmed hat with a hood which fell only to the shoulders, and which might even reveal the face. This hat, originally designed to protect the head on long dusty journeys, was worn both by men and by women, but attracted unfavorable notice to women especially. An edict of 671 attempted to outlaw these brazen-faced equestriennes, who should have traveled in decently covered

carriages, but it was ignored, and by the early part of the eighth century women were riding about the city streets wearing Turkish caps, or even bare-headed, and dressed in men's riding clothes and boots.[179] Other exotic fashions of mid-T'ang were leopard-skin hats, worn by men, tight sleeves and fitted bodices in the Iranian styles, worn by women along with pleated skirts and long stoles draped around the neck, and even hair-styles and makeup of "un-Chinese" character. Court ladies of the eighth century wore "Uighur chignons."[180] The zeal of colonials for the pure customs of the fatherland, however, inspired the people of Tun-huang in the ninth century to retain Chinese dress under Tibetan rule, when citizens of towns like Liang-*chou* (notoriously prone to exoticism) freely adopted outlandish dress and manners.[181]

Enthusiasm for Turkish customs enabled some aristocrats to endure the discomfort of living in a tent, even in the midst of the city. The poet Po Chü-i erected two Turkish tents of sky-blue felt in his courtyard, and entertained guests in them, proud to demonstrate how they furnished protection from the winter wind.[182] The most eminent of such urban tent-dwellers was the unhappy prince Li Ch'eng-ch'ien, son of the great T'ai Tsung, who imitated the Turks in everything: he preferred to speak Turkish rather than Chinese, and erected a complete Turkish camp on the palace grounds, where, dressed like a Khan of the Turks, he sat in front of his tent under the wolf's-head ensign, attended by slaves in Turkish dress, and sliced himself gobbets of boiled mutton with his sword.[183]

Though the prince surely had his imitators, it is likely that this barbaric dish had only a limited number of votaries. But other food of foreign parentage was widely admired. Of these the most popular were little "foreign" cakes of various kinds, especially a steamed variety sprinkled with sesame seeds, and cakes fried in oil.[184] The art of making these had been introduced from the West, and, though enjoyed by native and foreigner alike, they were ordinarily prepared and sold by Westerners. A popular tale of the age tells of such a cake seller, visited by a young man returning from his mistress' house before dawn, and waiting for the sound of the morning drum to announce that the gate of the quarter was open:

> When he came to the gate of the neighborhood, the bar of the gate had not yet been released. Beside the gate was the dwelling of a Westerner who sold cakes, and he was just setting out his lamps, and kindling his brazier. Cheng-tzu sat down under his curtain to rest, and to wait for the drum.[185]

At the other extreme were the elegant viands prepared for the tables of the rich and respectable. Some of these were made with expensive imported ingredients, but may not have been made according to foreign recipes. Especially popular were aromatic and spicy dishes, such as the "cakelets with grated aromatics, worth a thousand in gold."[186] But some were obviously made according to a foreign formula, as the "Brahman" wheat-paste, "light and high," which was steamed in baskets.[187]

Exotic influences on costume, dwellings, diet, and other aspects of everyday life were paralleled by exoticism in the arts. The foreigners who crowded into T'ang

China were pictured by painters and poets alike. There are, of course, exotic artists in every age, since a man may be by temperament out of step with the popular and persuasive cultural trends of his own time. But exoticism flourishes most in eras of new or renewed contact with strange peoples. Therefore it is especially connected with imperialistic conquest and with commercial expansion. The typical exotic artist glorifies his country, and at the same time exposes his guilty conscience, burdened with oppression or exploitation abroad, by glamorizing the oppressed and exploited. The images of Moors and Saracens in the paintings of Gozzoli and Bellini, like those of Algerians and Tahitians in the paintings of Delacroix and Gauguin, are equally symptomatic of an expansive and imperious civilization. They had their counterparts in T'ang. Indeed, even religious exoticism, such as that centered around representations of the Magi in Renaissance art, had its analogue in the idealized arhats, with Indian visages, visible in the Buddhist art of the Far East.

Some medieval critics did not recognize exotic pictures as a special category of painting. The eminent Kuo Jo-hsü, for instance, writing of ninth- and tenth-century art from the vantage point of the eleventh century, classified old paintings under such rubrics as "glimpses of virtue," "heroism," "representations of scenery," and "popular manners and customs," but had no special pigeonhole for pictures of foreigners and their appurtenances, even though he occasionally discussed exotic themes, such as the proper manner of representing deities of Indian origin. Thus, when painting Indra, ". . . one should display a stern and imposing demeanor . . ." [188]

On the other hand, the anonymous author of the *Hsüan ho hua p'u*, a catalogue of the paintings in the collection of Hui Tsung, imperial Sung connoisseur of the twelfth century, has left us a short essay about paintings showing foreigners.[189] He includes among his examples of distinguished depicters of barbarians of T'ang the painters Hu Kuei and his son, Hu Ch'ien, many of whose works still survived in Sung times. These men were famous for hunting scenes set in remote countries, and for exotic horses, camels, and falcons.[190] Our unknown cataloguer states that the true value of such pictures is that they illustrate the inferiority of barbarian culture as compared with the Chinese. Such didactic chauvinism was certainly much more common in Sung than in early T'ang. In T'ang the characteristic feeling provoked by a painting of a foreign subject was condescending pride; in Sung it was apprehensive arrogance. We may be sure in any case that most Sung art collectors, as well as most T'ang art lovers, took the greatest pleasure in these paintings for their style and color, whatever their opinions about the value of the subject matter may have been.

Despite the rarity of generalizations about exoticism and other fashions in critical writings, we can easily create simple pictures of trends and modes in art by synthesizing the critics' statements about the themes best treated by individual artists. If we do this, we find that the great century for the exotic in T'ang painting was the seventh, when the military might of the T'ang emperors was at its apex, and when overawed barbarians thronged to the T'ang court. Victorious pride made these out-

landers seem fit subjects for approved paintings. In contrast, we shall see presently that the great age for the exotic in T'ang literature was the ninth century, an age of reminiscence. Most eminent of the painters of outlandish themes was Yen Li-te, brother of the equally famous Yen Li-pen who had the honor of depicting the martial visage of T'ai Tsung himself. It is said that no painter of exotic subjects of his own or earlier times could touch him.[191] In 629, the scholar Yen Shih-ku introduced a native of the remote mountains of what is now Kweichow Province to the court. "His cap was made of black bearskin, with a gold fillet across the forehead; his outer garments were of fur, and he wore leather leggings and shoes." Shih-ku referred sententiously to appropriate examples from antiquity, and then said, "Today the myriad realms to which the Imperial virtue has extended come to court in their garments of grass and feather ornaments, to meet together in the barbarians' guest quarters. Truly this is a [sight] which might be represented in pictorial form, to exhibit to posterity the far reaching extent of that virtue." Accordingly Yen Li-te was commissioned to paint the flattering scene.[192]

Pictures of foreign countries were once hardly to be distinguished from strategic maps, and were based on the same kind of interrogation. Still, in T'ang times, the practical and aesthetic purposes and results were undoubtedly kept distinct. In 643, Yen Li-pen was commissioned to paint typical scenes of the nations that sent submissive emissaries to the court of T'ai Tsung. Among his productions were two paintings of the "Western Regions." [193] Chou Fang and Chang Hsüan, both of them otherwise famous as painters of women [194] and both active in the late eighth century, more than a century after the Li brothers, made representations of the incredible nation of Prom, or Hrom, or Rome (modern Fu-lin), that is, of some part of the Byzantine realm. We cannot now imagine the character of these scenes, though they would be incomparable treasures if they had survived.[195] Even the great Wang Wei did a landscape from some "Strange Realm," now unidentifiable.[196]

It was usual to picture the inhabitants of such distant places in their native costumes, with their curious features emphasized. Of all representations of foreigners, most of those that we can date with certainty as the works of T'ang craftsmen are the little terra-cotta figurines, among which we can find the images of Uighurs with high hats and haughty manners, Arabs (it may be) with black brows and hawklike noses, and persons with curly hair and toothy grins who, whatever their ethnic type, show the influence of Hellenistic taste.[197] But although exotic peoples were a favorite subject of the great painters as well as of the potters of T'ang, few of the painted images survive. We do not have Yen Li-pen's pictures of tribute bearers bending before the emperor of China, presenting, perhaps, a kingly lion.[198] We can no longer see the mounted barbarian archers, depicted by Li Chien and his son Li Chung-ho,[199] nor "The King of Korea Making a Ritual Circumambulation with Incense," [200] painted by Chang Nan-pen, nor Chou Fang's picture of "A Woman of India," [201] nor Chang Hsüan's picture of "A Japanese Equestrienne." [202] But we can see men

of several Central Asiatic nations, with strange faces, unusual hats, and exotic haircuts in the frescoes at Tun-huang.[203] The soldier, government clerk, or weary pilgrim passing through one of the oasis cities of Serindia would have seen even stranger beings on the walls of the temples he visited under the protection of the local Chinese garrison: Buddhas in Hellenistic vestment, laics of the purest Iranian type, and nude women straight out of the fervent Indian epics.[204]

Almost equally attractive during those exciting years were the wild beasts of strange lands, especially those sent with missions as gifts to the Chinese court, and also domestic animals, in particular those admired and desired by the Chinese—the famous hawks, hounds, and horses.[205]

Finally, the artists of T'ang loved to show the gods and saints of foreign lands, above all those of the lands where Buddhism thrived: emaciated Hindu arhats with shaggy brows, princely Bodhisattvas glittering with strings of many-colored gems,[206] the ancient gods Indra and Brahma, shown as protectors both of the Law of the Buddha and of palatial Chinese gateways,[207] and other divine guardians—partly assimilated to Northern nomadic and to Chinese culture—such as Kuvera, Protector of the North, shown bearded and mustachioed, in Chinese armor.[208] Such pictorial amalgams were sometimes the result of the use of a Chinese model by a painter of exotic subjects, as when a geisha in the service of a great lord posed for the figure of a *devi*—a Hindu goddess—in a Buddhist scene,[209] as did the Italian courtesans who loaned their forms to Renaissance madonnas. With these pictures of hybrid beings too must be grouped the elaborate paintings of the ineffable paradises of Buddhism. like distant fairylands. One of the most eminent of painters of Buddhist icons in early T'ang was himself a foreigner, a Khotanese,[210] with the Saka name of Viśa Īrasangä,[211] called in Chinese Yü-ch'ih I-seng. He came to the Chinese court about the middle of the seventh century, recommended by his king, bringing with him a new painting style of Iranian origin, in which modeled and shaded polychrome figures seemed to stand out in relief, or even to float free from their background. A painting of a Devarāja by this master survives to our own day. His manner is said to have influenced the great master Wu Tao-hsüan, and to be traceable in the caves of Tun-huang.[212] He has also been credited with having helped bring the Western technique of using a line of unvarying thickness to outline figures—the "iron-wire" line—to the Buddhist temples of the great cities of China.[213] Not only did this Viśa paint in an exotic manner, but he painted exotic subjects, not disdaining to represent a "Dancing Girl of Kucha."[214]

Exotic Literature

The peak of literary interest in the exotic lagged almost two centuries behind the great period of exoticism in the plastic arts. This new development began late in the

eighth century, and was associated with the "old-style" movement in prose writing, a reaction against the "new" (that is, only a few centuries old) formal antithetical prose. But the taste for the strange appears in the poetry as well as in the prose of this era. Rich colors, strange fancies, and romantic images captured the attention of many of the best poets of the ninth century. Typical of the age was Li Ho, a poet of illusions and dream images and vivid coloration, prone to use hyperbole and synecdoche —"amber" for "wine," "cold reds" for "autumn flowers." It does not surprise us that this young man was devoted to reading the rich old classic *Ch'u tz'u* and the Zen sect's *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra,* that he died young, and that the Sung critics spoke of his "demoniac talents."[215] Exotic flavors came naturally to him, as in his poem "The Ambassador from Kurung" or in his description of a barbarian boy with curly hair and green eyes.[216] Another like him was Tu Mu, an official also known for his military essay which advocated waging war on the Northern barbarians in the early summer when they were quiescent and unprepared.[217] Whatever his practical talents, Tu Mu was also a poet of the romantic group, and recollections of the splendid past are common in his verses:

> Looking back at Ch'ang-an, an embroidered pile appears;
> A thousand gates among mountain peaks open each in turn.
> A single horseman in the red dust—and the young Consort laughs,
> But no one knows if it is the lichees which come.[218]

This poem was suggested by the sight of the deserted palace at the hot springs near Ch'ang-an, where Hsüan Tsung and his Precious Consort passed the winter months long ago,[219] and refers to the special courier who brought lichees from Canton to satisfy the Consort's whim. A third poet characteristic of the times was Yüan Chen. This great writer longed passionately for the pure and classic standards of the imagined past. He deplored, for instance, the abandonment in the eighth century of the traditional stone from the banks of the Szu River, celebrated in the oldest literature as material for making chimes, in favor of some new stone;[220] alas, few moderns listen to the old music, he says, and though "Hsüan Tsung loved music, he loved *new* music." Even in his stanzas written to popular airs,[221] Yüan Chen laments the rage for new and exotic things. Despite their puritanism, however, these stanzas depend for their effectiveness upon the poet's treatment of such exotic subjects as imported rhinoceroses and elephants, Turkish horsemen, and Burmese orchestras. Yüan Chen was, in short, exotically anti-exotic.

