

to buy brilliant pearls, glass, rare stones, and curious products, for which they give gold and various silks. The countries where they arrive provide food and companionship. The merchant-ships of the barbarians transport them so as to make them reach (their destination); they (the barbarians) draw also profit from the trade, (and sometimes) they loot and kill people. Moreover (there is) the hardship that one may meet storms and die by drowning. If (these misfortunes do) not (happen), the voyage out and back takes several years. The big pearls have a circumference of two inches at most.<sup>1</sup>

After this historical retrospect the text goes on to describe what happened during the period when Wang Mang had the power.

"In the period Yüan-shih of the Emperor Ping (A.D. 1-6) Wang Mang, 'assisting the Government'<sup>2</sup> desired to make brilliant his majestic virtue. He sent rich gifts to the king of Huang-chih, causing him to send an envoy to present (as tribute) a live rhinoceros. From Huang-chih, going by boat about 8 months, one arrives at Pi-tsing; going by boat about 8<sup>3</sup> months one arrives on the border of Hsiang-lin in Jih-nan (i.e. the most southern of the prefectures of Jih-nan, in Central Annam). To the south of Huang-chih there is the country of Yi-ch'eng-pu.<sup>4</sup>

The interpreter-envoys of Han returned from there."

The report about the rhinoceros sent as tribute is confirmed by a notice in the *Annals* that in A.D. 2, "in the spring, the country of Huang-chih presented a rhinoceros."<sup>5</sup>

The event was played up by Wang Mang; together with a white pheasant from Yuch-shang (in Indo-China) it was quoted as an example how the throne's prestige was able to draw people from far and wide, just as had been the case in the time of the legendary Duke Chou whom he imitated.<sup>6</sup>

Now where did the animal come from? A. Herrmann has supposed<sup>7</sup> that Huang-chih represented Abyssinia; he suggests a phonetical identity of Huang-chih with the Ag'azi or Ge'ez who lived on the

<sup>1</sup> Pelliot misunderstands this last sentence as "Les grandes perles ont jusqu'à sept pouces", taking 四 in the technical sense of "measure of five inches". He adds in a footnote: "Il y a certainement pas d'autre exemple, pour le moment, où 'sept pouces' soient exprimés comme ici par 'un ou deux pouces'." Pelliot is certainly mistaken, as is proved by the following passage from the *Chien-han-shu*, 諸蕃志, Jap. ed., p. 309: 瓜國六尺, "the melons are six feet in circumference." It would be quite impossible here to take 四 as "measure of five inches".

<sup>2</sup> 輔政. Pelliot translates less exactly: "transformant le gouvernement."

<sup>3</sup> Pelliot translates "deux mois" which is the better reading of the Southern Academy ed., the Mu ed., the Wang 王 ed., and the official ed.; the Chün-shing edition and Wang Hsien-chien edition read 八月, no doubt a dittography of the characters 八月 in the preceding sentence.

<sup>4</sup> After the words 象林界 the text reads 云. Pelliot has joined this to the following sentence: "On dit qu'au sud de Huang-chih, il y a le royaume de Sseu-tch'eng-pou." The Wang Hsien-chien edition breaks the sentence after 云, which then would mark the end of a sort of quotation, presumably of the report of the interpreter.

<sup>5</sup> *Chien-han-shu*, ch. 12, 1b.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 60A, pp. 2 ja.

<sup>7</sup> Ein Seeverkehr zwischen Abyssinien und Süd-China zu Beginn unserer Zeitrechnung, *Zeitschr. d. Berl. Ges. f. Erdkunde*, 1913, p. 553. Cf. also R. Hennig, *Terra incognita*, I, pp. 270-75.

