

CHINESE INDUSTRIES AND FOREIGN RELATIONS.

BY THE EDITOR.

CHINA'S superiority over all her neighbors is due to the industry of her people, and of all the several branches of labor agriculture holds the first place.

Agriculture is honored by an annual plowing ceremony, which is of ancient origin, and is performed every April all over China with great pomp by the highest state authorities. At Peking, the emperor betakes himself in grand procession to the sacred field, and lays royal hand to the plow which, for this especial purpose, is kept in the Temple of Agriculture. He turns over three furrows, the princes five, and the ministers nine. The crop of the field is used as show-bread in the temple service.

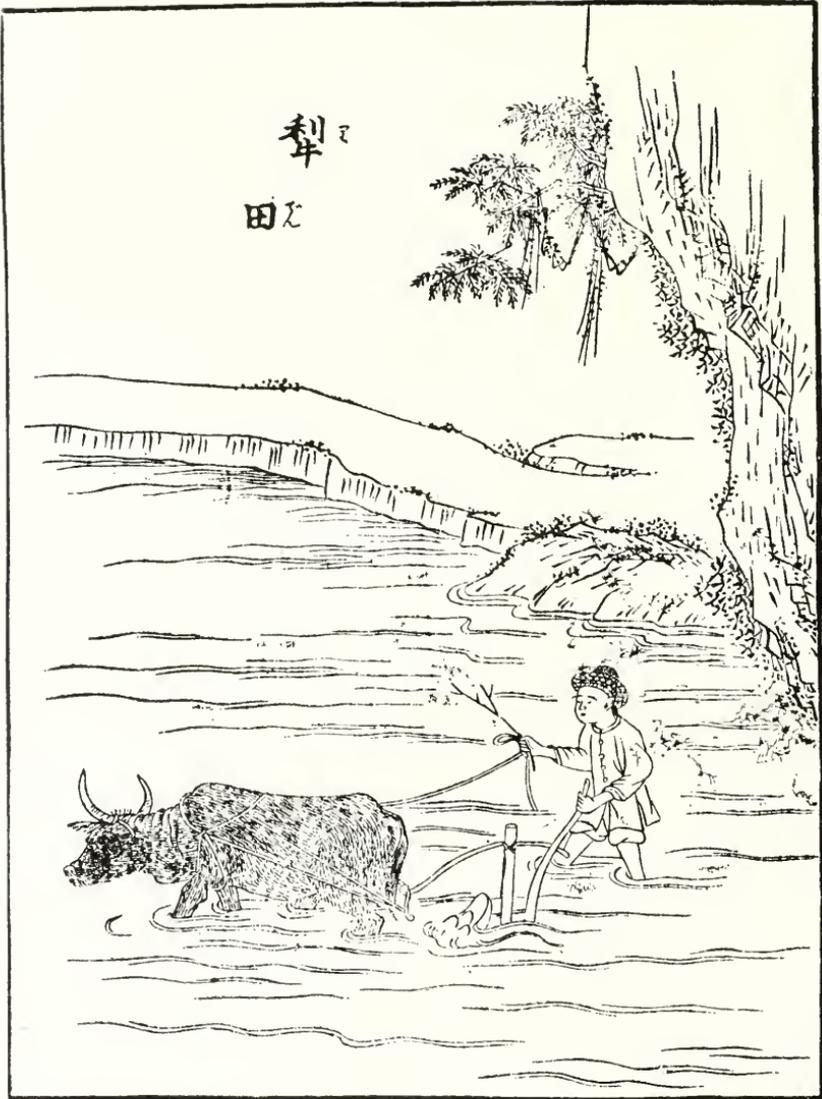
The Chinese raise wheat, barley, oats, millet, maize, sesame, peas, beans, lentils, etc. and, in the south, rice. In addition they cultivate hemp and sugar cane. Some peculiarly Chinese plants are cultivated for their oil and used for cookery. In addition there is much vegetable gardening, and large tracts are covered with tea plantations, which constitute a very considerable portion of the wealth of the country.

The character *mi*,¹ "rice," is one of the radicals in Chinese writing, bearing the number 119. Its original form is that of a cross (like the Chinese character 10²) having in each corner a dot. The four dots mean grains of rice, and the cross is simply intended as a division line between them. Originally the character *mi* referred to grain of all kinds, but now unless otherwise specified always denotes grains of rice, just as in continental Europe "corn" means first of all wheat, while in the United States it means "maize."

