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# NOTES ON MARCO POLO

## I

OUVRAGE POSTHUME

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IMPRIMERIE NATIONALE  
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## 16. ALAU (c. 9)

*alau* TA<sup>3</sup>, LT

This is the name, in TA<sup>3</sup> and LT, of the city where Nicolò and Matteo Polo left Qubilai's envoy. It is very probably the result of a clerical error, as explained by BENEDETTO (*B*, 246).

17. ALEXANDRE<sup>1</sup> (THE GREAT)*alesander* Z*alesandro* TA<sup>3</sup>, V, VA, VB*allessandro* R*alexander* LT, P, Z; G*alexandre* F*alexandro* VA, VL*alixandre* F, FA, FB*allessandro, allexandro* VA*allessandro* TA<sup>1</sup>, VB*alexander* L; G*alyxandre* FA

On his epithet of Dū-'l-Qarnāin, «the Two-Horned», see «Çulcarnein».

Alexander's name occurs several times in Polo's text. His information about the Macedonian conqueror is not derived from genuine historical sources, but from stories heard in the East and perhaps from some mediaeval *rifacimenti* of that fabulous history of Alexander which is known as the work of the Pseudo-Callisthenes. In two cases (see «Gate of Iron» and «Lone [Dry] Tree»), Polo formally refers to the «Book of Alexander». The world-wide popularity of the Pseudo-Callisthenes in hellenistic and mediaeval times is aptly illustrated in YULE's Introduction (I, 113-115). Yet I would like to add a few remarks.

Polo left Venice when he was about fifteen, to return only two or three years before he dictated the account of his travels, so that he could certainly not have been well versed in Western literature. Of course, he had heard of Alexander in Mussulman countries, where the same stories circulated about him as in Europe, but the question may be asked whether the express mentions of the «Book of Alexander» are due to him or the professional recaster of romances, Rustichello. In the account of his outward journey, Polo speaks, when dealing with Eastern Persia, of the «arbre seul que les cristiens appellent l'arbre seche» (*B*, 32); but in the latter part of his book, we read of «l'arbre sol que en livre d'Alexandre est appelé l'arbre seche» (*B*, 222). This second mention belongs to the chapters where the fastidious and stereotyped descriptions of battles are generally attributed to Rustichello. Now the legend of the Dry Tree was well known among Christians in the East, where Polo may have heard it, and a repetition of the same sentence in another part of the book would have been nothing abnormal. But that the «Book of Alexander» should take the place of the «Christians» the second time is the more surprising since the «Dry Tree» does not occur in the Pseudo-Callisthenes, nor in most mediaeval versions derived from it, but only in additional sections sometimes joined to the Romance of Alexander, like the *Vœux de Paon*. The mention of the «Book of Alexander» in the present case would perhaps be easier to explain if we assume that Rustichello intervened here.

The other case is no less embarrassing, though for another reason. The story of the nations walled in by Alexander at the eastern end of the Caucasus is an old tale, actually given in the Pseudo-Callisthenes and all the versions derived from it (see « Gate of Iron » and « Gog and Magog »). But Polo's text, taken at its face value, would imply that in the « Book of Alexander » the tribes shut in by Alexander's wall were called « Tartars »; this Polo qualifies by saying that there were no Tartars in Alexander's time, but Comans and the like (which is almost as wrong). Now, the Tartars were sometimes connected in the 13th cent. with the people « whom Alexander the Great shut up in the Caspian mountains », for instance by Richer of Senones (cf. ZARNCKE, *Der Priester Johannes*, II, 22), by the Emperor Frederic II, and in Polo's time by Ricold de Montecroce (cf. *Y*, I, 56-57); but I can find no version of the Romance of Alexander where the Tartars are mentioned; such a version, if it should exist, could not of course be older than c. 1240. Rustichello cannot well be held responsible for the present passage, where the remark on the Comans can only have been made by Polo himself. My impression is that Polo had heard of the Romance of Alexander, although he had never read it, and on the strength of statements which connected the Tartars with the shut-up tribes, erroneously attributed the mention of the Tartars to the Romance itself. If it be the case here, something of the same sort may have occurred with the Dry Tree, the mention of which was perhaps attributed to the Romance by mistake and not because it occurred in the additional matter inserted in some late version.

That most of Polo's information on Alexandre, derived from popular accounts heard in the East, should tally with the legends of the Pseudo-Callisthenes is not surprising if we remember that almost all the Eastern traditions relating to Alexander are indirectly derived from versions of the Pseudo-Callisthenes itself. There was practically no direct souvenir of Alexander in Persia or in India, not to speak of China where he had never been heard of before the Middle Ages. It was long believed that the acquaintance of the Mussulman world with the Pseudo-Callisthenes was due to some Arabic version of the early Mussulman period. But NÖLDEKE, in his remarkable *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans* (*Denkschr. der kais. Ak. d. Wiss.*, Ph.-hist. Cl., vol. 38, Vienna, 1890), has shown that there must have been first a now lost Pahlvī version of the early 7th cent., from which a Syriac translation which is still in existence was made at an early date. This is of some moment when we now pass on to India.