But the history of exoticism in T'ang poetry has yet to be written. The prose tales on exotic themes, constituting an important variety of the T'ang wonder tale, are much better known. These flourished during the two decades on each side of the turn of the century. In particular, fantasy and marvels of every sort were à la mode during the early years of the ninth century. Fortunately many of them have survived into the twentieth. A common type is the tale of the wonderful gem,

brought to China or sought for in China by a mysterious stranger. The stone has the power to clear muddy waters, to reveal buried treasures, or to bring fair winds to seafarers, or is endowed with some other equally gratifying property.[222] This taste for the fantastic,[223] which in late T'ang showed itself in astonishingly rugged and awe-inspiring landscape paintings,[224] necessarily also included the romantically foreign in the arts, and was exemplified in its purest form in stories of weird and lovely objects brought from abroad, most particularly the splendid oddities said to have been offered in former years as tribute gifts to the imperial court. We have to deal, then, not with the charm of genuine imports, but with the glamour of wares that existed nowhere on land or sea, with no truly golden gifts, but with their counterfeits—brummagem of the mind and tinsel of the imagination.

Imaginary gifts, which in turn feed the imagination, do not, of course, appear first in T'ang literature. From antiquity, we have the wonderful presents made to Mu, Son of Heaven; since his time, tales of marvelous gifts from abroad have appeared in every age. The two girls presented by the Red Raven people to archaic Mu, King of Chou by divine right, whom he took to be his concubines,[225] are prototypes of the two black maidens sent (or so we are told by a sophisticated thirteenth-century source), as tribute gifts from the Coromandel Coast,[226] whose fiery loins could rejuvenate the least potent of men. The antique charm of such wonders was enhanced by the old belief that foreign travel was full of physical hazards and spiritual perils, and that monstrous adventures were to be anticipated everywhere outside the confines of China. It was readily believed that spirits and monsters waited at every turn in the mountain trail and lurked beneath every tropical wave.[227] People and things from abroad naturally partook of this dangerous enchantment, and even as late as T'ang times it is probable that exotic gods were still invested with the aroma of uncertain magic and perilous witchery. But in every age, even our own, men are willing to credit every quaint superstition if it concerns distant lands. The notion of fantastic tribute, in short, was not novel in the ninth century. The books that told of it simply gave new life to old and natural traditions, but also found raw material in the events of the first half of the T'ang epoch, which had been unusual in the variety of exotic things that could be seen in China. Material and spiritual exoticism had flourished in the taste of the seventh and eighth centuries. Outlanders and their curious trappings were abundantly to be seen, and the vogue for them was everywhere prevalent. In this lively and expansive age, it even became necessary, from time to time, for the Son of Heaven to set an example for his unthrifty and credulous subjects by issuing bans on the submission of the weird, the wild, and the whimsical among articles of tribute. A notable instance of such exemplary simplicity is found in an edict of the founder of the dynasty, handed down in the first year of his reign.[228] This decree had the additional purpose, it should be noted, of pointing up the recklessness of the preceding regime, that of Sui. It con-

cludes, ". . . such things as dwarfs, small horses with short joints, pygmy cattle, strange beasts, odd birds, and all things without actual utility: the presentation of these shall in every instance be discontinued and cut off. Let this be announced and published far and wide! Let everyone hear and understand!" This enactment did not remain effective for very long, but similar prohibitions issued from the throne again and again.[229] If not aimed at the odd, like the five-colored parakeets from Java, they were directed against the frivolous, like the snow-white hunting falcons from Manchuria.

But after the troubles of the second half of the eighth century, fewer rarities from overseas and overland could be found in the stricken country. There were even fewer after the depredations of Huang Ch'ao in the ninth century, such as the massacre of the foreign merchants during the sack of Canton. In that same century was the great persecution of foreign religions, which tended to remove from the sight of the average Chinese not only the foreign religions and the foreign priests and worshipers, but also foreign books and the images of foreign gods.

It is not surprising, then, that as the international age, the age of imports, the age of mingling, the golden age, began to pass away at the beginning of the ninth century, and the thirst for wonderful things from beyond the seas and across the mountains—whether for Buddhist manuscripts and medical books, or for costly brocades and rare wines, or perhaps just for the sight of an itinerant juggler from Turkestan—could no longer be readily satisfied, the ancient wonder tale gained new and vigorous life, and furnished to the nostalgic imagination what could not be granted to the senses.

The greatest number of T'ang tales about fictitious imports and fantastic tribute were written in the ninth century, when the authentic marvels had passed beyond reach.[230] So the vogue for the exotic in wares was replaced by the vogue for the exaggerated exotic in literature. To quote a modern critic:

> We are no longer in the world of flesh and blood. We are in the Dreamland in which the soul glimmers like the flame of a candle. The landscape has been transformed into an "inscape." The world is drowned in the immeasurable ocean of Darkness, and there remains only "an odorous shade." [231]

Many of the stories pretend to tell of the reign of Hsüan Tsung, the fabulous king, most glorious monarch of a cosmopolitan age, himself a connoisseur of the exotic, and a symbol of everything romantic even before his own death.[232] In *his* day, one could *hear* the lutes of Kucha! In the next century one might only dream of them.

Here are a few examples of this kind of creative reminiscence:

Two white rings, the story tells, were given to an emperor of China by one of his vassals, among other "treasures which make firm the nation." [233] These were

the rings of the "Mother who is King in the West," a dim and hoary figure associated with dreams of immortality in the mountains at the summit of the world. They resemble other magic rings well-known in folklore. Their possessor could expect with confidence the submission of all peripheral nations.[234]

Again, from Tongking came a piece of rhinoceros horn, as yellow as gold. This was set on a golden plate in the basilica, and the envoy who brought it explained that it had the virtue of dispelling cold—and indeed warm air radiated from it all around.[235] Similar were the hundred sticks of charcoal called the "charcoal of good omen," said to have been sent from the Western Liang, an ancient state in the Kansu area. These were as hard as iron, and would burn without flame for ten days, unapproachable because of the intensity of the heat.[236]

A royal gift from Kucha was a pillow coarsely wrought from a glossy stone much like agate. The fortunate head which slept on it was blessed with dreams of voyages through all lands and seas, even those unknown to mortal men. The tale tells that the head proved to be that of the upstart statesman Yang Kuo-chung, twice fortunate in being the favored cousin of the Precious Consort of Hsüan Tsung.[237]

The perennial demand for beautiful jade, the most magnificent of minerals, underlies the following story: Hsüan Tsung, midway in his reign, marveled that there was no artifact made from the almost legendary five-colored jade among the gifts recently received from the West, though he had in his treasury a belt decorated with plaques of this handsome stone, and a cup carved from it, both submitted long before. He commanded his generals in charge of the "Security of the West" to reprimand the negligent (but anonymous) barbarians who were responsible. The delinquent savages may have been natives of Khotan, the inexhaustible source of jade, and savages they seemed to the Chinese, despite the refinement of their music and the charm of their women. Whoever they were, they did not fail to start a shipment of the pretty polychrome stuff on its way to Ch'ang-an. Alas, the caravan was attacked and robbed of its cargo by the people of Lesser Balür, turban-wearing lice-eating marauders from the frigid and narrow valleys on the fringes of the snowy Pamirs.[238] When the bad news reached the sacred palace, the Son of Heaven, in his wrath, sent an army of forty thousand Chinese and innumerable dependent barbarians to lay siege to the capital of the marauders and recover his jade. The king of Lesser Balür quickly surrendered his booty and humbly sought the privilege of sending annual tribute to T'ang. This was refused, and his unhappy city of Gilgit was pillaged. The victorious Chinese general, leading three thousand survivors of the sack, set out for home. He was followed by a prediction of doom, pronounced by a barbarian soothsayer. And indeed the whole multitude was destroyed in a great storm, except for a lone Chinese and a single barbarian ally. The unfortunate Hsüan Tsung, thus finally deprived of his treasure, sent a party to search for the remains of his host. They found an army of transparent bodies, refrigerated prisoners and soldiers of ice, which melted immediately, and were never seen again.[239]

Those had been the magical years, when nothing was impossible. It was this dead glittering world of the eighth century that the writers of exotic fantasy tried to recreate in imagination.

The chief exemplar of this mode in fiction is a book written near the end of the ninth century. Unlike most T'ang wonder books, which exploit every sort of fantasy, this one is almost completely on the subject of *exotic* marvels. It is called *Assorted Compilations from Tu-yang,*[240] and was written by the scholar Su O in 876.[241] Here are some of the rarities he describes:

The "magic shining beans"[242] were sent from a country called "Forest of the Sun," possibly to be interpreted as "Source of the Sun," which is to say "Japan."[243] This land, far across the seas to the northeast, was most noted for a great shining rock, which reflected the internal organs of a man, like a modern X-ray machine, so that his physician might examine their condition and heal him the more quickly. The beans themselves were of a rich pink color, and radiated light over a distance of several feet.[244] Cooked with leaves of the sweet flag, they would grow to the size of goose eggs. The emperor himself tasted one of these excellent beans, and found them delicious beyond compare. Moreover, they freed him from hunger and thirst for several days.

Another marvelous food came from a country in the mysterious South Seas, which also sent a pillow of crystal, within which could be seen a landscape furnished with buildings and human figures; with the pillow was sent a brocaded coverlet, made of the silk of the "water silkworm,"[245] which expanded when dampened and contracted when heated. The food sent from this land was a fragrant kind of wheat which made the body light enough to ride with the wind, and some purple rice grains which restored youthful vigor and prolonged life.

Dragons, that is, water spirits, crystallized into miniature concretions, were another favorite gift. Examples are the "dragon horn hairpin"[246] and the "tread-water bead."[247] The wonderful hairpin was a gift that accompanied the "magic shining beans." It was made of a jadelike stone, of a deep plum color, and was carved in dragon shapes with inhuman skill. The Emperor Tai Tsung presented it to his favorite consort, the beautiful[248] Lady Tuku. One day, as he and she were boating on Dragon Boat Pond, a purple cloud formed over the pin. The sovereign took the pin in his palm and spat water on it, whereupon the vapor congealed into two dragons, which leaped into the sky and disappeared in the east. The "tread-water bead" was a black, perforated bead with an oddly scaly surface. Its bearer could pass unharmed through water. The emperor tested it by binding it with a five-colored cord (which poisonous dragons fear) to the arm of a good swimmer. This man walked on the surface of the waves, plunged under the water, and emerged dry. Later, when the women of the palace were playing with the bead in a pool, it turned into a black dragon.

Marvelous birds and bird spirits were desired tribute. One such was the "fire-rejecting sparrow,"[249] a black passerine bird, sent as token tribute on the accession of Shun Tsung. The bird was immune to fire. It was, in short, a true phoenix, unlike the *feng-huang* of Chinese tradition usually miscalled "phoenix" in the West. That is, it was the *samandal* of India (said by the Arabs to be found also in Wāq-wāq) whose skin no flame could consume.[250] A crystal cage in the monarch's bedroom housed this prodigy. There the maidservants amused themselves in vain attempts to burn it with candles. Another country sent two dancing girls, one named "Light Phoenix" and the other "Flying Simurgh,"[251] the most ethereal creatures imaginable. On their heads were golden crowns, adorned with the images of the fantastic birds for which they were named, or whose spirits they were. They dined on lichees, gold dust, and "dragon-brain" camphor.

Extraordinary heating devices form a special group. The "ever-burning cauldron"[252] cooked food without fire. This useful object, the tribute of a mythical kingdom, is described in a fantastic narrative that is full of references to countries named in the histories of Han, a millennium before. Related to it was the "fire jade," which was red and could be used like an ember of coal to heat a cauldron.

Contrariwise, sources of cold were equally wonderful and useful. The "ever-hard ice"[253] was found on a great mountain, whose glaciers were a thousand years old. It would not melt in the hottest sunlight. The "pine wind stone" was translucent, and within it could be seen the figure of a pine tree, from whose branches issued a cooling breeze. The sovereign kept it close to him during the summer.

Less desirable, but still to be wondered at, was the "daylight-altering herb."[254] It resembled a banana plant, and was always surrounded by an area of darkness. This uncanny virtue was displeasing to the emperor.

Among these literary marvels were some which could easily have been real, or at least adapted from reality. Such was the "pentachromatic carpet,"[255] given to Tai Tsung of T'ang, as were many of these gifts, by the Korean kingdom of Silla. It was marvelously wrought to show the figures of dancers and musicians, and mountains and rivers. Among these things were shown every sort of bird and insect, which fluttered and flitted about when the least breeze blew through the room.

