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January 23, 1928

A Science Service Feature

! WHY THE WEATHER ! Mailed January 16, 1928

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"SAND MIST" IN THE FAR EAST

In an article published a few years ago by the Astronomical Society of Japan, Yuji Prof./ Wada described an interesting phenomenon well known in the Far East under the name of "bai". In English it is called "sand mist".

These mists prevail in spring and are associated with the presence of a barometric depression over central China. In winter the ground is frozen, and in summer it is knit together by grass, but between these seasons the loose surface is churned up by the wind and clouds of sand rise to a great height. These are carried eastward, afterward collecting moisture and falling as a colored mist. During the fall the sun is obscured and objects assume a yellow or ashy hue, as during an eclipse of the sun, for which phenomenon the mists were often mistaken by the ancient chroniclers.

Characteristic of the "bai" is the thick coating of very fine yellow dust that settles everywhere. During one of these mists on March 4, 1915, a fall of one-fourth of an inch of dust was reported in Etchu Province, Japan. Sometimes the dust descends mixed with rain. A heavy shower of orange-colored rain in the year 1306 is said to have caused the deaths of many human beings and cattle.

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21st and B Sts.,  
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