Alexandria is sometimes mentioned in Indian literature (see « Alexandre<sup>2</sup> »), but Alexander the Great left in India still less of a souvenir than in Persia. The name « Alikasudara » or « Alikyasudala » in the inscriptions of Aśoka renders Alexander, but refers to a later individual, either Alexander of Epirus or Alexander of Corinth. S. LÉVI was of opinion, however, that, in the middle of the 7th cent., the name of Alexander appeared as « alasa-Çaṇḍakośa », « lazy Çañḍakośa », in Bāṇa's romanced biography of King Harṣa, the *Harṣacarita* (cf. *Mémorial Sylvain Lévi*, 414). LÉVI considered his opinion confirmed by the fact that Bāṇa reproached « alasa-Çañḍakośa » for not having entered Strīrajyam, the Kingdom of Women. This, according to LÉVI, could be no other than the story of the Amazons which, in the Pseudo-Callisthenes, marks the last stage of Alexander's advance before he turns back towards the West. « So Bāṇa's witty allusion », says LÉVI, « is the only sign, but a sufficient one, which proves that the Romance of Alexander was known in India, among scholars and at the royal Courts, in the 7th cent. of our era. »

But there is more. Hsüan-Tsang, who was Harṣa's guest in 643 and left India in 644, speaks of the « Western 'Kingdom of Women' » (西女國 Hsi Nü-kuo), which lay to the south-west of the kingdom of Fu-lin (Frōm = Rōm, the Roman Orient). According to the Chinese pilgrim, there were only women in that country, some of the precious productions of which were sold in Fu-lin. « That is why the king of Fu-lin sends every year men who have sexual intercourse with those women . . . » In that Kingdom of Women, LÉVI saw « the famous kingdom of Amazons ruled by the Queen Candace [this is not quite correct; Candace was not a queen of the Amazons], which has taken such an important place in the development of the Romance of Alexander ». « The yearly sending of human stallions to the kingdom of the Amazons », LÉVI adds, « is not mentioned, as far as I know, in any of the numerous versions of the Romance; but it frequently appears in the literature of the *Physiologus* and of the *Mirabilia*. The Chinese monk must have noted a version of the tale which had undergone some contamination, or perhaps he himself is responsible for a contamination between two tales he had heard. »

Without maintaining that LÉVI has conclusively proved his case, I am prepared to accept the bulk of his deductions. A weak point of his argument is that, as he has himself stated (p. 422), there are several Kingdoms of Women mentioned in Chinese historical literature, as well as in Indian and in Mussulman sources (see « Female [Island] »). While many tales of the *Physiologus* have found their way to India and the Far East (or sometimes may have originated there and been carried to the West), it is moreover somewhat risky to assume a double origin for Hsüan-tsang's brief account. On the other hand, LÉVI said nothing as to the date when the Romance of Alexander could have reached India or as to the channels through which it may have passed. We may perhaps add more precise indications on these points.

The Kingdom of the Amazons, or Kingdom of Women, is well known in the Mussulman versions of the legend of Alexander. Its most detailed exponent is no other than Firdausī. Alexander first sends to the Kingdom of Women a philosopher from Rōm, and afterwards himself reaches the country, the main city of which was called هَارُوم Hārūm (cf. MOHL, *Livre des Rois*, 8vo ed. v, 206, 208; SPIEGEL, *Die Alexandersage bei den Orientalen*, Leipzig, 1851, 28; NÖLDEKE, *loc. cit.* 51). The name Hārūm is unexplained. Although it was not adduced in SCHAEDEER's *Iranica* (1934), phonetically it may very well be a doublet of Rōm, Rūm, and represent the form with an initial *h-* which is known in Armenian, has passed to Frōm in Middle-Iranian and is the original of Ch. Fu-lin. In Firdausī's time, this form would be a survival, but its curious misapplication to a city of the Kingdom of Women would find some sort of explanation in the relations which, according to Hsüan-tsang, existed between Rōm and the Kingdom of Women. If Hsüan-tsang really owed his information to an Iranian source which had reached the basin of the Ganges, that lost source may have also spoken of the men annually dispatched to the Kingdom of Women by the king of Rōm.

The question of date remains. If a Romance of Alexander corresponding to the Pseudo-Callisthenes was known in India in time to leave traces in the writings of Bāṇa and Hsüan-tsang, it must have reached India in 630-640 at the latest. On the other hand, the only likely channel for a transmission of the Greek romance to India is Pahlvī. But NÖLDEKE has shown that the Pahlvī translation of the Pseudo-Callisthenes can neither be earlier than the end of the 6th cent.,

nor later than the first quarter of the 7th, so that the date we must postulate for the transmission to India is possible. We must only admit, if LÉVI's theory be correct, that the popularity of the romance in India was as rapid as it was short-lived.

