

MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS
THE GINKGO IN ART

The note on the *ginkgo* tree in the January number of ASIA MAJOR has brought from a friend the question why the *ginkgo* figures so rarely in the works of Chinese artists. It is answer enough, perhaps, that tradition and convention have been strong in Chinese art, so that artists rarely strayed beyond the classical trees, pine, willow, *wu-t'ung*, bamboo, and a few others, amongst which *ginkgo* found no place. Nevertheless, there is a record of at least one painting of the *ginkgo* which is not without some interest. In the '宣和畫譜 *Hsüan ho hua p'u* c. 19, fol. 227^o-228^o there is a notice of 樂士 [?] Yo Shih-hsüan, tsü 德 [?] Tê-ch'ên, a native of 祥符 Hsiang-fu (i.e., Pien, or K'ai-fêng, the Capital). No exact dates are given, but an incidental mention of *Hsi-ning* (1068-78) shows that Yo was painting towards the end of the eleventh century, when, as we have seen, the *ginkgo* was a novelty at the capital. He was famed for life-like paintings of flowers and birds, and late in life became a leading expert in the wash-and-ink (水墨) manner. The notice ends with a list of the 41 of his paintings which were in the imperial collection; and the second of these is: 銀杏白頭翁圖 — "One picture of *yin hsing* and *po t'ou wêng*". *Po t'ou wêng*, "white-headed old man", is the name of the grey starling (*sturnus cineraceus*). My cousin, Mr. E. C. H. Moule, tells me that this starling is found in Northern China in the summer, and migrates to the central provinces for the winter. If then we may assume that the spray or branch of *ginkgo* depicted had leaves, and that the painting represented a combination of tree and bird which the artist had really seen, it will follow that the painting was probably done at the capital, and the choice of tree justified by the fact that the *ginkgo* had not yet ceased to be a fashionable curiosity there. I have not traced the later history of the painting, except to find that it was not one of the three of Yo's paintings which survived in the imperial collection of the Southern Sung at Lin-an (see 南宋館閣續錄 *Nan sung kuan ho hsü lu*, ed. Wu lin chang ku ts'ung pien, c. 3, fol. 14^o).

A coloured print of a hawk perched on a *ginkgo* bough may be seen in Kōno Umene's 梅嶺百鳥畫譜 *Umene hyakuchō gafu*, 1881, c. 2, fol. 15-16.

The *Ku chin t'u shu chi ch'êng*, XX, c. 286, 紀事 2, 雜錄, states that there were four large *ginkgo* trees in the Palace grounds at Pien, quoting the 墨莊漫錄 *Mo chuang man lu*, c. 1150, which says they had long been there (舊有), and the 春渚紀聞 *Ch'un hsü chi wên*, c. 1095, which names the date *Yüan-fêng* (1078-86). This is not inconsistent with the view that the first trees were introduced by Li Ho-wên about the year 1055. The Chinese were prepared, as Marco Polo testifies, to transplant full-grown trees; and, indeed, Li's original trees must have been about thirty years old, since they immediately, as it seems, began to bear fruit.

To the list of recent works on the *ginkgo* should be added: A. A. Pulle, *Over de Ginkgo alias Ginkyo*, pp. 25-35, in the "15 de Jaarboek van de Nederlandsche Dendrologische Vereeniging 1940-1946".