The rice plant called *tao*,³ consists of the radical "plant" and

two other symbols denoting "mortar" and "hand." It means in this position a plant that is intended to be husked in a mortar.

Tea and rice are the most indispensable things in China to

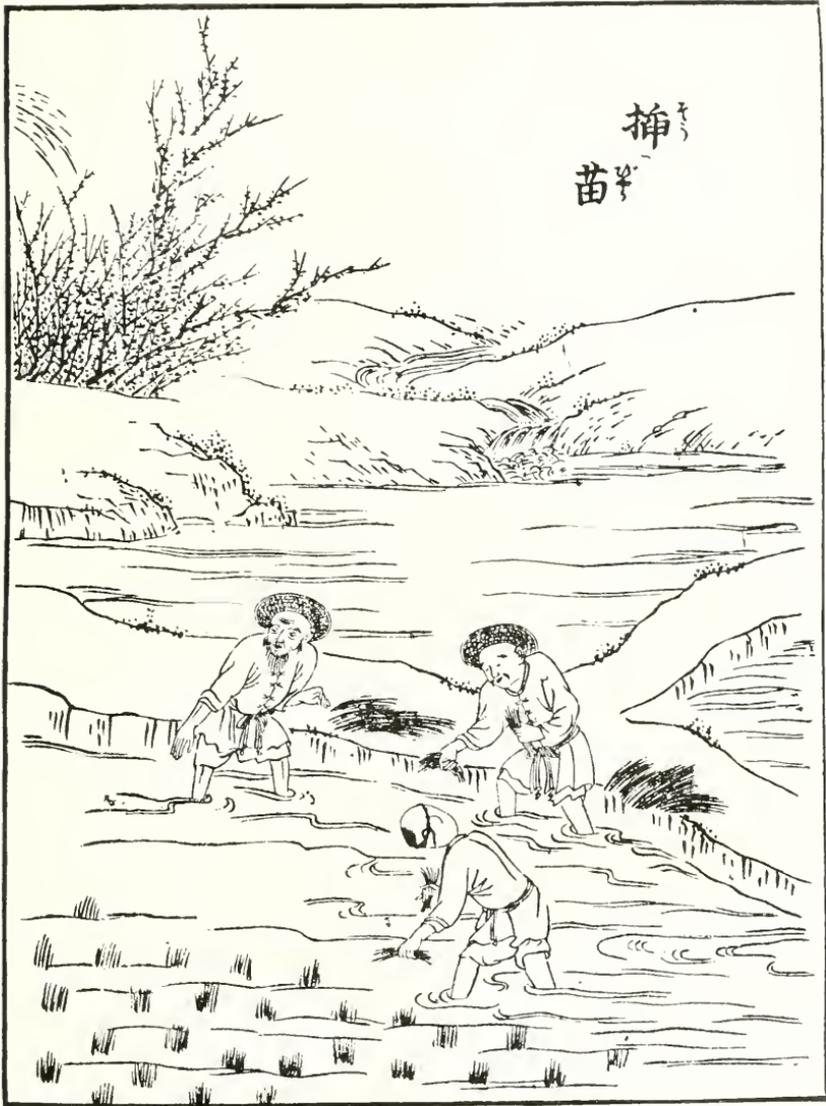


PLOWING THE RICE FIELD.

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both the rich and the poor, the literati and the common people, the emperor and the peasant. It is characteristic of the Chinese

that both the chief drink and the chief food of China have peculiar names to be used ordinarily in life and also in poetry. Rice is called "white food" and tea "the servant of cream." The literary