The "mountain of the myriad Buddhas"[256] was a jeweled construction carved from the aloeswood of Indochina, about ten feet high. This too had been sent by Silla. On the mountain were images of all the Buddhas, in a setting of buildings and natural verdure, all done in the minutest detail in pearls and precious stones. The emperor, a pious Buddhist, installed this cosmic symbol in a shrine, and spread the "pentachromatic carpet" on its floor. This wonderful object may not have been entirely imaginary.[257]

The "Chu-lai bird"[258] may also have existed in some form. Though the Emperor Te Tsung was often given trained animals and wonderful fowl, he ordinarily freed such creatures in accordance with Buddhist precept. But he did not release the

handsome Chu-lai bird sent by a Southern country in 781. Its bill was red, and its purple-blue tail was longer than its body. It was very clever, and understood human commands. Its voice was high and piercing. This dandy of a bird, apparently a tropical magpie,[259] was much loved by the people of the court, who gave it the most costly delicacies to eat. It passed its nights in a golden cage, and spent its days flying about the courts of the palace, and "neither bold goshawk nor great falcon dared come near." Alas! one day it was caught and murdered by an eagle. The palace mourned it sincerely, and one courtier, a skilled calligrapher, made a copy of the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*[260] on paper speckled with gold for the good of its soul.[261]

An unknown country in the South Seas sent a girl of fourteen years, called the "Maiden of the Black Eyebrows," among whose remarkable skills was the talent of embroidering the seven scrolls of the *Lotus Sutra* in tiny, perfectly formed characters on a single foot-length of artist's taffeta. She too may have existed in the flesh.

The wonders just described are only a sampling from the splendid array displayed in Su O's book. As we have seen, some are attributed to such real countries as Japan and Silla, some to ancient nations long since unheard from, and some to lands altogether mythical. But if we survey the tribute records in reliable documents of the T'ang period, we find no mention of any of these gifts, even those from "real countries." The period covered by the narrations of Su O was the last half of the eighth century and the first of the ninth, ranging back over a century before his own lifetime, the late afternoon and the setting of the sun of T'ang's splendor. But the cold, unlovely days of Su O's own time were not yet come. During the years he claims to describe, there actually were horses from the Uighurs, dancing girls from P'o-hai, musicians from Burma, a rhinoceros from Champa, and pearls and amber from some remnant of the dismembered Persian empire. Su O has merely filled the gaps in the record of actual imports for these twilight years with things of magic and delight. His book, in short, deals with fairylands of commerce, and archaic wonder worlds of diplomacy. Its charm lies in its antiquarian exoticism, studded with doubtful gems and forgotten curios. Though conceivably some of these stories may have sprung, fertilized by the imagination, from accounts of actual embassies in the years of waning glory at the end of the eighth century, they are nonetheless delicacies for the use of a poet, not grist for the economist's mill.[262]

the famous I-ching, and another by Amoghavajra,[69] and there were paintings of this "Luminous Prince" by such eminent artists as Yen Li-pen [70] and Wu Tao-hsüan.[71]

Parrots

The ancient Chinese had their own flocks of autochthonous parrots, which lived in the Lung Mountains near the old caravan route along what is now the Shensi-Kansu border. These classical birds, sometimes called "Holy Birds of the Western Regions," because of their ability to speak, were most likely a variety of the green parakeet with violet breast, called the Derbyan parakeet,[72] nowadays a native of Szechwan, Yünnan, and eastern Tibet, but not now known to be north of about 30° North Latitude.[73] But, unhappily, the aboriginal Lung Mountain colonies were raided for cage birds in medieval times, and the race has since then become extinct. In the ninth century P'i Jih-hsiu wrote pityingly of the men of Lung, who were obliged to hazard their lives to catch parrots as "local tribute" for the "Gilded Terrace" of the imperial court:

> The Mountains of Lung—a thousand myriad fathoms—
> The parrots nest on their peaks.
> Were all of their perils explored and their hazards followed to the end,
> These mountains would still not be comprehended.
> Doltish and dull-witted these people of Lung,
> With their hanging passageways—as if they would climb to Heaven.
> Should they spy such a nest up in the void,
> They will fight tumultuously to bring it down into their hands.
> Of a hundred birds they do not get one;
> Of ten men, nine die at it.
> By Lung Stream are the garrison recruits;
> The garrison recruits are not idle either:
> Under the Mandate, they must take up the carved cages,
> And go straight to the front of the Gilded Terrace.
> But this plumage has no value to itself,
> This tongue does not speak for itself.
> To what end this slighting of man's fate,
> To offer up such trifles for play and pleasure?
> I have heard that an ancient king, a paragon,
> Let each of his costly birds go free;
> Yet now the likes of these people of Lung,
> Must weep floods of tears each year.[74]

From about the second century of our era, new breeds of parrots, southern birds, symbolically allied to the peacocks, began to appear in the north, sent from the newly Chinese lands of Lingnan and Vietnam. In T'ang itself, the rose-ringed parakeet, the red-breasted parakeet, and the blue- or blossom-headed parakeet, as attractive

as their names, were to be found on the Luichow Peninsula and nearby parts of western Kwangtung.[75] Like the peacocks, these showy little birds provided a casual article of diet for the natives of this zone, but only because of their abundance—a trivial motive for eating such flamboyant creatures, and to be contrasted with the destiny of the parrots of India, which were eaten by the brahmans as noble and holy food, or those brought to Rome and consumed, along with roast flamingo, by such gourmets as Elagabalus, as worthy of his elegance and luxury.[76] Some were sent away, however, to vie with the familiar parrots of Lung in the cages and gardens of northern bird fanciers. The classic birds must still have been abundant, however, since the parrots in the tenth-century garden of Li Fang were named "Visitors from Lung."[77]

But from the third century, parakeets of both the northwest and the south had dazzling rivals who quickly replaced them in the favor of connoisseurs wealthy or noble enough to obtain them. These were the parrots of Indochina and Indonesia,[78] splendid fowl sent as gifts from the mighty ones of the tropical nations to the Chinese emperor, or brought in (as parrots have been everywhere and in all times) from the ends of the earth by far-traveling sailors and merchants, visible proof that distant realms are more highly colored than the hills of home:

> Now the Eastern curtain draws;
> Now the red'ning splendour gleams,
> Now the purple plum'd maccaws,
> Skim along the silver streams.

Chatterton's "An African Song," from which these verses are taken, caught the eternal glory of exotic places—but the macaw is an American, not an African, bird and was unknown in the Old World until modern times. The parrots brought into T'ang by seafarers and diplomats were new kinds of parakeets, lories and cockatoos.

Most celebrated for their beauty were the parakeets and lories styled "five-colored parrots" in China. In medieval India the lories of the Moluccas were named *pañcavarṇagini*, "five-colored parrots,"[79] for the same reason—they flashed with all the colors of the rainbow. Perhaps, even, the Chinese epithet was a translation of the Indian.

> With my becke bent, my littil wanton eye,
> My fedders freshe as is the emraude grene,
> About my neck a circulet like the riche rubye,
> My littil leggis, my feet both fete and clene,
> I am a minion to wait uppon a quene . . .

So the central figure of John Skelton's "Speak, Parrot." And so, it might be, an exotic parakeet in China. "Red parrots" arrived, too—these were certainly the scarlet lories and rosy cockatoos of Australasia, east of Wallace's line, which separates the two

great faunas of Oceania. The "white parrots" of Chinese literature were plainly cockatoos from those remote lands.

No record of gifts of "red parrots" survives from T'ang times, though they had been imported earlier. The "South Indian Nation," however, sent a talking pentachromatic parrot with an embassy in 720: this embassy is well reported; it requested a Chinese army to punish the Arabs and Tibetans for numerous outrages, and the Indian ambasador was clever enough to point out that robes and girdles were the only sure marks of Chinese favor among the "barbarians"; he was accordingly invested by Hsüan Tsung with a brocaded caftan and a girdle of gilded leather.[80] In the previous century, a five-colored parrot presented by Champa had astonished T'ai Tsung, who ordered a "rhapsody" composed in praise of it.[81] This and a white parrot which accompanied it complained frequently of the cold, and by special decree these intelligent birds were manumitted and sent home again.[82] A mountainous country on the Malay Peninsula, rich in elephants,[83] sent a five-colored parrot in 655.[84] In the eighth century parrots came from Śrivijaya[85] and from Tukhāristān (brought by the great lord "Rama," on behalf of neighboring Kapiśa),[86] and twice from Kalinga early in the ninth century.[87] One of these multicolored creatures, which knew how to talk, remained the pet of the great Hsüan Tsung; it was suggested to him that this might even be the fabulous bird of good omen called "Joy of the Season," which had been shown in an old illustrated book with "cinnabar head, pink breast, vermilion cap, and green wings."[88]

As for white cockatoos, we have already mentioned the one from Champa (but it is not native there—it must have been caught in the furthest part of Indonesia). This was the bird, "refined in understanding, discriminating in intelligence, and excellent at answering questions," which T'ai Tsung, out of pity, returned to its native forest.[89] This bird, and the five-colored one which accompanied it, were painted by Yen Li-pen. Chou Mi, the Sung writer and critic, claimed that he owned this picture:

> My household has long had in storage a "Picture of Prum Irap Presenting Parrots." These must have been the ones presented in the time of "Honorable Outlook" of T'ang. Since they longed for return, T'ai Tsung let them go back to their country, escorted by two women. This, then, is a true relic of Yen Li-pen.[90]

Another famous white cockatoo preserved in paint was "Snow-Garbed Maiden," the pet of Yang Kuei-fei. According to a widely repeated anecdote, the Consort flew it at the gaming board when Hsüan Tsung was in danger of losing at "double six," disarranging the men and preventing the inevitable blow to imperial pride.[91] This touching scene (another form of the story of the toy dog of Samarkand) was recorded by the master Chou Fang.[92]

More spectacular than these was the cockatoo with ten long pink feathers on its crown, surely the elegant rose-crested cockatoo of Ceram and Amboina,[93] the

gift of an island nation far over the sea, five months from Canton, probably one of the Moluccas.[94] The envoys of this remote country brought camphor as well as the parrot, and asked for horses and bronze bells in return, and it was decreed that they be given them.[95]

As for parrot lore generally, there was an old tradition that stroking a parrot led to mortal disease. The disease was psittacosis, which is actually transmitted to the lungs by dust contaminated with the parrot's feces.[96] Then there were well-known tales, probably mostly of Indian origin,[97] of parrots as spies on household servants and errant wives. Finally, the parrot was the image of caged intelligence—best not to be wise! But ". . . loss of freedom may be voluntary and altruistic, as when the parrot becomes a symbol of the bride who surrenders her liberty to her husband, or the vassal who gives up his private interests for his lord's. Again, fine plumage, a source of vanity to its owner, may lead to capture, imprisonment, and sorrow." [98]

Ostriches

No foreign animal was a greater marvel in China than the ostrich, but no fewer than two came to T'ang in the seventh century. The monstrous birds were known by repute, since the Parthians had sent one as a gift as long ago as A.D. 101.[99] They were doubtless specimens of a Tocharian race of ostriches similar to the one which inhabited, until its extinction in 1941, the Syrian and Arabian deserts.[100] The head and neck of the adult male were red or pink, the body feathers glossy black, with white plumes in tail and wing. This was the bird called *ushtur murgh,* "camel-bird," by the Persians,[101] a name which, translated into Chinese, became the common medieval name for the ostrich in the Far East, replacing the ancient title "great sparrow of T'iao-chih," a name which reminds us of the Greek and Latin names of the ostrich.[102] The old name was not extinct, however, for the report of a mission from the Khan of the Western Turks in 620 states that the envoys presented "a giant bird of T'iao-chih." [103] More famous is the "camel-bird" presented by Tukhāra in 650: its ability to run 300 Chinese miles in a day, beating its wings the while, and to digest copper and iron, were widely reported.[104] The last-mentioned ability led to the adoption of camel dung into the T'ang materia medica: it was recommended that a man who had inadvertently swallowed a piece of iron or stone swallow some of the unlikely drug to dissolve it.[105]

This handsome Tocharian bird was offered by Kao Tsung to the manes of his glorious predecessor, T'ai Tsung, at the latter's tumulus,[106] and its image in stone stands today at the tumulus of Kao Tsung himself.[107] A camel-bird of unknown origin, but like the other shown plainly and realistically, clearly modeled from life, stands at the tomb of Jui Tsung.

A mystery altogether is Li Po's ostrich:

drinking barbarians, and the hazards of frontier warfare. Here they are in a "Song Below the Border" by Li Ch'i:

> Yellow clouds at Goose Gate Canton—
> Where sun sets behind wind and sand;
> A thousand horsemen in black sable furs—
> All styled "Boys of the Feather Forest."
> Gold clarinets blow through boreal snow,
> Iron horses neigh by clouded waters;
> Under the tents they are drinking the grape—
> And this is the very inch-big heart of their lives.[23]

Whether martens, sables, or ermines, small furs were imported in quantity for the T'ang military establishment. Even the Chinese frontier provinces sent them regularly to the imperial saddlery to be made into paraphernalia for the cavalry.[24] The soft warm skins were sent by the Ulaghun,[25] a people dwelling west of the Mo-ho, east of the Turks, and north of the Khitans, in the seventh century, and particularly from the Tungusic Mo-ho tribes, on the Sungari and the Amur, in the eighth century, sometimes in quantities of a thousand.[26]

Leopard Skins

In 720 "South India" (Pallavas?) submitted a leopard skin to the T'ang court,[27] and four years later Silla sent another, this one doubtless taken from a long-haired Siberian leopard.[28] It was all very well for the lucky owner of a spotted furpiece to follow the poet's example: "The cold is right for being wrapped in leopard furs." [29] Warmth was desirable, but might be dangerous. The fierce leopard-nature could have an ill effect on the wearer, for the pharmacologist Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i warns that "one should not lie on one to sleep, for it will frighten a man's soul"; moreover, if the hairs get into an ulcer or wound, they will poison it.[30] Some ignored this advice; such a one was the hermit Chang Chih-ho, who, in the best Taoist manner, ". . . when, matted on leopard and shod with coir, he dropped his fishhook, he put on no bait, for his ambition lay not in the fish." [31]

Leopard skin had an everyday academic use, too; just as a scholar's ink palette should be covered with a piece of patterned damask to keep the dust off, so should his ink stick be kept in a leopard-skin bag, against the dampness.[32]

Lion Skins

"In the fourth month, the Yabghu Qaghan of the Western Turks sent envoys who offered up a lion's skin." [33] The year was 622, and the pelt a trophy worthy of Nimrod or Hercules.