Abyssinian coast. This is very fanciful. Pi-tsing 卑 occurs on the map known as the *Wu-wei-shih* chart, drawn up in the fifteenth century, about which we shall have to say more later.<sup>1</sup> It is there described as being eight leagues south of Malacca.<sup>2</sup> Huang-chih is therefore eight months distant from the "Banana-Island", the ships, of course, keeping close to the coast and avoiding the direct crossing through the open sea. Ferrand<sup>3</sup> attempts to identify Huang-chih with Lanchi, "one of the oldest towns of Southern India, the present Cojeywarin, south-west of Madras, where at this time the Indian Pappayas-dynasty was reigning." This seems at least possible, although the phonetic equivalence is imperfect. Laufer<sup>4</sup> wanted to locate Huang-chih on the Malay peninsula, on the strength of the notice in the *Her-han-shu* (Poma ed., ch. 76<sup>5</sup> p. 61) that Huang-chih is located south of Jih-nan. This, however, is merely a general indication of the direction in which one starts, I think, and it is based on a commentary by Ying Shao, who wrote at the end of the second century and who added "it is 30,000 li from the capital."<sup>6</sup> Although this distance should not be taken literally, Laufer does not sufficiently take into account the data about the length of the voyage, furnished by the text in the *Chien-han-shu*. Pelliot, in one of the few instances where his criticism was too lenient,<sup>7</sup> did not definitely reject Herrmann's identification, in spite of the latter's curious error in thinking that the missions of the "interpreters" started from the barbarian countries.<sup>8</sup> The argument that the rhinoceroses from Abyssinia were particularly famous has little value: the animal is also found in India and Indonesia and specimens from there have later been presented to the Chinese court. The transportation of this animal all the way from Abyssinia may well have been an impossible feat in those days, as Laufer points out. Herrmann's idea, therefore, has definitely to be dropped.

The note in the *Chien-han-shu* is, however, extremely valuable as an indication of the antiquity of China's trade-relations with the countries of the Indian Ocean. It confirms independently the statements in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (between A.D. 50-60),<sup>9</sup> a description for sailors of the coasts of the Indian Ocean, in which the ocean is supposed to end in the country of *Thina*, where, further north, there is a very large city, *Thina*. More details are found in Ptolemy (about A.D. 150). His information was partly based on a map drawn up by Marinus of Tyarus (about A.D. 100). The terminus was a place called Cattigara, which was either in Indo-China (Hanoi) or more likely, on the Malay

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Wu-wei-shih*, ch. 120, p. 16b. Cf. G. Phillips in *J.N.O. to R.A.S.*, xvi, and W. W. Rockhill in *T'ung Pao*, xvi, p. 129. It is Pulo Pisang, "Banana-Island," at 1°30' northern latitude.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal Asiatique*, xiv (1905), p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> *Chinese Geog. Imports*, 1912, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> Laufer writes by mistake: ch. 110.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Pelliot, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> *T'ung Pao*, xiv, p. 783.

<sup>8</sup> The same error is still repeated in Hennig, op. cit., p. 270: "Es gibt dort hohere Dolmetscher" etc.

<sup>9</sup> For this date cf. J. H. Thiel, *Endoxus von Cyäcus, Medel. Kon. Akad. v. Wetensch. Afr. Letterl. N.R.*, vol. 2, no. 6, 1939, p. 66, n. 3.

peninsula.<sup>1</sup> It should not be supposed that any ship sailed the entire route; the Chinese text in the *Ch'ien-han-shu* makes it very clear that there were many transshipments. Individual traders may have ventured even beyond India, but if they did, their experiences have not been recorded. Some enterprising merchants from the West penetrated into China: in A.D. 166 a man from Ta-ch'in, that is the Roman Orient, arrived at Jih-nan and went to the Court at Lo-yang, passing himself off as an envoy from the Emperor Marc Aurel Antonine (An-tun). Another one, Ch'iu Lun, arrived in A.D. 226 and went to Nanking to the Court of the King of Wu. When he started on the return journey the Emperor sent one of his officers with him, but he died on the way, and Ch'iu Lun returned alone. The sea-route to and from the West was definitely open, although the more remote stages of it and the countries at the other end were still imperfectly known. The Chinese tell us that down to the sixth century no Chinese and but few (if any) persons from Cambodia, Annam, or Tongking had reached the Far West (Ta Ch'in), though merchants from these parts came frequently to Indo-China.<sup>2</sup>