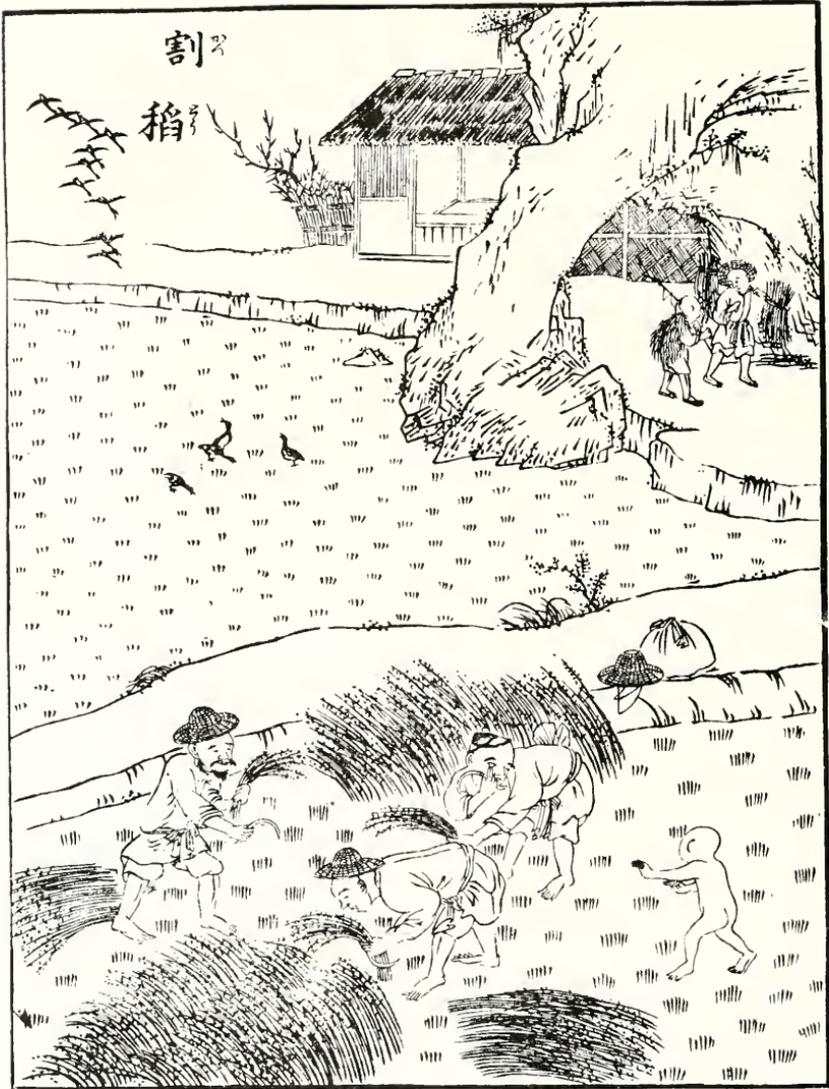
PLANTING THE RICE.

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or poetic name (*tsen ming*) of the former is "auspicious herb," and of the latter "long waist," an epithet which might be more

freely translated as "tall beauty" and refers presumably to the elongated shape of a grain of rice.