Other Skins

It is said that Hsüan Tsung owned the fur of an animal whose barbaric name meant "indigo and fragrant," the gift of a distant nation in the times of T'ai Tsung.[34] This beast was said to be a hybrid between a leopard and a fabulous beast of ancient China, called **tsi̯ə̯u-ngi̯u;* its pelt was more deeply blue than Persian indigo, and its aroma could be detected many miles away.[35] The problem of its identity is made all the more difficult by the fact that we do not know the identity of one of its parents, though the not quite fabulous panda has been suggested.[36] The Tibetan "blue bear" comes to mind.

Finally, in the eighth century, the Mo-ho of high Manchuria sent the skins of white rabbits, relics of their snowy forests, along with the pelts of their martens.[37]

Sharkskins

Shark's skins were a product of the whole coast of China south of the mouth of the Yangtze, and are included here as an exotic product only because they were also a product of Tongking, itself a Chinese protectorate.[38] Ancient tradition told of shark-people who lived under the sea off the coast of Champa; they were rich in pearls (which were their tears) and weavers of a strange pongee.[39] But sharkskins served prosaic ends, and seem not to have been invested with any special glamour, despite the fabulous mermen who may have worn them. A kind of plate armor had formerly been made of sharkskin, and the stuff made a useful abrasive, but in T'ang it was in demand mostly as a decorative and efficient wrapping on the hilts of swords, since its pearled surface would not readily slip in the hand.[40] Swords of the T'ang period, adorned with such other precious materials as gold, silver, and mottled rhinoceros horn, and with hilts wrapped in shagreen, may still be seen at Nara in Japan.[41]

Animal Tails

As a symbolic decoration, the tail of an animal could signify the whole animal and contain its essence, as a sword might hold the mana of a king, or a scalp the spiritual sap of an enemy. But of course some tails were simply badges of honor; among these must be numbered the yaktails imported from Tibet or those T'ang lands adjacent to Tibet in the West (modern Szechwan and Kansu),[42] and even from the Chinese protectorate in Mongolia in the north.[43] White horse tails from the northwest [44] and fox tails from the west [45] may have been richer in holy power, but there was no question about leopard tails—they were charged with mana and apotropaic energy.[46]

in tropical America. Particularly notable kinds are *Dalbergia sissoides* of Java, and *D. latifolia* and *D. sissoo,* both of India.[26] The last named of these costly rosewoods was in demand in ancient Persia, under the Achaemenid dynasty; it was employed in Susa, for instance, along with cedar and cypress, for luxurious chairs and bedsteads.[27]

Some kinds of rosewood were used by the cabinetmakers of T'ang. Much of this wood could have been *D. hainanensis,* called "flowered *lü*-wood" and shipped, as the name suggests, from the island of Hainan to Canton; but probably other Indochinese *Dalbergias* were involved. "It comes," writes Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i in the eighth century, "from Annam and Nan-hai, and is used to make couches and taborets. It resembles 'purple sandal,' but its color is red, and its nature is hard and admirable."[28] The beautiful patterned wood was also desired for medicinal reasons: pillows made of it could cure headaches.[29]

Sandalwood

Sandalwood is the white or yellowish heartwood of a small parasitic tree[30] of India, Java, and the Sunda archipelago.[31] "It is like our rosewood," writes Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i,[32] meaning that it is comparable to the yellowish wood of the Chinese *Dalbergia.* And, indeed, despite the frequent epithet "white," yellow is the natural color of the fragrant wood, desirable because of the fragrance itself and because the close-grained wood, preserved by its own oil,[33] is perfectly adapted to making finely carved objects of virtu, such as small religious images, boxes for jewels, and other such small treasures. It was the religious applications which were most characteristic—the role of sandal in southern and eastern Asia was like that of cedar in the ancient Near East, where the wood of Solomon's temple and of Egyptian mummy cases stood for the immortality of the spirit.

The chief sources of sandalwood in T'ang times are not known with certainty. The raw wood and worked-up artifacts alike came from India and the Indies, but the exact sources and the proportional amounts they contributed are a mystery.[34] An Indonesian country, named **Dabatang,* perhaps Sumatran, sent sandalwood to the court in 647,[35] but otherwise imports of the stuff seem to be concealed under textual references to tribute and gifts of "rare aromatics" and other collective expressions.

Sandal had a significant place in Oriental medicine. Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i states that it was used to quell "demoniac vapors" and to "kill crawling creatures."[36] The former virtue has been interpreted as carminative, and indeed the medieval Arabs also used sandal to relieve intestinal colic.[37] This usage was undoubtedly Indian in origin, as was the custom of using powdered sandal as a cosmetic,[38] which spread among the "Hinduized" countries of Indochina.[39] But medicines and cosmetics were not properly separate things in the medieval world: as Pāramiti put it in the Chinese

translation he made of the Tantric *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* in 705: "plaster the body with white *candana,* and you will be able to get rid of feverish distresses one and all."[40]

The divinely sweet odor of sandal expressed to the senses the antidemoniac properties concealed within its godlike body. For the same reason, sandalwood was the most suitable substance out of which to carve the fragrant body of divinity, such as the sandalwood image of Avalokiteśvara seen by Hsüan-tsang.[41] Other sandalwood statues, great and small, were venerated through the East. And, extending the idea, sandal could become the epithet of a living god himself, as it was of the Buddha of the South, one of ten spirits of the directions, who was styled "Shining with Sandal and Pearl."[42]

The wood, and the emotions and imagery associated with it, were brought into China under the influence of Indian Buddhism, some centuries before T'ang. The word *candana,* "sandal," appears in China in 357, but only as the name of a country in the Indies;[43] as the name of a tree it appears in 454.[44] The exotic word was first spelled out in Chinese characters sounding approximately like *candana,* semanticized as "oriflamme rosewood" and "true rosewood." This was possible because the name of the Chinese rosewood was **d'an.*[45] The mature name, reserved for the fragrant heartwood, "rosewood aromatic," developed naturally and easily.

In T'ang, the acme of Buddhist culture produced a multitude of carved images, many of them of sandalwood. Consider the apocalyptic vision of the nine assemblies of divine beings described in the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra,* done in sandal by a foreign (and unhappily anonymous) master, with the help of sixty artisans, and adorned with jewels. This wonder of woodcarving was installed in the K'ai-yüan temple in Canton by Hsüan Tsung, where it was seen by the pilgrim Chien-chen.[46] Another pious traveler, the Japanese Ennin, tells of an image of Shakyamuni, three feet high, carved in sandalwood at the order of the powerful mandarin Li Te-yü and installed in the K'ai-yüan temple in Yang-*chou.* Ennin sipped tea with the great man (seated on chairs!) in the "Gallery of Auspicious Images," which had been restored with the aid of contributions from the Persian and Cham mercantile communities.[47]

Less expected than these was the story of the Buddhist priest Pu-k'ung, who, at the instance of Hsüan Tsung, ". . . burned an aromatic dragon of white sandal" while praying for rain.[48] The venerable Chinese custom of burning the rain spirit, whether in the form of a human surrogate of the deity, as in remote antiquity, or in an image, as in this case,[49] was thus adapted by a Buddhist to proper Indian usage.

Utilitarian objects of sandal ranged in size from small objects like an eight-lobed box in the Shōsōin[50] to large ones like the "Gallery of *Candana*" in Li Po's poem.[51] Sandal was a wood of luxury as well as a wood of religion. When Hsüan Tsung had a fine house built for Rokhshan in Ch'ang-an in 751, he had it furnished with the richest objects, such as gold and silver utensils, and among the furnishings were two couches, ten feet long and six feet wide, appliqued with sandalwood.[52] Even more splendid than these were the high seats presented to the monks of the An-kuo

("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.

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]

From Nan-chao in the Southwest came a "creeping" walnut, which tasted

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 *jïla*, which is either Sanskrit *jīra* or Middle Persian *žira*.[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.

Old and ugly, just like ghosts and goblins.
These, prompted from first to last by currish hearts,
Will not leap out to the land of escape and freedom.[63]

It was not unmanly to be well perfumed: a poem of the ninth century tells of a young soldier embarking on an evening of pleasure with foreign courtesans in the capital; he rides a white horse, has a shirt with a phoenix pattern, and "the famous aromas of strange countries fill his sleeve with scent."[64] Even the emperor wore perfume bags, especially at the festival of the winter solstice, when it was a matter of convention.[65]

A famous scent bag was the one buried with Yang Kuei-fei. After his return from Szechwan, Hsüan Tsung sent an emissary to remove her body secretly from the wayside grave at Ma Wei. This agent found the bag still there and brought it to the sovereign, who wept from grief.[66]

Usually these sachets were made of some colored or flowered stuff, especially of fine gauze. There are several small ones in the Shōsōin, of gauze net and of linen.[67] Finally, there were the aromatic balls, mentioned in poetry, which were tossed skillfully about by dancing girls of T'ang.[68]

Aloeswood

Agaru, the Sanskrit name for the favorite aromatic substance of T'ang, has spawned a considerable progeny of English synonyms. From Malay *gahru,* Hebrew *ahaloth,* Portuguese *aguila,* and the like, we derive "garroo" (in trade jargon), "aloes," "eaglewood," and even "agalloch."[69] These words and their relatives stand for a product of various trees of genus *Aquilaria,* native to Southeast Asia.[70] The aloeswood of the incense trade is heavy, dark, diseased wood, distinct from the lighter, softer wood around it. It is saturated with resin and richly scented. Sometimes these pathologically fragrant patches occur in the shapes of men and animals, which increases their market value greatly.[71]

The Chinese name for the best of this precious wood was "sinking aromatic," because it was heavier than water. One T'ang writer tells how the Chams obtained it: "They chop them down and stack them up for years upon twelvemonths. When they have rotted and disintegrated, so that only the heart and joints remain, they place these in water, at which they sink, and so we name this 'sinking aromatic.'"[72] But, adds another, "If it floats, and the patterning in its flesh has black veins, it is **tsi̯ən* aromatic. Both 'chicken bone' and 'horse hoof' are kinds of **tsi̯ən* aromatic, and neither has any special virtue [in medicine]; they are only fit for fumigating clothes and expelling odors."[73] These last are names for various cheaper commercial varieties of the incense.

In the West, China was the reputed source of aloeswood. We hear, for in-

stance, of an Ibādite merchant of Oman who went to China in the eighth century and bought it there.[74] But despite the fact that the city of Canton sent garroo to Ch'ang-an regularly as local tribute, along with silver, orchids, lichees, and python bile,[75] it seems almost certain that the aloeswood was obtained on the Annamese marches.[76] The "China" of the Muslims was not a primary producer but a great emporium. Probably most of the aloeswood used in China was imported, especially from Champa, whose kings sent it to Ch'ang-an during the eighth century, including one gift of thirty catties of "black" lignaloes.[77] It seems likely that the civilized Chams relied heavily on the aboriginal tribes of the mountains to find the diseased trees, then as now. In the nineteenth century the *gahlao,* as the Chams call it, was gathered ceremoniously by a single village of Muslim Chams in Binh-Thuan province, in close collaboration with the *orang glai,* "forest men." Even as recently as that it was very important in both Cham and Annamese rituals.[78]

Aloeswood had a strong place in Chinese medicine, being employed to alleviate all sorts of internal pains, to drive out evil spirits, and to purify the soul. For these purposes, it was supposed to be decocted in wine; it was also added to ointments for application to external lesions.[79] The prevalence of aloes in T'ang incenses and fumigants indicates that the odorous smoke was thought, as in India,[80] to have a beneficial effect on ulcerations and wounds. Whether the report of Abū Zayd of Sīrāf, early in the tenth century, that the kings of China were buried in a preparation of aloes and camphor, has any actual foundation, I have not been able to learn.[81]

In any case, the importance of aloeswood in medieval Chinese incenses for every sort of ritual and private purpose was enormous. A quatrain by Li Ho will serve to illustrate this importance in miniature. It shows a young lordling awaiting the dawn in his lonely room:

> Curling, swirling—the smoke of "Sinks-in-water,"
> A crow cries out—the spectacle of a worn night,
> A winding pond—the ripples among the lotuses.
> The waist-girding white jades are cold.[82]

A scented water prepared from garroo is said to have been used to "dye" the garments of certain courtesans,[83] presumably to make the ladies more stimulating to the senses, but a more extravagant use of the precious wood was to perfume buildings. The aromatic was made into a powder and applied to the desired part—in the case of one Tsung Ch'u-k'o, to the walls of his mansion, to overwhelm the visitor when the door was opened.[84] None of this perfumed architecture has survived, but in the Shōsōin there is a long hexagonal sutra-box, which is coated with aloeswood powder and decorated with cloves and the red "love-seeds" of "wild licorice," [85] a suitable container for the fragrant words of the Buddha.