During the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-907) this intercourse increased enormously. Buddhist pilgrims and missionaries came and went (Fa-hsien, of course, had already been earlier) and in the south, at Canton, a great centre for foreign trade developed. Many foreign merchants settled there. The Arabic-Persian called it Hân-fū. On the island of Hsi-nan there was also an important Persian colony.<sup>3</sup> The Mohammedan merchants at Canton were strong and important enough to start a rebellion and to sack the city in A.D. 758. More than a century later their offices were looted by the great rebel Huang Ch'ao. The Arabic account of the merchant Sulayman, based on his own experiences and those of others, dated A.D. 851, gives interesting information on the trade-relations between western ports and China. Chia Tan,<sup>4</sup> writing between A.D. 785-805, describes the route to the Persian Gulf but it is clear that his information is second-hand. The trade was in the hands of the Persians and the Arabs. In A.D. 607 the Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty sent a mission to Siam to open commercial relations with it. The mission returned in A.D. 610 and from the rewards given it is clear that this was considered a very daring and unusual enterprise.<sup>5</sup>

It is, however, in the T'ang period that the first definite information appears in Chinese sources on the countries beyond India, and what is to the point here, on Africa. There is a curious work, written by the scholar Tuan Ch'ung-shih 段成式, who died in A.D. 863, called the *Tu-yang-tai-tsu* 酉陽雜俎. This book was published in the *Chin-tai-pi-shu*

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this name cf. Franke, *Geschichte des Chinesischen Reiches*, III, pp. 212-14. Cf. also the recent discovery at Oc-Eo, apparently an old sea-port, now situated 25 km. from the coast of the Gulf of Siam. The most interesting find, from our point of view, is a gold Roman medal dated 157 A.D. The finds are briefly described in a pamphlet entitled: "L'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient de 1910-1945" (published at Hanoi), pp. 19-139.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Pelliot, *Journal Asiatique*, 1913, II, p. 380.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. on this Treasury Pelliot, "Deux Itinéraires de Chine en Inde," *DEFFO*, I, pp. 131-99, and Hirth and Rockhill, *Chiu Jue-kua* (1911), pp. 9-14.

<sup>5</sup> *Chiu Jue-kua*, p. 8.

津逮秘書 by Mao Chin 毛晉 (1593-1657).<sup>1</sup> The antiquity of the text is guaranteed by the *Hsin T'ang-shu*, 新唐書 by Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修, completed in 1060, which has an abridged extract of it.<sup>2</sup> From the chapter in which a number of exotic plants are described,<sup>3</sup> it is clear that part of his information is derived from priests (僧侶)<sup>4</sup> of *Fa-hin*, that is Ta-ch'in or the Roman Orient<sup>5</sup> and Magadha in India. Hirth has called attention to this text; in his translation,<sup>6</sup> however, there are a few curious errors which make a new translation necessary.

The text runs: "The country of Po-pa-li 播拔力 is in the south-western sea. (The people) do not eat any of the five grains, but eat only meat. They often stick a needle into the veins of cattle and draw blood which they drink raw, mixed with milk. They wear no clothes except that they cover (the parts) below their loins with sheepskins. Their women are clean and of proper behaviour.<sup>7</sup> The inhabitants themselves kidnap them, and if they sell them to foreign merchants, they fetch several times their price.<sup>8</sup> The country produces only ivory and ambergris. If Persian merchants wish to go into the country, they collect around them several thousand men and present them with strips of cloth. All, whether old or young draw blood and swear an oath, and then only do they

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hirth, "The Mystery of India," *J.AOS.*, xxx, pp. 17-46. This bibliographical information may now be supplemented, cf. *T'ung-shu-t'ien-shu shu-yin-tsu* 讀書子目書名索引, p. 295. Mao Chin's edition has nominally twenty chapters and a supplement of nominally to chapters. The editions in the *Hsi-pi-shien-hung-yu-shu* 湖北先正遺書, and in the *Ssu-pu-t'ung-k'an* 四部叢刊, are reprints of an ed. by Li Yün-shan 李雲山 of 1763. There some missing chapters are supplemented by adding 上, 中 or 下 to the existing ones. An edition exists in two chapters, which gives only fragments of the other text, both the main work and the sequel. It is reproduced in the *T'ung-shu-t'ien-shu* 藝苑摺華 (which I have not seen), in the *T'ung-shu-t'ien-shu* 說唐書, the *Shuo-t'ung* 說唐, and the *T'ung-shu-t'ien-shu* 唐代叢書 (not mentioned in this catalogue, cf. E. D. Edwards, *Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period*, II, pp. 217-19). The abridged edition in the *Shuo-t'ung* 說唐, too, divided into chapters, has one section with extracts from the main work and another with extracts from the sequel, but it is quite different from that in two chapters. The other editions mentioned in the catalogue I have not seen. Cf. also Pelliot, in *T'ung Pau sui*, pp. 373-375.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 221B, p. 156, Chün-fing ed.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 16, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> Hirth, loc. cit., by mistake writes 僧.