The cultivation of the rice plant and the various operations

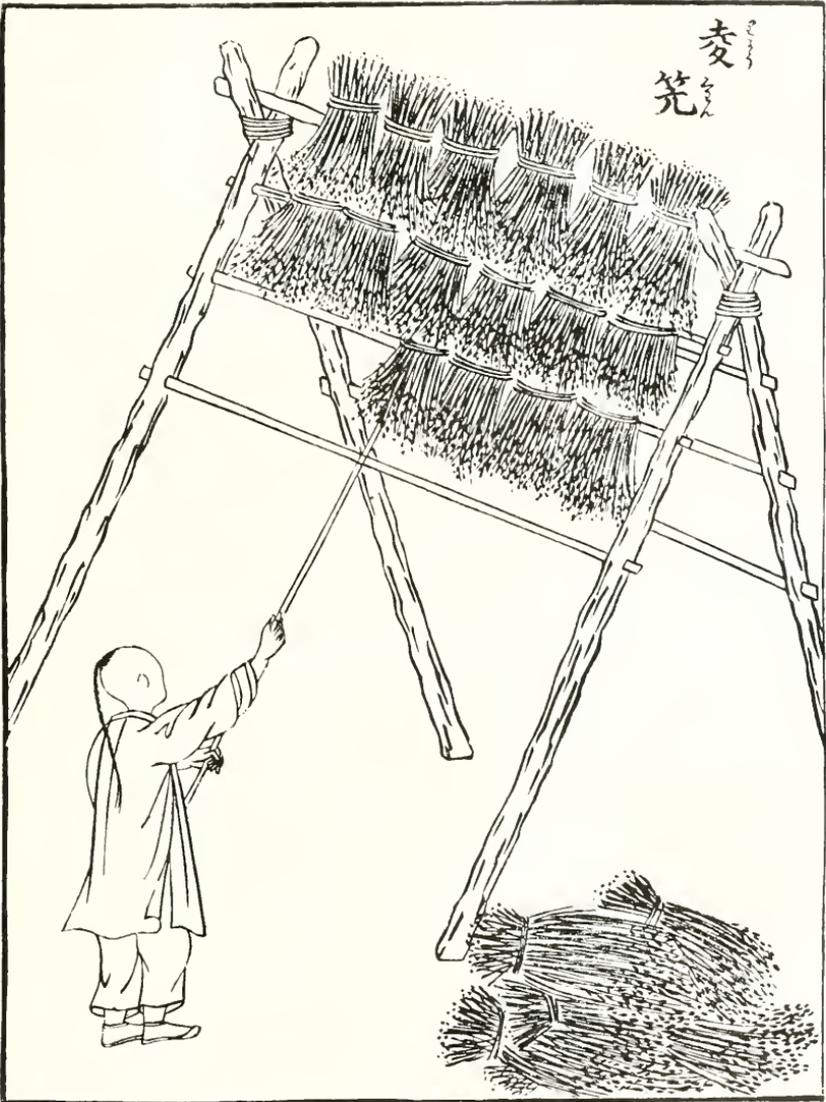


HARVESTING.

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necessary to prepare the grain for use are well illustrated in our pictures. Rice culture is described by Mr. S. Wells Williams as follows:

“An early rain is necessary to the preparation of the rice-fields, except where water can be turned upon them. The grain is first soaked, and when it begins to swell is sown very thickly in a small

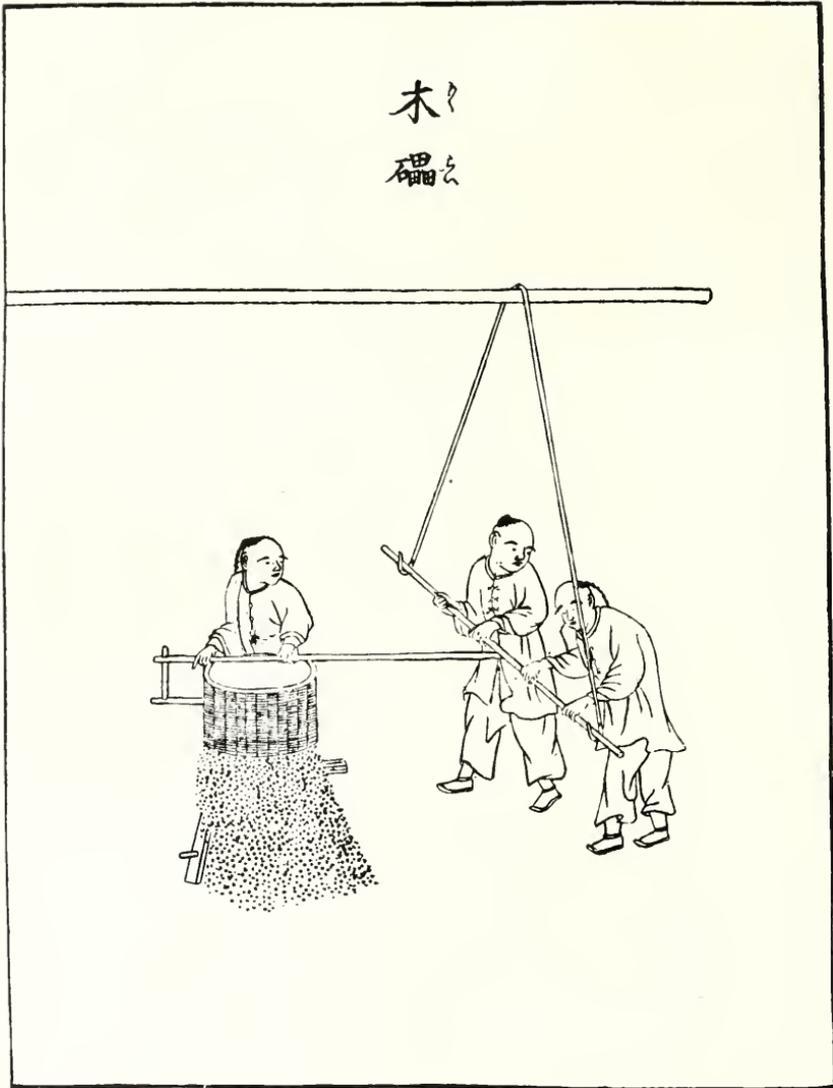


DRYING THE SHEAVES.