It was natural that small and precious objects should be made of garroo—an example is the writing brush, partly of aloes and partly of spotted bamboo, bound by birchbark strips, which is kept in the Shōsōin.[86] It seems incredible that pieces large

Pompey and Vespasian. Tuan records a Syriac form of its name, *apursāmā*, the source of Greek *bálsamon*.[122] There is no evidence that it ever came to China.

Galbanum

Galbanum is a sweet gum resin, the sap of a tree related to that which produces asafetida.[123] Tuan Ch'eng-shih knew this substance, too. He records a Persian name for it, *birzai*, and a Semitic name cognate to Aramaic *ḫelbānita*, which is the name of one of the four ingredients of the sacred perfume of the Jews. It was also known to Pliny and other Roman writers. Tuan calls it a product of Persia and Rome (meaning, as usual, Roman Asia), and declares that it is used in various useful medicines.[124] But again, we cannot be sure that the balsam itself was ever seen in T'ang.

Asafetida

Unlike galbanum, asafetida was well known in T'ang as a drug and flavoring.[125] It was commonly called by a Serindian name much like Tocharian *aṅḳwa*,[126] but its Sanskrit name *hiṅgu* was also known. It was imported both as sun-dried cakes of gum and as sliced roots, the latter being regarded as inferior.[127] Many Asian countries supplied the valuable drug to China. Among them Jāguda figured prominently, and also Persia, along with various unnamed countries of South and Central Asia;[128] it was submitted regularly as tribute by the Chinese garrison at Beshbalik on the edge of Dzungaria,[129] and came up through the South China Sea by merchant vessel.[130]

Asafetida is a nerve stimulant and promotes digestion, but the property most exploited in T'ang was its strange ability to neutralize foul odors, though it is very odorous itself.[131] It was also a powerful antihelminthic,[132] and it was boiled with jujubes in cow's milk or meat extract and swallowed as an antidemoniac.[133]

Judging from the poem "An Idle Stay by the T'ung River," written by the monk Kuan-hsiu, talented painter and poet who lived eighty years in the ninth and tenth centuries, asafetida was taken with tea:

> In the quiet room I burn a sandal seal;
> In the deep brazier I heat an iron flask.
> The tea, blended with *aṅḳwa*, is warming,
> The fire, sown with thuja roots, is fragrant.
> Some few single cranes have come flying,
> A good heap of sutras is read through;
> What hinders me from stealing away like Chih-tun—
> From riding a horse up into the blue darkness? [134]

The "sandal seal," of course, is an incense clock. Chih-tun was a hermit monk of the fourth century, and a great admirer of horses.

I have suggested from time to time that Tuan Ch'eng-shih's notes were based more on extensive reading in many languages than on personal observation, and that accordingly we cannot take a reference to a plant or animal in his book to mean that it had been seen in China. But it does appear that the knowledge of this most interesting man was based on more than books. In his rather detailed account of the tree which yields asafetida he refers to conflicting information given him by two priests, one a "Roman" named Wan, the other a certain "Deva" from Magadha.[135] The presence of the informant Wan, possibly an Anatolian or Syrian, suggests that Tuan relied on other unnamed foreigners for oral information on exotic affairs.

Castor Beans

"Tick hemp,"[136] says Su Kung, is so called because its seeds, which are imported from the West and also grown in T'ang, look like cattle ticks.[137] This was the castor bean, which was important for its oil in many parts of the ancient world; it is thought that it may have been first domesticated in Egypt, where the oil was used in lamps.[138] In China both the seeds and the oil pressed from them were used in medicine.[139]

Purging Cassia

"Indian laburnum," or "golden shower," or more prosaically "purging cassia,"[140] was for the Indians "gold-colored" and "king's tree," and for the Arabs "Indian carob" or "cucumber of necklaces."[141] The tree, which has beautiful flowers and bright red seeds in long pods, is a native of India, but was transplanted to all tropical lands quite early because of the popularity of the black pulp surrounding the seeds as a remedy for constipation.[142] In T'ang it was called "Brahman black pod,"[143] or "Persian black pod,"[144] because it resembled the Chinese honey locust[145] or "soapbean tree," which was named "ink-black pod" in China. The Indian name *āragvadha*[146] was also well known to the T'ang doctors, who prescribed the seeds for a number of internal complaints.

Seaweeds

Edible marine algae were no new thing in China; red laver,[147] for instance, which makes an excellent soup, was a familiar product of the coastal waters of central and south China, and was sometimes brought from Japan.[148] Green laver, a "sea lettuce"

My hangings all of Tyrian tapestry;
In ivory coffers I have stuffed my crown;
In cypress chests my arras counterpoints,
Costly apparel, tents and canopies,
Fine linen, Turkey cushions boss'd with pearls,
Valance of Venice gold in needlework . . .

William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act II, scene 1

XII—Textiles

When, in the middle of the ninth century, the representatives of the "Country of the Female *Man*-barbarians," as splendid as princely Bodhisattvas, brought offerings to the palace in Ch'ang-an (so goes the romantic tale of Su O), they had "luminous sunset-clouds brocade" among their gifts.

> They asserted that this was made from "refined water fragrant hemp." It was shining and radiant, infecting men with its sweet-smelling aroma. With this, and the intermingling of the Five Colors in it, it was more ravishingly beautiful than the brocades of our Central States.[1]

The wonderful textiles offered by these beaded Amazons seem to be imaginative transformations of the fabrics styled "morning sunrise-cloud" brought from Indonesia and Indochina—fine cotton goods, of which we shall have much to say later. The notion that there could be textiles more lovely than any manufactured in T'ang testifies to the extravagance of Su O's fancy, since China was at this time the very home and headquarters of rich stuffs and elegant weaves.

The fiber most used for textile making in T'ang was silk, both the long filaments reeled from the cocoon of the domestic silkworm, and the short broken fibers from the cocoon of the wild silkworm which needed to be spun into thread. There were also a number of vegetable fibers from which both plain and fancy linens could be made, including ramie, kudzu, hemp, banana, and bamboo. Wool was used

mostly for felt in the Far East, woolen textiles being more characteristic of the Iranian sphere of culture.

The number of weaves in which these threads were employed was very large: an idea of them is given by the official list of goods purveyed by the imperial Office of Weaving and Dyeing: there were ten textiles, including pongees, damasks, nets, and gauzes, along with linens and woolens; five kinds of cords and ribbons; and four kinds of spun threads, including tussah.[2] The most characteristic T'ang weave was a weft twill. Some scholars think that this was a new introduction from the West, where twills are ancient; the weft twill was especially important in Sāsānian weaving. In ancient China, twills had not been much used, though the warp twill was known; satin, a T'ang invention, is a warp twill in which many fine warp threads completely cover the weft.[3] The beautiful patterned fabrics which we often call "brocades" were actually polychrome damasks, mostly weft rep twills, though some were still done in the old warp style.[4] However T'ang also produced some true brocades, with gold leaf twisted on silk threads. Tapestry weave seems to have been introduced in the eighth century, by way of the Uighur Turks.[5] T'ang also had printed textiles. These were done by the "negative" method: the design was cut in wooden blocks, the fabric was pressed between them, and the dye poured into the hollows; this technique was known from the eighth century. It contrasts with the typical wax resist printing of India and the West.

As an example of the luxuriance of T'ang textiles, consider "*k'ung*-sparrow net," or, as we would say, "peacock net." This was a fine, rich, apparently iridescent fabric manufactured at Heng-*chou* in Hopei.[6] It had been a favorite material among ladies of luxurious taste since the sixth century.[7] Here it is in one of the "Ten Demands" which the Sui courtesan "Sixth Maiden Ting" addressed to her lover:

> A skirt tailored of *k'ung*-sparrow net,
> Red and green intermingled, contraposed,
> Refulgent as with fish-scaled dragon's brocading,
> Clear-cut and luminous, admirably strange:
> How coarse or fine, you know, my lord, yourself—
> I demand of you, young man, a dress and sash![8]

The great centers of the T'ang textile industry were around the mouth of the Yangtze River, and in Szechwan. In these regions large numbers of workers plied their looms to produce immense quantities of fancy fabrics demanded by well-to-do persons of the empire. It is said that seven hundred weavers were devoted entirely to providing the fabrics required by Yang the Precious Consort. From time to time this huge industry was attacked, and in part reduced, as tending to corrupt public morals. In 771, for instance, Tai Tsung decreed that the manufacture of certain cloths with complicated figures, including both monochrome and polychrome damasks and patterned gauzes, was to be stopped, for the reason just given, and also because this detailed work ". . . was harmful to the female artisans." The woven images of

dragons, phoenixes, unicorns, lions, peacocks, heavenly horses, and divine herbs were prohibited, though ". . . the regularly current white 'brocade of Koryŏ' and the brocades of mixed colors, as well as the regularly current damasks and brocades with small figures and graphs and the like, may still be allowed in conformity with old precedent."[9] A similar edict of Wen Tsung, promulgated in 829, went so far as to order the burning, on the first day of the new year, of all the looms and reeds which produced gaudy and frivolous textiles.[10]

It is curious to find a Korean weave (if indeed this was more than a mere descriptive name) among those allowed to circulate by Tai Tsung. Exoticism, it seems, did not necessarily taint the Chinese spirit. Despite the excellence of the T'ang textile industry, or perhaps because of it (since it stimulated interest in rare goods), many cloths of foreign make were imported. Inevitably, T'ang, the purveyor of fine goods to all of Asia, came under the influence of these imports, and shipped abroad articles of her own manufacture which show the impress of exotic ideas. Therefore the handsome T'ang fabrics preserved in the Shōsōin and Hōryūji at Nara in Japan, and the almost identical ones found near Turfan in Central Asia, display the popular images, designs, and symbols of Sāsānian Persia, usually thoroughly adapted to T'ang culture.[11] One of the fabrics of Hōryūji, for instance, is patterned with roundels, in each of which are four bearded Sāsānian kings, mounted on horseback and carrying bows, but with Chinese characters branded on the flanks of their steeds.[12] Again, a prose poem of the end of the eighth century, entitled "Rhapsody on the Figured Brocades Offered by Men from Overseas," describes a pattern of dancing "phoenixes," ". . . with double corollas and layered leaves intermingled conformably with them, so as to make a pattern."[13] The animal shown in a floral scroll or roundel is a typically Iranian device, and these royal gifts must have been the prototypes of well-known T'ang brocades showing "phoenixes" in floral roundels.[14]

A Suit of Gold

It might almost have been predicted that Kao Tsung would reject such an extravagant article as the golden costume presented to him by ambassadors from Tukhāra early in 682.[15]

Woolens

The wools of Turkestan, both eastern and western, were famous in medieval times.[16] Woolens were familiar enough in T'ang (they are frequently mentioned in poetry, for example), but, except for rugs and carpets, they seem not to have been imported. In-

deed, there was a sort of native industry in wool which may have sufficed for the limited purposes for which the Chinese required them. An exception was the woolen cloth—or perhaps we should say "hair cloth"—made from otter fur, sent by the Tibetans in the ninth century, along with other precious things, such as yaktails and gold vessels.[17] This unusual cloth (the alpaca of T'ang?) was exotic, though otters were not; there was even a Chinese of the same period, a professional fisherman, who had trained ten of the clever animals to do his fishing for him.[18]

The native T'ang woolens were almost as curious as the Tibetan: a "woolen" fabric was made of rabbit hair at Hsüan-*chou* near the mouth of the Yangtze,[19] and woolen goods of camel hair were manufactured in Kansu (Hui-*chou*) and the Ordos (Feng-*chou*).[20] The art of making these camlets had presumably been learned from the Iranian peoples of the West.

Rugs

In 726, the king of Bukhāra sent envoys to T'ang, asking help against Arab raiders. These emissaries brought with them a number of valuable gifts, such as saffron and "stone honey," and also a "Roman embroidered carpet."[21] The king's wife, the "Qatun," sent the Chinese empress two large rugs and one "embroidered carpet."[22] In return for these, Hsüan Tsung was asked to give a saddle and bridle, a robe and girdle, and various other regalia to the lord of Bukhāra, and a costume and cosmetics to his wife.[23] Other woolen rugs, including "dance mats," came to Ch'ang-an in the eighth century, the gifts of the potentates of Kapiśa, of Māimargh, of Turgäch, Chāch, and Kish.[24] Among the "embroidered dance mats" of Persia which arrived at the T'ang capital in 750, some were characterized as "great hair" and "long hair," terms which must refer to rugs with unusually deep and thick piles.[25] Possibly the dance mats decorated with gilded serpents, described in a poem by Li Ho, were of Iranian origin,[26] but another of the same poet's verses tells of an undoubted Iranian wool rug under the Sino-Persian name of **t'ǎp-təng*: we must believe that these were not uncommon in the houses of the well-to-do in the eighth and ninth centuries. The poem, "Song of a Palace Houri," is worth translating. In reading it, the reader must understand that a "palace warder" is a gecko: according to an old tradition these little lizards could be fed on cinnabar until they became red; then they were pounded up in a mortar, and the liquor obtained used to spot the body of the emperor's concubines; these marks were permanent, it was thought, unless the woman had sexual intercourse, after which they disappeared. Therefore the Son of Heaven could see plainly whether his women had remained faithful to him, and the geckos were accordingly called "palace warders." The "Seven Stars" are in the Great Dipper. A-chen was the favorite of a ruler of the third century, and the "houri" of our

present poem means to say that she is as sad and lonely as that lady of a former age. "Long Island" is the name of a garden. The poem mixes contemporary and archaic images.

