

The Golden Peaches of Samarkand

The Golden Peaches

University of California Press




of Samarkand

A STUDY OF T'ANG EXOTICS

by Edward H. Schafer

Berkeley Los Angeles London



Dedicated to the memory of *Berthold Laufer*

University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

University of California Press Ltd.
London, England

© 1963 by The Regents of the University of California
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 63-8922

First Paperback Printing 1985
ISBN 0-520-05462-8

Designed by Theo Jung

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

IN THE FIRST chapter of this book there is much that is not my own. I have relied heavily on the work of American, European, Chinese, and Japanese students of T'ang civilization. In later chapters the reader will find rather more of my original labors, though I have tried to conceal most of the impedimenta of scholarship and criticism in the notes at the end of the book. Even in the later chapters, however, I stand on many learned shoulders. I am most grateful for the assistance of my colleagues, living and dead, in these necessary acrobatics, but above all to the peerless Berthold Laufer, to whom this book is unavoidably dedicated.

Much of the work which produced this book was made possible by a research grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, and I am most grateful to them. Particular thanks are due Dr. Joseph Needham, who generously allowed me to use his library of books and articles on the history of science and technology at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

Translations of poetry are my own, unless otherwise stated; Mr. Arthur Waley is the second most common contributor. The epigraphs to chapters i and ii are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

E. H. S.

Berkeley, California
February, 1962

Contents

	Introduction	I
I	The Glory of T'ang	7
	Historical Matters — Foreigners in T'ang — Ships and Sea Routes — Caravans and Land Routes — Foreign Settlements in T'ang — Treatment of Foreigners — Tribute — Exotic Taste — Exotic Literature	
II	Men	40
	War Prisoners — Slaves — Dwarfs — Hostages — Human Tribute — Musicians and Dancers	
III	Domestic Animals	58
	Horses — Camels — Cattle — Sheep and Goats — Asses, Mules, and Onagers — Dogs	
IV	Wild Animals	79
	Elephants — Rhinoceroses — Lions — Leopards and Cheetahs — Sables or Ermines — Gazelles or Chamois — Doubtful Ungulates — A Doubtful Carnivore — Marmots — Mongooses — A Weasel or Ferret	
V	Birds	92
	Hawks and Falcons — Peacocks — Parrots — Ostriches — <i>Kalaviṅka</i> s	
VI	Furs and Feathers	105
	Deerskins — Horschides — Sealskins — Skins of Martens	

	and Their Kin — Leopard Skins — Lion Skins — Other Skins — Sharkskins — Animal Tails — Feathers — Peacock Tails — Feather Garments — Insect Ornaments	
VII	Plants	117
	Preservation and Propagation — Date Palms — Peepuls — Saul Trees — Saffron Crocus — <i>Nāga</i> -Flowers — “Buddha’s Land Leaf” — Narcissus — Lotuses — Water Lilies	
VIII	Woods	133
	Sanderswood — Rosewood — Sandalwood — Ebony	
IX	Foods	139
	Grapes and Grape Wine — Myrobalans — Vegetables — Delicacies — Seafoods — Condiments — Sugar	
X	Aromatics	155
	Incense and Braziers — Aloeswood — Lakawood — Elemi — Camphor — Storax — Gum Guggul and Benzoin — Frankincense — Myrrh — Cloves — Putchuk — Patchouli — Jasmine Oil — Rose Water — Ambergris — Onycha	
XI	Drugs	176
	Pharmacology — <i>Citragandha</i> — <i>Thēriaca</i> — Cardamoms — Nutmeg — Turmeric and Zedoary — Tacamahac — Manna — Balm of Gilead — Galbanum — Asafetida — Castor Beans — Purging Cassia — Seaweeds — Ginseng — Assorted Herbs — Bezoar — <i>Olnul</i> — Python Bile — White Wax — Human Hair — Blue Vitriol	
XII	Textiles	195
	A Suit of Gold — Woolens — Rugs — Asbestos — Felt — Linen — <i>Varnakā</i> — Pongee — Bombycine — Polychrome Silks — Water Sheep and Ice Silkworms — Cotton — “Sunrise Clouds of Morning”	
XIII	Pigments	208
	Gibbon’s Blood — Lac — Dragon’s Blood — Sapan — Murex Purple? — Indigo — <i>Bhallātaka</i> — Oak Galls — Gambodge — Flake Blue — Orpiment	