<sup>5</sup> This is another old error. Pelliot has found its origin with Rome (Hsiao, Hsiao, Franke, cf. *Journal asiatique*, 1914, pp. 145 sq.). For the latest discussion of the problem, cf. Franke, op. cit., III, pp. 202-12. Franke believes with J. J. Hess that the name indicates the "New Antioch" in Euphrates-Selucia, called "Rōmiva" (the Roman town) by the Arabs and explains in this way its origin with Hsiao and Ta-ch'in. He admits, however, that its usage was extended to include the entire Roman Orient.

<sup>6</sup> Hirth, "Early Chinese Notices of East African Territories," *J.AOS.*, xxx, pp. 47-56.

<sup>7</sup> 潔白端正. Hirth, loc. cit., translates "white and upright", and in *Chiu Jue-kua*, p. 123 (1906), "clean-shinned and well-behaved". I think the meaning is "clean", probably referring to freedom from venereal disease and "chaste". Both these qualities would increase the market-value. The *T'ung-shu* reads: 明哲而麗 "intelligent and graceful" as Hirth translates.

<sup>8</sup> 國人自掠賣與外國商人, 其價數倍. Hirth, disconnecting this phrase from what was said about the women, translates quite unwarrantably: "The inhabitants make their own countrymen prisoners," etc. This is an impossible translation. The *T'ung-shu* omits the passage.

It may be asked what was the motive that took the Chinese, from the fifth voyage on, as far as the east coast of Africa? This is a very peculiar one. It should be remembered that the expeditions, on their visit to the distant countries, collected as many rare and precious objects as possible. Among these objects strange animals always occupied an important place. I may recall how even under Wang Mang a rhinoceros had been brought all the way from "Huang-shih". There was, in the capital, an Imperial Zoological Garden in which such rarities were kept, and when the expeditions returned they were regularly followed by a string of foreign ambassadors (including, on one occasion, even an ambassador from "Misr", Egypt) with their gifts of lions, tigers, oryxes, nilgais, zebras, ostriches, etc. Now we learn that in 1414 a present arrived from Bengal (that had been visited by one of the secondary expeditions, detailed from the major fleet), consisting of a giraffe. Bengal, of course, is not a country where the giraffe is native, so it must have come from elsewhere. I think the riddle is solved by the fact that the following year suddenly the African country of Melinda, with which China so far never had entertained any relations, came to Court presenting a giraffe. I believe that what happened is this: we know that in Bengal there just was a new king, Saifi'ul-Din, who on ascending the throne, naturally received presents from the various Mohammedan, including African, countries. Among these presents must have been giraffes, one of which he passed on to the Chinese Emperor, and the Chinese must have met the Ambassadors from Melinda and given them a hint that such an animal would be a very welcome gift at Court. The result was that the following year Melinda came to present a giraffe. These ambassadors had to be conducted home, and so we see that on the fifth voyage (1417-9) for the first time the itinerary is extended all the way to Melinda. It was the giraffe, therefore, that caused the Chinese to sail to Africa.