> The light of the candles, high suspended, shining through the gauze, is empty;
> In the flowered chamber, at night, they pound the "palace warders."
> The elephant's mouth blows incense, the *taptan* is warm;
> The Seven Stars hang over the city wall, I hear the gong of the water clock.
> The cold penetrates the silken screen, the shadow of the basilica is dark;
> The curtain's architrave, with its colored simurghs, shows marks of frost.
> Crying mole-crickets mourn the moon under the crooked balustrade;
> Bent-knee hinges and copper doorplate lock me, like A-chen, in.
> In dreams I enter the door of my home, and go up the sandy islet;
> At the place where the River of Heaven falls is the road to the Long Island.
> I wish that my Lord, bright and shining like the Great Luminary,
> Would release his concubine to ride a fish away, skimming the waves.[27]

Asbestos

The wonderful quality of asbestos was familiar to both Romans and Chinese from about the beginning of the Christian era. The men of Han regarded it as a Roman product, quite properly since this mineral fiber was very well known to the Romans, who also understood that it came from a rock. Here is Apollonius Dyscolus on asbestos napkins:

> When these napkins are soiled, their cleansing is performed not by means of washing in water, but brush-wood is burnt, the napkin in question is placed over this fire, and the squalor flows off; while the cloth itself comes forth from the fire brilliant and pure.[28]

This natural but somewhat ostentatious display is said to have had its counterpart in China in the second century, when a man purposely soiled his asbestos robe, and hurled it into a fire with simulated anger, only to bring it out fresh and clean.[29] These anecdotes make the Chinese name for the mineral fabric understandable—it was "fire-washed linen." But asbestos was also called "fire hair," which illustrates another (and false) theory of the origin of the stuff. In the Hellenistic Orient it was sometimes thought to be of vegetable origin, like cotton, but among the Chinese, until the sixth century, and after that among the Arabs, the most popular theory was that it was the fur of the salamander-rat (but sometimes the phoenix) which was cleaned and renewed by fire.[30]

A Persian gift to the T'ang emperor in 750 was a "fire hair embroidered dance mat," that is (as it might be conceived), a rug made of salamander wool.[31] To judge from a couplet in a poem of the same period, asbestos was sometimes used in clothing; the verses describe the costume of a rich aristocrat:

A fire-washed single garment, with embroidered square collar;
A "dogwood brocade" girdle, with jeweled plates and wallet.[32]

Asbestos seems to have been particularly associated with Lingnan, presumably because of imported stuff in the hands of dealers there. In a poem on that region, Yüan Chen (of the early ninth century), describing such typical articles of that region as sago and elemi, also has these lines:

Fire linen when dirty or dusty needs washing in fire,
Tree floss is warm and soft, right for padding clothes.[33]

"Tree floss" is kapok, another typically southern product.[34]

Felt

The arts of making and using felt had been known to the Chinese since the end of the Chou dynasty, but in Han times it was still conceived to be a rather barbaric stuff. Its true home was among the Iranians, where the ancient Magi and the Achaemenian Shahs wore high felt hats, as did their latter-day imitators in Sogdiana.[35] Even in T'ang times the material was not completely naturalized, though it was widely used for curtains, draperies, tents, mats, saddle covers, boots, and all sorts of coverings. Somehow it was regarded as more characteristic of the nomadic peoples, like butter, and T'ang descriptions of nomadic life invariably emphasize its presence. High-ranking Tibetan soldiers lived in huge felt tents, which could accommodate several hundred men;[36] but the great King Srong-btsan-sgam-po, to please his Chinese consort, ". . . discarded his felt and fur robes which had to give way to Chinese silk and brocade"[37]—this was the beginning of a seventh-century trend; not many years after, during Kao Tsung's reign, the Tibetans asked for and received Chinese craftsmen in sericulture, wine making, mills, paper, and ink.[38] The red-haired, blue-eyed Kirghiz (they regarded black hair as unlucky) carried whetstones at their belts and wore hats of white felt.[39] The Turks cut the image of their god from a piece of felt, and kept it in a skin bag, plastered with fragrant ointments, as they moved about the country, and worshiped it suspended from a pole.[40]

But felt boots were made in Ch'ang-an itself;[41] scarlet felt for Chinese use was brought in from the garrison at Kucha,[42] and white felt was a regular product of inner Kansu and the Chinese Ordos.[43] Early in the seventh century, Chang-sun Wu-chi (codifier of the T'ang statutory laws) was responsible for a widespread mania for men's hats of felt made from the wool of a black sheep,[44] and among the many rich gifts given to Rokhshan by Hsüan Tsung was "felt embroidered with goose feathers."[45] In short, though it savored somewhat of the wild horsemen of the steppe, felt was as commonplace in north China as Scottish woolens are in England.

Linen

If "linen" is used in its broadest sense, meaning a fabric woven from threads spun of vegetable fibers, the Chinese had many excellent linens of their own, especially those of hemp, ramie, and kudzu. But they imported some too: they used the "Western (*hu*) woman linen," of the Ordos and Mongolia and of their own provinces of Shensi and Shansi, but though the name indicates that it was made by non-Chinese weavers, we do not know what sort of thread they used.[46] From Silla and nearby Manchuria came another unidentified linen (hemp seems the likely fiber).[47] For that matter, cotton cloth fits our definition of "linen," and the Chinese regarded it as of the same class of textiles. But that is another story.

Varṇakā

Varṇakā, whose Indian trade-name indicates that it was a "colored" stuff,[48] was the product of "Lesser Brahman," a land of vegetarians just beyond Pyū in Burma,[49] and also was brought to Ch'ang-an from Samarkand in the eighth century.[50] Although Sung texts tell of "white *varṇakā*" (a seeming contradiction) of Baghdad, and "*varṇakā* with gold characters" of Rūm,[51] we have no hint of the nature of this "colored" linen (a cotton?) of T'ang times.

Pongee

T'ang, the land of silk, accepted some foreign silks. Early in 839, a shipment of a plain weave of raw silk (which can conveniently be called "pongee")[52] crossed the Yellow Sea, the gift of the ruler of Japan to his cousin of T'ang.[53] This kind of material would have been most suitable as a ground for court painters.

Bombycine

T'ang, and other Far Eastern countries as well, made bombycines, or tussahs, of thread spun from the silk remnants left when the wild tussah moth cuts its way out of the cocoon.[54] Toward the end of the eighth century, Nan-chao offered tribute of Tibetan tussah to T'ang.[55] From both Annam and Japan came tribute of a coarse bombycine, or what we might call by our naturalized word "shantung."[56] Japanese shantung was of two kinds, and there were two hundred lengths of each kind. One

was named for the *kuni* or "province" of Mino, and the other was styled "water woven." This last mysterious epithet, otherwise unintelligible, takes us into the world of the "water silkworms," which we shall encounter again presently.

But before that let us look at some fancy tussahs from Silla. Several times during the eighth century that Korean nation offered textiles called "sunrise clouds of morning bombycine" and "fish tusk bombycine."[57] The latter was also sent by the "Black Water Mo-ho" and the Shih-wei.[58] The name "sunrise clouds of morning," connoting the radiantly pink color of white clouds illuminated from below, was a familiar epithet, applied to popular cotton cloth much imported from the Indies. It is to be supposed that this Korean tussah was attractively colored to deserve the same name. As for the "fish tusk," this designated a yellowish veined or grained appearance, with larger yellow flammulations, suggestive of the appearance of a cross section of walrus ivory, and so the name.[59]

Polychrome Silks

Tapestries, brocades, and other sumptuous stuffs ornamented with colored figures, especially fancy silks, were classed together in T'ang, under a term which I have translated "brocade." They will be briefly treated together here, but it must be remembered the while that China was a world-renowned source of these splendid goods, and gave much more than she received. Persia was a great rival of China in fine fabrics, and embassies from Khuttal and Kapiśa were undoubtedly proud to offer "Persian brocades" to the Son of Heaven.[60] Here too we must mention the "caftan woven with gold threads," a true and noble brocade, the gift of the "'Amīr al-Muhminīn Sulaymān" (that is, of the Ummayad Commander of the Faithful) to Hsüan Tsung in 716.[61] Even the manner of the Byzantine Greek was represented in the Far East—an example is a fabric decorated with eight-pointed stars, found in a grave at Astāna, near Turfan.[62] And among the oddities belong a "hair brocade," the gift of Samarkand,[63] presumably a fine woolen or perhaps a muster (silk and wool mixture), and a brocade from Silla commemorating the victory of that country's hosts over the men of Paekche. On this latter piece was woven a paean in five-word form, eulogizing Kao Tsung of T'ang in the most fulsome manner, and it was presented to Kao Tsung by the younger brother of the king of Silla.

Water Sheep and Ice Silkworms

In our discussion of exotic and fantastic sheep we have noted down the story of the "earth-born sheep," the *Agnus scythicus* of Roman legend. That story, possibly presenting a pale reflection of the episode of the Argonauts and the Golden Fleece to

the Far East, has become entangled with the story of the "water sheep," whose "wool" was the raw material of a real industry, the production of *pinikón* around the shores of the Indian Ocean during the early centuries of the Christian era. The fabric known by this name was woven from the tough, thin anchoring filaments, called byssi, of the pearl-bearing mussel *Pinna squamosa,* and was probably an outgrowth of the pearling industry about the Persian Gulf and Ceylon.[64] These pinna textiles had ". . . a uniform gold-brown or dull cinnamon hue."[65] In China, where the paramount animal producer of textile fibers was the silkworm, not the sheep, we have stories of a marvelous thread from across the seas, produced by a "water silkworm," most probably the pinna mussel. The beautiful Yang Kuei-fei had a lute, whose wood was mirror-glossy, with figures of two phoenixes inlaid in red and gold, and this precious instrument was strung with ". . . the silk threads of the strained-water silkworm," the tribute of a remote nation some 250 years earlier.[66] Or again, there was the coverlet of "divine brocade," woven from the silk threads of the water silkworm, also called the "ice silkworm." This useful animal (so went the tale) was fed its favorite leaves in pools lined with multicolored tiles, in its home in the South Seas; the blanket made from its cocoon had the virtue of expanding in contact with water and contracting when it touched fire.[67] This tale was the production of our old friend Su O. That the "water silkworm" is sometimes an "ice silkworm" is probably due to the fact that the graphs for the words "water" and "ice" differ by only a single dot, and are regularly confused in Chinese texts. In this case, the confusion was accepted the more readily in that there was an ancient tradition of "ice silkworms" in China itself. A fourth-century tale told of ice silkworms, horned and scaled, seven inches long, which lived on a round cosmic mountain. When covered with frost and snow, they spun multicolored cocoons that could be turned into patterned textiles which were not wettable by water and were unconsumed by fire; the archaic culture hero Yao received some of this material from "men of the sea" (a term which sometimes means only "men from overseas"), and wove himself ceremonial robes of it.[68] This imaginary cloth (or is the pinna mussel behind this too?) was easily confused, at least in the minds of innocent men of letters, with a perfectly real "ice taffeta," or "glacé taffeta,"[69] a fine white fabric made during the first Christian century in Shantung. In the name of this product, " 'ice' means that its color is as fresh and clean as ice."[70] Accordingly, when a *literatus* of the ninth century wrote "Rhapsody on the Offering of Ice Silkworms by Men from the Sea" on a rhyme scheme which can be translated "Now That the Four Barbarians Are Put in Order, the Seas Do Not Hide Their Treasures," praising, of course, the world-wide effects of the imperial charisma,[71] a one-time governor of Zayton could also write, on the identical rhyme scheme, "A Rhapsody on the Offering of Ice Taffeta by Men from the Sea."[72] So colored cloth from the monstrous worms of the frozen world-mountain was effectively merged with the old Han glacé taffeta, while keeping the fantastic qualities of the ice-worm's filaments: ". . . neither scorched nor dampened, only to be compared

with the fire-rat in significance; sometimes vermilion, sometimes green . . ." Even the asbestine salamander is pulled into the story.

The panegyrical language of these two "rhapsodies" prevents us from being certain whether the tribute "ice taffeta" was to be taken merely as symbolic of the revival of the good old days of Yao, or whether something actually describable as a cloth made from the cocoons of the ice (or water?) silkworm had in fact been received from overseas during T'ang. If the latter, it may well have been *pinikón*.