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plat containing liquid manure. When about six inches high the shoots are planted into the fields, which, from being an unsightly marsh, are in a few days transformed to fields clothed with living

green. Holding the seedlings in one hand, the laborer wades through the mud, at every step sticking into it five or six sprouts, which take root without further care; six men can transplant two

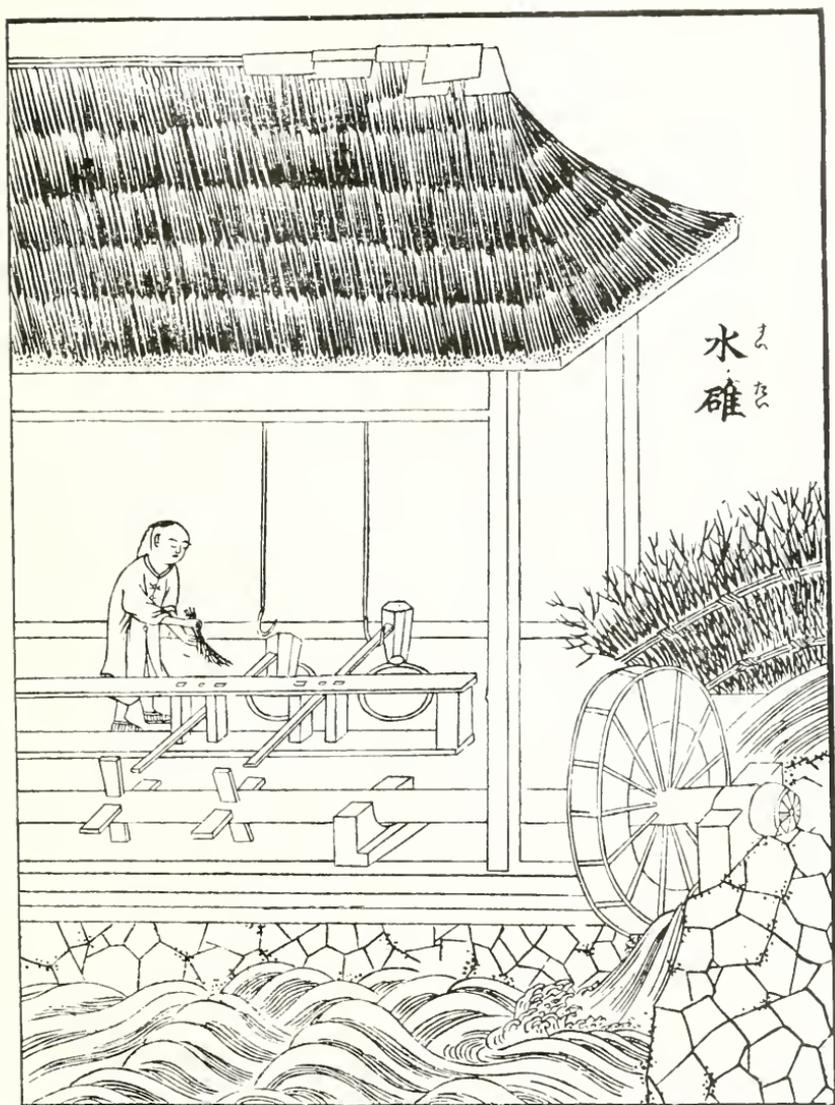


HUSKING THE RICE.

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acres a day, one or two of whom are engaged in supplying the others with shoots. The produce is on an average tenfold. Rent of land is usually paid according to the amount of the crop, the landlord

paying the taxes and the tenant stocking the farm; leases are for three, four, or seven years; the terms vary according to the position and goodness of the soil."