Contents

xiv	Industrial Minerals	215
	Salt — Alum — Sal Ammoniac — Borax — Niter, Glauber's Salt, and Epsom Salts — Sulphur — Realgar — Litharge — Soda Ash — Diamonds	
xv	Jewels	222
	Jade — Crystal — Carnelian — Malachite — Lapis Lazuli — "Germ of Metal" — Glass — Fire Orbs — Ivory — Rhinoceros Horn — Fish Tusks — Pearls — Tortoise Shell — Neptune's Cradle — Coral — Amber — Jet	
xvi	Metals	250
	Gold — Purple Gold — Silver — Brass — Gold and Silver Coins	
xvii	Secular Objects	258
	Various Utensils — Lamp-Trees — Armor — Swords and Spears — Bows and Arrows	
xviii	Sacred Objects	265
	Relics — Images	
xix	Books	269
	"Exotica" — Bookshops and Libraries — Books of Travel and Geography — Religious Books — Scientific Books — Tablatures and Maps	
	Notes	279
	Bibliography	345
	Glossary A. Names and Titles	373
	Glossary B. Words	377
	Index	381

List of Plates

- I Relief, Borobudur, Java
- II Yen Li-pen, "Foreign Envoy Arriving with Tribute," possibly a late copy
- III Yen Li-pen, "Foreign Envoy Arriving with Tribute"
- IV Tun-huang mural, paradise scene
- V Ceramic, dwarf
- VI Tun-huang mural, Serindian orchestra
- VII Tun-huang mural, man leading caparisoned horse
- VIII Hu Kuei, "Going Out to Hunt"
- IX Ceramic, loaded camel
- X Chou Fang, "Exotic Gift from a Tributary State"
- XI Tārā or Avalokiteśvara seated on yellow lotus
- XII Ceramic, merchant holding wineskin
- XIII "Kuan-yin as the Guide of Souls"
- XIV Elephant brazier
- XV Lu Leng-chia, "Foreigners Presenting Coral Trees to Arhat"
- XVI *Prajñāpāramitā* in Nepalese script on palm leaves from Tun-huang

Dates at Which Chinese Dynasties Began

<i>ca.</i>	1500 B.C.	SHANG
<i>ca.</i>	1000	CHOU
	221	CH'IN
	206	HAN
A.D.	220	Three Kingdoms
	265	CHIN (TSIN)
	317	Northern and Southern Dynasties
	589	SUI
	618	T'ANG
	907	Five Dynasties (North)
		Ten Kingdoms (South)
	960	SUNG
		LIAO (Khitan) and CHIN (KIN) (Jurchen) in North
	1260	YÜAN (Mongol)
	1368	MING
	1644	CH'ING (Manchu)

Year of Accession of the Rulers of T'ang

618	Kao Tsu	780	Te Tsung
627	T'ai Tsung	805	Shun Tsung
650	Kao Tsung	806	Hsien Tsung
684	Chung Tsung	821	Mu Tsung
	Jui Tsung	825	Ching Tsung
	Empress Wu	827	Wen Tsung
705	Chung Tsung (restored)	841	Wu Tsung
710	Jui Tsung (restored)	847	Hsüan ⁽¹⁾ Tsung
712	Hsüan Tsung	860	I Tsung
756	Su Tsung	874	Hsi Tsung
763	Tai Tsung	889	Chao Tsung

THE GOLDEN PEACHES OF SAMARKAND

In the seventh century the kingdom of Samarkand sent formal gifts of fancy yellow peaches, large as goose eggs and with a color like gold, to the Chinese court at Ch'ang-an. What kind of fruit these golden peaches really were cannot now be guessed, but they have the glamour of mystery, and they symbolize all the exotic things longed for, and unknown things hoped for, by the people of the T'ang empire.

This book examines the exotics imported into China during the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907), and depicts their influence on Chinese life. Into the land during the three centuries of T'ang came the natives of almost every nation of Asia, all bringing exotic wares either as gifts or as goods to be sold. Ivory, rare woods, drugs, diamonds, magicians, dancing girls—the author covers all classes of unusual imports, their places of origin, their lore, their effect on costume, dwellings, diet, and on painting, sculpture, music, and poetry.

This book is not a statistical record of commercial imports and medieval trade, but rather a “humanistic essay, however material its subject matter.”

“The most essential thing the reviewer can say about this book is, ‘Read it!’ It is probably the most informative, most scholarly, and most delightfully written book on China that has appeared in our time. It is a heartening reminder that . . . scholars still have an interest in studying history in terms of people, in examining people’s intimate reactions to the little human things that occupied their daily lives.”—*Journal of Asian Studies*

“A pure delight. . . . Scarcely any aspect of T'ang life is omitted, so that bit by bit Mr. Schafer builds up a reasonably complete picture of an entire civilization. . . . Mr. Schafer writes with urbanity and wit. He likes tall stories and he tells them well.”
—*Saturday Review*

“A fascinating survey of T'ang culture as reflected in the use and demand for exotica. . . . Rarely has the reviewer come upon a book so enjoyable and informative.”
—*Journal of the American Oriental Society*

University of California Press
Berkeley 94720