Cotton

From about the beginning of the ninth century, words for cotton appear commonly in Chinese poems. To give a few examples: P'i Jih-hsiu wrote of Buddhist priests "kerchiefed with *karpāsa*-linen, catered to with morsels of *candana*,"[73] where "*karpāsa*-linen" means cotton cloth; Chang Chi described Kurung slaves brought to China by "*Man*-barbarian visitors," black-skinned, wearing their hair in long curls, heavily earringed, and caped in "tree floss";[74] Po Chü-i tells how he drinks, unrepentant, in the early morning hours in his sky-blue Turkish tent:

> A short wind-screen covers the head of the couch I lie on,
> With raven-black hat, and this blue felt, and white cotton cape;
> I drink one goblet at the *mao*-hour, and sleep one nap;
> What affair is there—out in the world—which isn't dim and remote?[75]

Cotton was well enough known from mid-T'ang times, it seems, but more as a popular novelty than as an old familiar thing. Let us look at its history in the Far East.

True cotton is the product both of the annual "cotton plant" (*Gossypium herbaceum*) and of the perennial "cotton tree" (*G. arboreum*), which occur as wild and cultivated plants in tropical Asia. The useful fibers of these plants are often confused in literature, both Western and Chinese, with the floss known as simal, the product of the "silk-cotton tree" (*Bombax malabaricum*), and with kapok, which comes from another "silk-cotton tree," the ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra*).[76] Both simal and kapok, which also grow widely in southern Asia, serve to stuff cushions and the like but are useless for spinning into thread.

True cotton, then, is not native to China, but is endemic to many tropical lands close by. However, it cannot be cultivated in lands which have rain throughout the year, since it is subject to mildew; for this reason it is not found growing in southern Malaya, Borneo, Sumatra, or western Java. It is grown, like sandalwood, in places which have a dry season (approximately April to September), such as eastern Java, Bali, the Sunda Islands, and northern Malaya.[77] Most likely it was first domesticated in India.[78]

Cotton was introduced to China as an article of commerce in about the third

century A.D., by two different routes: through Serindia and through Indochina.[79] Cotton planting followed by the same routes. It was cultivated by non-Chinese peoples of what was later called Yünnan in later Han times, and in Chinese Turkestan by the beginning of the sixth century.[80]

The cotton of Qočo in Serindia was especially well known in T'ang: it was grown, spun, and woven into cloth by the natives of that city, and imported thence.[81] Administratively, this was Chinese territory, and its conquest must have stimulated the creation of a Chinese cotton industry. But the cottons of Indochina and the Isles enjoyed much greater repute in T'ang. It was reported of Champa, for instance, that "its king wears *bagtaḳ* [and] *karpāsa* [that is, cotton], draped slanting from his upper arm, and wrapped above his waist. To this he adds true pearls and golden chains made into beaded pendants. He crowns his curled hair with flowers."[82] Bali was known to grow its own cotton and to make cloth of it: there ". . . all the men have curled hair, and they cover themselves with '*karpāsa*-linen,' using a horizontal length to wrap around their thighs."[83] Hsüan-tsang, the great traveler for the Faith, reported cloth made of *karpāsa* in India, but mistakenly described it as made from "the thread of a wild silkworm";[84] of the timid and ugly Tocharians he wrote, "they wear much cotton, but are little costumed in wool."[85] And cotton was imported from many places in the South: cotton thread from Nan-chao;[86] "flowered" and other cotton fabrics from Champa;[87] and fine cottons from Ceylon.[88] Island kingdoms in the Southern ocean, whose names are now difficult to identify, sent cottons:[89] mysterious **Dabatang* was such a land—there, on the seas west of Kalinga, they wrote their books on palm leaves, and the mouths of dead men were filled with gold, after which their bodies were burned on pyres of Borneo camphor. This nation sent cotton cloth to T'ang in 647.[90]

We have seen the foreign words *bagtaḳ* and *karpāsa* in passages just quoted. In T'ang the tree, the floss, and the cloth were known by a variety of names. One of the earliest was *t'ung*, in use from later Han to T'ang.[91] The origin of this name is unknown; it was obsolete in late T'ang. Better established by that time were Chinese phonetic renderings, by way of some Malayan language, of Sanskrit *karpāsa*, "cotton,"[92] and of an old Iranian word cognate to Modern Persian *bagtaḳ*, related somehow to Pali *paṭāḳa*.[93] If a distinction was made between the two, *karpāsa* (or rather its Chinese transcription) meant a coarser cotton cloth, and *paṭāḳa* a finer, but the difference was not always observed. These words, as we have seen, appear in late T'ang poetry and, looking at these poets again, it seems an inescapable conclusion that a cotton industry was established in Lingnan by the beginning of the ninth century. The poet Wang Chien, who was writing at that period, in a poem composed on the occasion of the departure of a friend for Canton, has these verses:

> At the head of the frontier garrison, shops for Dragon Brain;
> At the mouth of the customs barrier, heaps of elephant tusks.

And then,

Bagtaḳ woven by family on family,
Red bananas cultivated in place after place.[94]

Another poet, a tenth-century one, wrote of "Southern Yüeh," the same region as the one described by Wang Chien, in these terms:

In kitchens at daybreak they boil insipid greens,
With loom reeds in spring they weave the cotton flowers.[95]

"Sunrise Clouds of Morning"

The expression "sunrise clouds of morning" has already been noted as the name of a pink tussah silk imported from Korea. "Sunrise clouds" might equally be rendered "clouds flushed with dawn," to suggest the lovely peach color of an Indochinese and Indonesian cotton dye, and was used also of some silks, as when Li Ho writes, "One length of light chiffon, dyed with the pink clouds of morning."[96] It is only coincidence that Théophile Gautier, writing "A une robe rose," asked

Est-ce à la rougeur de l'aurore,
A la coquille de Vénus,
Au bouton de sein près d'éclore,
Que sont pris ces tons inconnus?

The phrase occurs also in direct reference to the rosy dawn in a quatrain by Wang Po, but even there its application to a textile cannot be forgotten, since this dawn is divinely woven:

As on a fragrant screen spring herbs are painted;
As by a sylph-man's reed the morning flush was woven.
What is quite like a road by hill and water—
Where against my face the flowers go flying?[97]

The rosy cotton was imported directly from the Annamese protectorate,[98] and gifts of it were received even from such an unlikely place as Tibet.[99] But, like other cotton goods, it was above all a product of the Indianized nations of the South. Consider for instance the cotton culture of the Burmese country of Pyū, also called Śrîkshetra. In the seventh century its people practiced a kind of Buddhism based on Sanskrit scriptures, a rival to an older sect whose holy books were written in Pali; the ashes of their dead were buried in inscribed terra-cotta urns,[100] and ". . . for clothing and costume they use only *bagtaḳ* made into 'morning sunrise-clouds,' and simply wrap it around their waists. They do not dress in silks or satins, saying that these come from the silkworm, and this would be to injure living things."[101] Similarly, the wives of the king of Champa ". . . are costumed in morning sunrise clouds *ḳarpāsa,* which they make into a short skirt; they carry golden flowers on their heads, and their bodies are adorned with beaded pendants of golden chains

and true pearls."[102] In short, they dressed much like the king.[103] Not only the dyed cloth of these dark peoples but also their barbaric costumes could be seen in the northern capitals: when the orchestras of Bnam and India, with their phoenix-headed harps, lutes, cymbals, flutes, conchs, and many drums, played at court receptions in Ch'ang-an, the dancers were costumed in the dawn-flushed cotton, which for the Indians was cut as the cassocks of Buddhist monks.[104]

Indigo

In addition to the old source of vegetable blue—the native "indigo" taken from one of the knotweeds [42]—the cosmetic makers of T'ang had also an imported Persian dye, called "blue kohl," derived from the true indigo.[43] This deep blue is thought to be of Indian origin, but it was in use very early in Egypt, and later also among the Iranian nations.[44] In T'ang it was known as a product of Kabūdhān, along with putchuk and gum guggul,[45] and of Farghāna, where the ladies painted their eyelids with it.[46] The rulers of Samarkand sent indigo with other valuable gifts to T'ang in 717.[47]

The exotic cosmetic was used by the women of T'ang as by their Western sisters, as we may see in a poem of Li Po:

> Grape wine—in golden beaker—
> A houri of Wu, just fifteen, borne on a slender horse,
> Eyebrows painted with blue kohl, and red brocade boots;
> The words she speaks are not correct, but the songs she sings are pretty;
> She is drunk in my bosom on the tortoise-shell banquet mat—
> What now, my lord, below the lotus hangings? [48]

Indigo was required for the "moth eyebrows" of the palace women of Te Tsung, late in the eighth century.[49]

By the beginning of the ninth century, the expression "blue kohl" had been generalized by the poets into a color appropriate to distant mountains. Po Chü-i has "The mountain named 'India,' a heap of blue kohl," [50] and Yüan Chen has, even more strikingly, "Flowery mountain, brushed with blue kohl." [51] The exotic color image, like "gibbon's blood," is characteristic of the age.

Bhallātaka

"Marking nuts," under the Sanskrit name of *bhallātaka,*[52] were imported from "the Western seas and the country of Persia," and used to strengthen the loins and to dye the hair black.[53] The marking nut tree, a native of north India, was widely used there to make black marks on cloth and also to provide a dark gray dye.[54] It is not certain that the men of T'ang used it for this last purpose.

Oak Galls

The round excrescences stimulated by Cynips insects around the buds of the "dyer's oak" [55] and other oaks are rich in tannin, which readily forms a bluish-black ink in conjunction with iron salts, and so they are widely demanded for both inks and

dyes. The Chinese had obtained their tannin from the bark and acorns of native oaks since archaic times, but the galls imported from Persia, under an Iranian name like **muzak* or **mazak*, were properly regarded as superior.[56] Su Kung reports that galls also grow on tamarisks in the sandy deserts of the West.[57] Though the pharmaceutical books state only that oak galls were recommended for various tonic medicines and to darken the hair, we may readily assume that, like *bhallātaka,* they were also used in dyeing.

Gambodge

Gambodge is named for Cambodia, its true home. This pigment is the solidified sap of an Indochinese tree related to the mangosteen.[58] This sap yields a fine yellow pigment, highly esteemed in the Far East: "It makes the golden yellow ink of Siam, which is used for writing on locally made books of black paper." [59] It was the only vegetable pigment much used by the medieval painters of China, where it was named "rattan yellow." [60] Li Hsün reports that it was needed by alchemists as well as by artists; [61] it must therefore have been imported, most likely from Cambodia.

Flake Blue

The basic carbonates of copper, malachite and azurite, were the traditional green and blue pigments of the Chinese painters. A variety of names, both popular and technical, for several grades of these two bices was current in medieval China: a traditional distinction is that between coarse grinds, which tend to be dark, and fine grinds, which are lighter. Azurite was ordinarily called "stone blue," but alchemists called it by the whimsical name of "blue-waisted girl," [62] and dark, coarsely ground preparations were "great blue." The "flake blue" [63] brought, according to Su Kung, from the Southern lands of Champa and Bnam by commercial argosy, was thought by the pharmacologist himself to be a malachite [64] but was most likely a coarse, flaky, deep blue azurite.[65] Indeed, in the cant of the alchemists, azurite was simply "K'un-lun," [66] as we would say "Indochina."

Orpiment

The beautiful yellow arsenic sulphide named orpiment (from *auripigmentum*), also called "king's yellow" by Western painters, was in China "hen yellow" [67] because it was found associated with realgar, which was "cock yellow." [68] The alchemists called it, in their cabalistic jargon, "blood of the divine woman" or "blood of the

contributed to the culture of T'ang. To judge by records of tribute and gifts from Tibet to T'ang, which over and over again list large objects of gold, remarkable for their beauty and rarity and excellent workmanship, the Tibetan goldsmiths were the wonder of the medieval world. But it would be a daring scholar who would point to the evidence of their influence in China. Let us look at the descriptions of some of these extravagant imports, while hoping that future archaeologists will discover actual examples of Tibetan or Tibetan-inspired T'ang goldwork in the soil of China.

One of the largest gifts of Tibetan gold was one of the earliest. Late in 640, Mgar Stong-rtsan, the minister of the great King Srong-btsan-sgam-po, came to Ch'ang-an to arrange a marriage between his lord and a Chinese princess. To bind the engagement he presented golden vessels weighing a thousand catties, and many other precious things.[40] In the following year, an imperial daughter, later deified by the grateful Tibetans, went to join the ruler of the highlands—an event commemorated in paint by Yen Li-te, but unhappily not now recoverable.[41]

We do not know what the golden vessels of 640 were, but we are better informed about a gift sent by the same Tibetan king in 641 to his father-in-law, T'ai Tsung, in honor of his swift victory in Korea. This was a golden wine jug in the form of a goose seven feet high.[42] Early in 658 the Tibetans sent another marvel of metalwork: a golden city, populated by golden horsemen, and the figures of horses, lions, elephants, and other animals.[43]

There were many other such metallic wonders. Tibet was a golden land. In the ninth century its king lived in a sumptuous tent, decorated with tigers, leopards, and fierce reptiles executed in gold.[44] But other nations were rich in gold too: the Uighur Khan had a golden tent at Kharabalgasun which would hold a hundred men,[45] and the distant king of Rūm sat on a couch covered with gold foil.[46] Great quantities of gold and silver were sent by Silla,[47] and there were occasional gifts of these metals from the tribes of Manchuria,[48] the Nan-chao kingdom,[49] and many nations of Turkestan, including Chāch, Kish, and Māimargh.[50] From snowy Balūr came flowers of gold.[51] What is surprising in all this welter of gold is that we hear nothing of gold brought to China from the Indies. Somewhere in Malaya was Suvarṇadvīpa, the island or continent of gold, an almost fabulous El Dorado for the peoples of India.[52] But the tradition, which was a powerful factor leading to the Indian settlement of Southeast Asia, was absent from China.