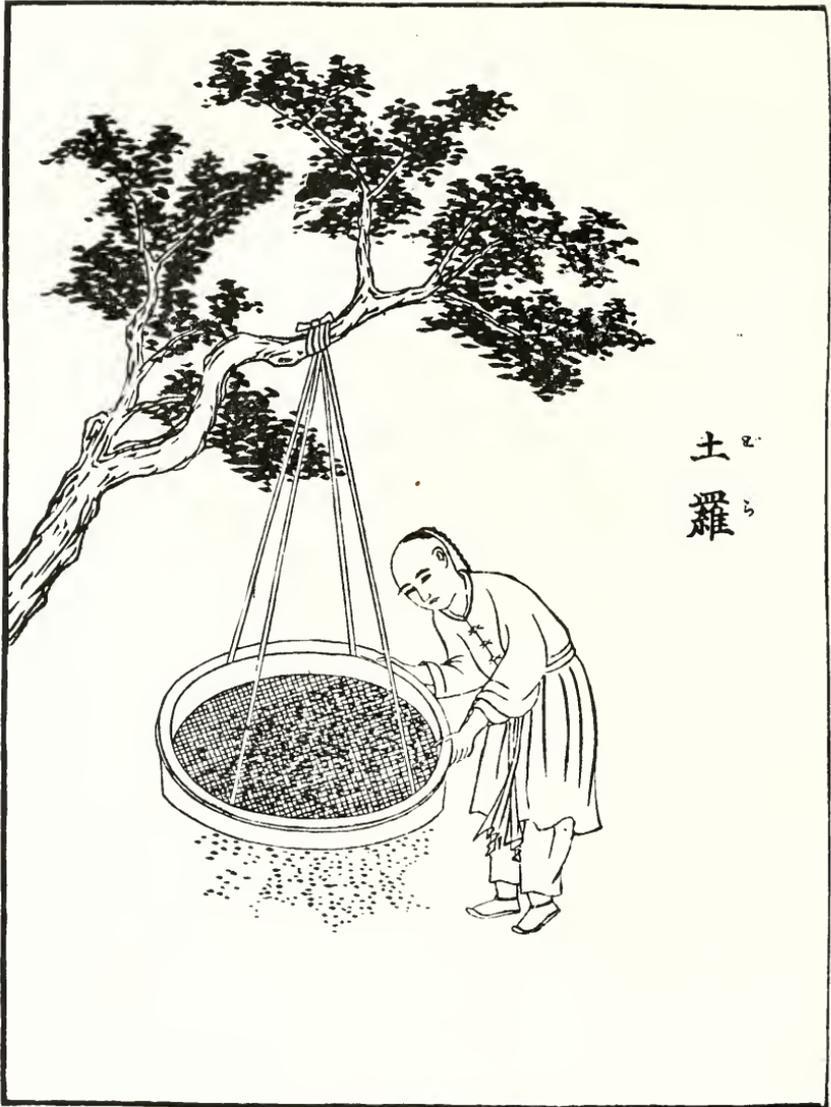
PURIFICATION OF RICE.

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After the rice harvest the sheaves are dried and the rice is passed through a husking drum whose machinery is turned by a large crank worked by hand. To purify it the rice is then pounded

in mortars by hammers which are turned by a water wheel, after which it is finally sifted.