But why this special interest in the giraffe? Thereby hangs a tale. It happens that in the Somali language the giraffe is called *gira* which, to Chinese ears, would sound like *ki-lin*. Now this sound is very close to that of the word *Ki-lin* (modern pronunciation (*Ki-lin*) the fabulous animal, which we equate generally with our "unicorn". The appearance of the unicorn was always regarded as a happy portent: it was a sign of Heaven's favour and proof of the virtue of the Emperor. Under a perfect reign the cosmic forces could come to such complete development that from the surplus, as it were, such wonderful beings as dragons and giraffes could develop and exercise their beneficent influence. Now there was a superficial resemblance between the giraffe and the *Ki-lin* which was supposed to have "the body of a deer and the tail of an ox", to eat only herbs and to harm no living being. For the eunuchs, leaders of the expeditions, professional flatterers as they were, this resemblance of form and sound of the name was enough: the presentation of a *Ki-lin* would be a supreme flattery of the Emperor. In the previous years several supernatural appearances had already been reported, such as vegetarian tigers, extraordinarily large ears of grain, sweet dew, etc. A *Ki-lin* would cap this series in masterly fashion. Not knowing whether the giraffe from Bengal would stand the hardships of the transportation, they made sure that the following year the Melinda people would present another sample.

When the giraffe from Bengal arrived at Court on September 20, 1414, under the guise of a *Ki-lin* or unicorn, it caused quite a stir. The Board of Rites asked to be allowed to present a Memorial of Congratulation. The Emperor declined, saying: "Let the Ministers but early and late exert themselves in assisting the government for the welfare of the world. If the world is at peace, even without *Ki-lins* there is nothing that hinders good government. Let congratulations be omitted."

When, however, in the following year the giraffe from Melinda arrived, a similar request was made and, although the Emperor again declined, he went out to the Feng-Chen gate to receive the animal in great state, together with a "celestial horse" (zebra) and a "celestial stag" (oryx), and all the officials prostrated themselves and offered congratulations. The Emperor said: "This event is due to the abundant virtue of the late Emperor, my father, and also to the assistance rendered me by my Ministers. That is why distant people arrive in uninterrupted succession. From now on it behoves Us even more than in the past to cling to virtue and it behoves you to remonstrate with Us about Our shortcomings."

The members of the Imperial Academy, the *Hsin-lin*, as well as the Court painters did not miss the opportunity to immortalize the extraordinary event of the arrival of a *Ki-lin* at Court. By a lucky chance the painting of the *Ki-lin* from Bengal has survived, and in the spring of 1939 it was my good fortune to discover in New York not only the original but also an early copy.<sup>1</sup> They show some curious differences in treatment but they undoubtedly are the same painting. Some other copies of paintings of giraffes have been preserved, one in the Book of Rare Beasts that is in the Chinese Library at Cambridge, but all these are very inferior in style. The inscription on it is a eulogy by the Member of the Academy Shên Tu, 沈度. It is only one of several similar productions,<sup>2</sup> and it shows very clearly to what lengths courtiers were prepared to go in their flattery of the Emperor. It runs as follows:—

"Respectfully I consider that Your Majesty succeeded to the Emperor Taï-tsu's Grand Heritage and that Your virtue transforms the world and causes the Three Luminaries to follow their regular course and all living souls to perform their duty. Consequently a Tson-yü (vegetarian tiger) has appeared. Wonderful Ears are produced, Sweet Dew has descended, the Yellow River has been Clear and Savoury Springs have gushed forth. All the creatures that spell good fortune arrive. In the 9th month of the year *chiao-mu* of the Yuan-lo period (1414) a *Ki-lin* (giraffe) came from the country of Bengal and was formally presented as tribute to the Court. The ministers and the people all gathered to gaze at it and their joy knows no end. I, Your servant, have heard that, when a Sage possesses the virtue of the utmost benevolence so that he illuminates the darkest places, then a *Ki-lin* appears. This shows that Your Majesty's

<sup>1</sup> Photographic reproductions of both were published in my article "The *Ki-lin*," quoted above. The copy, now in my possession, is reproduced on the cover of this booklet.

<sup>2</sup> In 1419 a giraffe was presented by Aden (cf. *Hsin-shi*, 1419, p. 10, in 1419) by Mecca (cf. Pelliot, "Notes additionnelles sur l'Inde, l'Hongrie et les voyages," *T'oung Pao*, xxxi, p. 293), and in 1438 again by Bengal (cf. Pelliot, "Les grands voyages maritimes chinois au début du quinzième siècle," *T'oung Pao*, xxxi, p. 315, n. 4).