Purple Gold

Hsüan Tsung, in gratitude for the *Book of the Dragon Pool,* written by his son when a serious drought oppressed the region of the capital city, presented the prince with a "girdle of purple gold," taken in Korea by his ancestor, Kao Tsung, at the time of his victory over the kingdom of Koryŏ.[53] Other objects of purple gold appear from time to time in the literature of T'ang—objects of great elegance, such

as the "purple gold hammer" in the sleeve of a young warrior who also boasted stirrups of "white jade," [54] or the "wine vessel of purple gold," sent, with imperial robes and a jade girdle, to Chu Ch'üan-chung, virtually master of China in 903, by the hapless Chao Tsung.[55] Distant snowbound Balūr also "abounded in purple gold." [56]

This beautifully named metal had been known in pre-T'ang times, and also in Sung and later, though it appears that in Ming times only imitations of the fine original were possible.[57]

A clue to the identity of "purple gold" may be found in ancient Egypt. Among the rich objects discovered in the tomb of Tut'ankhamūn were ornaments of gold covered with a rose-purple film; for instance, rosettes of this material alternated with bars of pure yellow gold on one of the young king's slippers. The same unusual metal has been found in the diadem of Queen Tewosret, also of the nineteenth dynasty, and in the earrings of Rameses XI of the twentieth.[58] This proves to have been gold containing a trace of iron, which becomes violet on heating.[59] In later times, the ancient art of tinting metals to this and other colors was a treasured secret of the Hellenistic alchemists, about which we have learned from Alexandrian and Byzantine papyri.[60] Whether the purple gold of Balūr, China, and Korea represents a curious but accidental parallelism of technique in Eastern and Western alchemy, discovered independently in Egypt and China, and possibly elsewhere, or a case of the diffusion of the art across Asia, cannot yet be told. But borrowed or original, the Chinese purple gold will have been the product of the inquisitiveness of the Taoist alchemists.

Silver

T'ang silver production was concentrated in Lingnan and Annam.[61] Apparently most of the white metal was produced by cupellation from galena, yielding only one or two parts of silver in 384 parts of lead.[62] At the beginning of the ninth century there were forty silver refineries in operation, producing 12,000 ounces annually; this number was increased to forty-two, with a production of 15,000 ounces, in the middle of the ninth century.[63]

The work of the T'ang silversmith was superb, at least up to the middle of the ninth century, when, because of the falling off of Iranian influences after the great religious persecution of 845, a period of decline set in.[64] The T'ang artisans made many designs, often "chased on a firmly punched background of tiny circles." [65] Sometimes the designs were made in repoussé relief; occasionally they were engraved. Often the whole object was made by soldering several pieces together, a technique used especially to make stem cups. Parcel-gilt and gold inlay were much used for the decoration of all kinds of silver vessels. The pictures shown on these bowls, dishes, boxes, and cups were usually mythological scenes or floral and animal scenes, and especially the "royal hunt," a theme closely related to the representa-

All over the world, I wonder, in lands that I never have trod,
Are the people eternally seeking, for the signs and steps of a God? . . .
Here in this mystical India, the deities hover and swarm,
Like wild bees heard in the tree tops, or the gusts of a gathering storm.

Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall,
"Meditations of a Hindu Prince"

XVIII=Sacred Objects

ALONG THE familiar trade routes through the deserts of Central Asia, or through the Southern Seas, a great traffic in holy and venerable objects passed from India and its cultural dependencies into T'ang.[1] Artisans of many races, including the Chinese, were engaged in making religious objects in the great Buddhist temples of Asia, and these temples had their own shops (as well as hostels, pawnshops, and credit agencies) for the benefit of the faithful who traveled these hazardous routes.[2] The goods they sold to the pious augmented the flow of images, relics, and texts which went into the Far East from India, the true home of the Law. As a result, a very diversified set of exotic objects enlivened the religious landscape of T'ang, among them such things as a Buddhist shrine five feet high sent as a gift from Tibet;[3] a model of the Nālandā temple brought from India itself by a monk;[4] ". . . the five-fingered bell and vajra which were inherited from his deceased Master, a silver plate, and rosaries made of seeds of the bodhi tree and crystal beads," all these being the legacy of the great Tantrist Amoghavajra to Tai Tsung;[5] a silver harp in the grotto of the T'ien-t'ai monastery at Wu-t'ai Mountain, ". . . which had 84,000 notes, and each of the 84,000 notes cured one of the worldly passions."[6] An example of the collecting zeal of Chinese visitors to the holy places

of India is that of the famous I-ching, who, between his departure from Canton in 671 and his return to Lo-yang in 695, after traversing thirty countries, accumulated 400 collections of scriptures in the Sanskrit language, the texts of 500,000 anthems, and 300 holy relics.[7]

Relics

The reverence shown to relics of the saints and masters of Buddhism, and even of the Buddhas themselves, was phenomenal, and what is more, these excellent objects fetched a great price in the public markets, as the following tale tells. This was one of a rich repertory of anecdotes told by the abbot of the Bodhi temple in the P'ing-k'ang Quarter of Ch'ang-an, adjacent to the home of the minister Li Lin-fu (here the minister "seated on the right"):

> Li, the Right-Seated, whenever his birthday arrived, invited some monk of this office-temple to come in his turn to his home, where he laid out a maigre feast for him. There was Monk I, who once extolled the Buddha there, and was given a saddle, completely equipped, as alms. He sold it, and its materials were valued at seventy thousand! Then there was Monk Kuang, who had a name for his voice. After reciting the sutras for several years, it came his turn to extol the Buddha there. Accordingly, he went the limit in invoking the patriotic merit and personal virtue of the Right-Seated, expecting to get a heavy donation. When the maigre feast was finished, a painted hamper, in a scented net kerchief, was brought from under the curtain. In it rested an object like a rotten nail, several inches long. His expectations lost, the monk went back, and was several days in a state of mortification. But after a while he reflected that such a great vassal would be incapable of deceiving him, and so he took the thing to the Western Market, where he showed it to a Westerner of the merchant class. When this Western merchant saw it, he was astonished, and said, "Where did you obtain this object, High One? If you must make a commodity of it, I won't stint the price." The monk made a trial of asking a hundred thousand. The Westerner gave a great laugh, and said, "You haven't reached it! Go just as far as you will, and then speak again!" He kept adding, up to five hundred thousand, and even then the Westerner said, "This is worth a thousand myriads!" And so he gave it to him for that. The monk inquired after its name, and he said, "This is the Precious Bone!"[8]

Excess of enthusiasm for the fragments of precious bodies could even lead to acts of piracy: the Chinese "Master of the Law" Ming-yüan tried to steal the world-renowned tooth of the Buddha from its reliquary in Ceylon. Tradition said that if this powerful relic should leave the country, the whole island would be devoured by demons.[9] Fortunately, the pious zealot was frustrated by the intervention of supernatural powers.[10]

Such fanatical piety naturally provoked its opposite. There were many in T'ang who condemned the faith of the worshipers of relics, and despised the relics themselves as filthy objects of no worth. Han Yü, who wrote the malevolent memorial against the honors shown to the finger bone of the Buddha, was only the most eminent

of these. This uncompromising anticleric represented the more cultured side of the xenophobia of the ninth century, which culminated in the great persecution of foreign religions, the destruction of religious art, and the beginning of the end of Buddhism as an important fertilizer of Chinese civilization.[11]

But meanwhile the enthusiastic search for saintly relics continued. The pilgrim Wu-k'ung returned to Ch'ang-an in 790 with a tooth of Shakyamuni obtained from a monastery in Udyāna.[12] In the ninth century there were teeth of the Buddha in four temples of the capital city, each with its special festival which attracted hordes of believers, who offered medicines, foods, fruits, and flowers, and, in fragrant clouds of incense, ". . . tossed cash like rain toward the storied hall of the Buddha's tooth."[13] The monastery at Wu-t'ai Mountain boasted the skull of a Pratyeka-Buddha, which (reported Ennin) ". . . is white and black in color and in appearance resembles Japanese pumice stone," with some few white hairs still attached to the crown.[14] There were even relics of historical personages, ranging in dignity from a bit of King Aśoka in a Ch'ang-an temple[15] to a piece of the Japanese monk Reisan, kept in a cloister on Mount Wu-t'ai. This last was a most curious object, consisting of a ". . . strip of skin from Reisan's arm, four inches long and three wide, on which the devout Japanese pilgrim had drawn a pictures of the Buddha."[16]

Although it must be admitted that such edifying objects seem to have had little effect on the effusions of the poets, they stimulated the imaginations of the learned tellers of stories. So we have a tale which revolves around a magic pearl sent to the Empress Wu by a Western country, along with the lower jawbone of the Heavenly King Virūpākṣa, as large as a folding chair, and the tongue of a Pratyeka-Buddha, which was blue, and as large as the tongue of an ox.[17]

Images

Religious images, Buddhist ones above all, were much in vogue during T'ang, especially small ones of metal, wood, or clay, which any believer might own—a vogue which encouraged the artisans of T'ang greatly.[18] But for rich individuals and handsomely endowed institutions there were images brought from foreign places, and artistic treatment of foreign subjects, all of which both satisfied and modified the taste of the men of T'ang. The homemade exotic images were plentiful enough; they ranged from the symbolic (such as the figures of the Seven Planets [Manichaean?] painted by Yen Li-te)[19] to the naturalistic (such as the pictures of the musicians of Pyū sent to court by Wei Kao, conquerer of Nan-chao and the Tibetans).[20] "Realistic" representations of foreign subjects were regularly painted in T'ang, since official painters were assigned the duty of delineating the persons and costumes of all visitors to the court.[21] Such paintings, rolled on sandalwood cylinders tipped with white jade, amber, or crystal,[22] must have had an important effect on the taste of the times, at least in court circles. But the effect of objects of art actually imported from the

studios of distant nations must have been even more widespread and penetrating.

Indeed, next to sutras and relics, a prime objective of Chinese pilgrims in the holy lands of the Indies was the acquisition of holy statues and images to edify the faithful at home and adorn the rich temples of T'ang.[23] Not all the exotic icons were from India, however. Many were from the workshops of other Buddhist nations, examples being the brass statue from Khotan kept in the temple of the Holy Flower [24] in Ch'ang-an, in a hall whose murals had been painted by divine beings,[25] and the figures of the Buddha, executed in gold and silver, brought by the son of the king of Silla as a gift to Hsien Tsung in 810.[26] Some were not even Buddhist; among the paintings found at Tun-huang there is what seems to be a Christian saint, with red mustaches, and a Maltese cross on his tiara, but perhaps he was conceived to be a Bodhisattva in the Far East.[27]

Among these introduced objects, however, the group which is most significant for its long-range effect on Chinese taste consisted of patterns and models of beings and symbols of religious worth, intended to guide the minds and hands of artisans not lucky enough to have been born in the lands which the Buddha and his saints had trod. When the painter Vajra Tripitaka, a native of Ceylon and skilled portrayer of holy figures, came to T'ang to exercise his craft,[28] we may be sure that he brought with him his books showing the standard proportions of religious figures. Whether he guarded them jealously or showed them proudly to his Chinese colleagues is not known. But certainly the Chinese were anxious to have such classical models, and certainly they used them: whole compositions are repeated in the different caves of Tun-huang, a phenomenon explainable only by the assumption that patterns were followed to guarantee a devout conformity to just ideals.[29] Special emissaries were sent abroad to obtain iconographic stereotypes; such a one was the man dispatched to Khotan by Hsüan Tsung to obtain the proper form of Vaiśravana, the Heavenly King of the North, a favorite divinity of the Turkish overlords of the city-states of Central Asia.[30] Divine patterns might also form an important part of the booty of war or diplomacy: the aggressive T'ang agent, Wang Hsüan-ts'e, who obtained many drawings of Buddhist images in India, took from Bodh-Gayā a copy of the image of the Buddha made by the Bodhisattva Maitreya himself; from this a gold-encrusted figure of that deity was modeled in Ch'ang-an in 665.[31] (Of course, the artistic influences operated in both directions: Chinese workers at the loom, goldsmiths, and painters worked for the Arabs in Mesopotamia in the eighth century—men such as the painters Fan Shu and Liu Tz'u, and the weavers Yüeh Huan and Lü Li.) [32]

The period of exotic influences on religious art passed, when, as part of the great persecution of 845, images both public and private were melted down for agricultural implements or for the uses of the treasury.[33] Ennin's words on this disaster were: "What limit was there to the bronze, iron, and gold Buddhas of the land? And yet, in accordance with the imperial edict, all have been destroyed and have been turned into trash." [34]