While the general welfare of China depends on good crops,

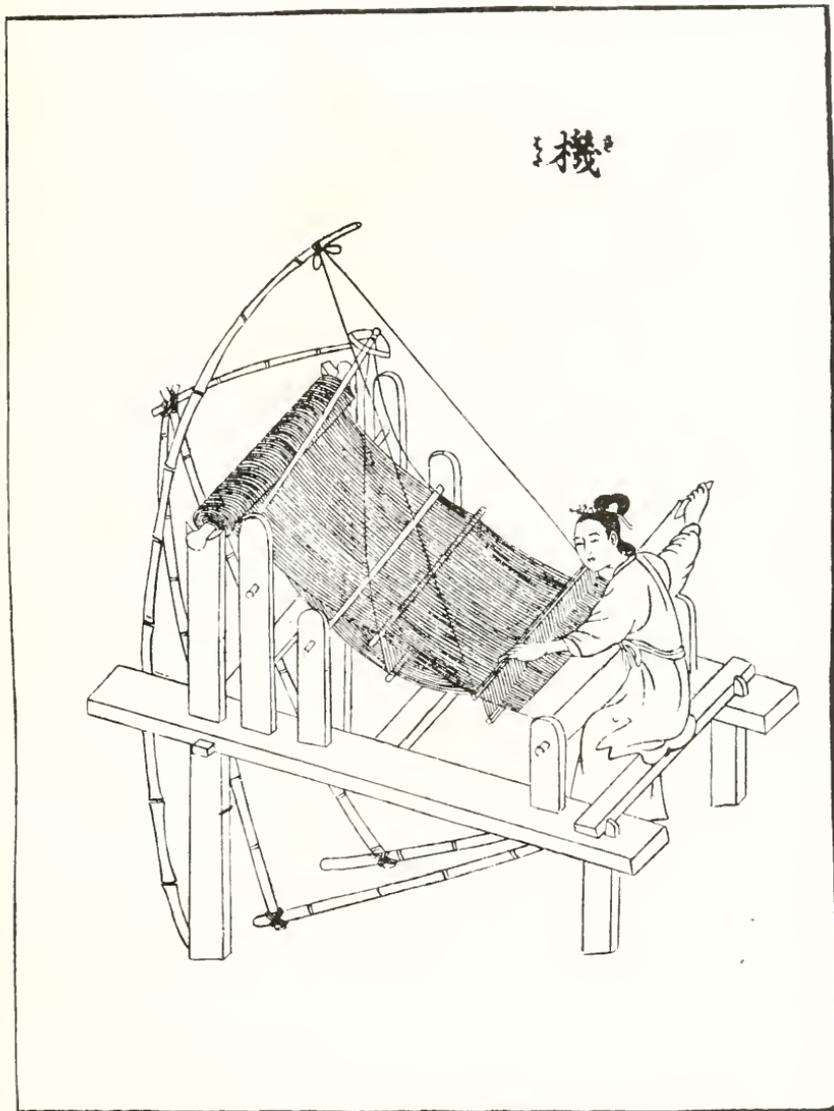


SIFTING THE RICE.

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as in most countries, other industries are not neglected. In fact, they are highly developed, and had reached a state of perfection when Europe was still in a semi-barbarous condition. Silk, lacquer,

porcelain⁴, glass, ivory carving, and textiles are mentioned among the earliest exports of China and form even to-day the staple products of the country. Weaving is still done by hand on old-



A CHINESE LOOM.

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⁴ The word "porcelain" is a Portuguese name which was given to Chinese crockery by the Portuguese, because they were under the impression that it was made of a mixture of egg shells, fish glue, and scales.

fashioned looms, but Chinese fabrics are famous for their fineness and elegance, and compete successfully with the best European products. In addition, China exports bronzes, furs, grass cloth, salt, and gems of all kinds.

The Chinese are good workers in metals and have been proficient in casting large bronze statues and bells for many centuries. They manufactured paper and printed books hundreds of years before the paper industry and the art of printing were thought of in Europe. They knew the mariner's compass and the use of gun powder. In fact these inventions were made in Europe after the report of them had been spread by travelers who had visited Cathay and startled the world with their tales of the flourishing state of China's civilization.

Ancient China had an extended trade with all the world. It is noteworthy that Chinese bottles with classical Chinese quotations have been discovered in ancient tombs of Egypt and Asia Minor. Professor Hirth has traced the intercourse of China with the Roman empire, and considers it to have been more important than is generally believed. The Mohammedans of Western Asia continued to trade with China and left, as an incidental result, many millions of adherents of the Prophet, whose religion in the Celestial Empire is called *hwei-hwei-kiao*, literally "whirl-whirl doctrine," or more explicitly, "the faith of the dancing dervishes."

There are also Jews in China who, according to their own traditions, (which Professor Williams considers quite probable), came to the country under the Han dynasty (201 B. C.—23 A. D.). They are called from one of their customs, *tiao-kin-kiao*, i. e., "the sect pulling out sinews," and their main seat is Kaifung, the capital of Honan. At present the Jews are fast disappearing through assimilation with the native population, but neither the Mohammedans nor the Jews have ever been seriously molested in their religious worship.

The present inclination of the Chinese to live in seclusion and keep aloof from foreigners is of comparatively modern date.

While at the beginning of the Middle Ages China was apparently more advanced in civilization than Europe, it has remained stagnant for more than a millennium,—a condition which is especially noticeable in its methods of government and the jurisdiction of its courts. Legal procedure is very primitive and punishments are as severe, not to say as brutal, as they were in Europe during the Middle Ages. But we have no reason to look with contempt upon China on account of these backward conditions, for we our-

selves have only just emerged from the same state of savagery and ought to consider that in the eighteenth, and even as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, criminals, especially traitors, still had their bones broken on the wheel, while the rack and other instruments of torture were considered as permissible means to extort confessions from suspects.