### 18. ALEXANDRE<sup>2</sup> (CITY)

*alesandria* TA<sup>3</sup>, V, VB, Z  
*alessandria* VB; R  
*alexandre* F

*alexandria* L, LT, P, VA, VL,  
 Z  
*alixandre* FA, FB

*allessandra* TA<sup>1</sup>  
*allexandria* L; G

Alexandria. The form « Alexandre », constant in F, is corroborated by « Alixandre » in all the French mss. of Hethum (*Hist. des Crois.*, Arm., II, 232).

On the name of Alexandria in Indian literature, cf. in the first place S. LÉVI's paper of 1934, reprinted in *Mémorial Sylvain Lévi* (Paris, 1937, 413-423). LÉVI concurs with the opinion I first upheld in 1914 (*JA*, 1914, II, 413-417) that the Alasanda of the *Questions of King Menander* was the Egyptian Alexandria. Moreover, *ālisamḍaga*, the name of a bean, and *ālakandaka*, a name of the coral, must be nouns derived from Alexandria.

In Chinese Buddhist texts, the Chinese version of the *Questions of King Menander* gives a form 阿荔散 A-li-san (\*·Ā-ljiē-sân), nearer to the Greek original for the vowel of the second syllable than Pāli Alasanda. LÉVI (*loc. cit.* 418) also thought he had found the name of Alexandria in the Chinese version of Nāgārjuna's commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā*; but he elicited it through a correction which I hold as very doubtful.

Apart from Buddhist texts, I proposed in *TP*, 1915, 690-691, to identify with Alexandria of Egypt the name 梨軒 Li-hsüan (\* Liei-χjæn), 犁軒 Li-kan (\* Liei-kân), etc., known in China from the end of the 2nd cent. B. C. Although others entertain different views, I still think that the equivalence is substantially correct. It remains doubtful whether, in the first half of the 3rd cent. A. D., the name of Alexandria underlies the transcriptions 遲散 Ch'ih-san (\* D'i-sân) and 烏遲散 Wu-ch'ih-san (\*·Uo-d'i-sân) of the *Wei lio*; cf. HIRTH, *China and the Roman Orient*, 181-182 (but the equivalence has gained in probability now that we know for certain that 烏弋山離 Wu-i-shan-li [\*·Uo-çøk-sân-ljiē, still more anciently \*·O-djøk-sân-ljia], certainly renders the name of another Alexandria; cf. *ZDMG*, 1937, 252; *TP*, 1938, 148). Chao Ju-kua, writing in 1225, has a whole paragraph on 遏根陀 O-ken-t'o (\*·Āt-kæn-d'â), and describes its Pharos with the wonderful mirror (*HR*, 146-147; cf. LE STRANGE, *Nuzhat-al-Qulüb*, transl., 239-241); this last transcription is made from the Arabic form Iskandariya.

### 19. ALINAC

A name not given by the mss. and introduced conjecturally by BENEDETTO (cf. *B*<sup>1</sup>, 437); it appears as « Alinac » in *RR*, 380, but « Alinek, Alinaç » in the *Index*, 411. BENEDETTO may be right,

as the «melic» (*q. v.*) meant by Polo must be Alināq, killed in 1284 (cf. *Y*, II, 474). But the text is surprising. Polo says that the «melic» of whom he has spoken and who has been killed «avoit a non Soldan» and was the greatest lord after Aḥmad. Already during the second half of the Abassid caliphate, the title of *sulṭān*, originally borne only by the caliph, had commonly been usurped by any powerful chief (cf. BECKER, in *Der Islam*, VI, 350 sq.). It is quite possible that Polo should have heard of Alināq as «the Sulṭān», and not known his true name. Or he may have confused Alināq with Sulṭān *idāji*, who had great power under Arḡun and was finally killed on March 4, 1291, three days before Arḡun himself died (cf. *Oh*, IV, 56-57).

## 20. ALTAI

*achai, chai* VB  
*alcai* F, VL  
*alcay* FA, FB, L  
*alcaym* G  
*alchahy* LT

*alchai* TA<sup>3</sup>, VA, VL  
*alchaim* TA<sup>3</sup>  
*alchay* LT, P, TA<sup>1</sup>  
*allai* VA

*altai, batai* V  
*altay* R  
*dalcay* FB  
*elcay* FA

The name is of course that of the Altai mountains, but it is not used in the sense of Altai proper, either Northern or Southern. Moreover, Polo never went to any Altai. In the text, the name of Altai first occurs, after the paragraph on Qaraqorum and the history of Chinghiz-khan, as that of a great mountain where all the «great lords» («grant seingnors») of the line of Chinghiz-khan are taken to be buried. The second time, Polo, having told what he had to say about the god and the laws of the Tartars, takes leave of «Qara-qorum and Altai — where the [Great Lords of the] Tartars are buried —» to speak of tribes still more to the north. It is evident that Polo means by Altai a mountain north of the Gobi; YULE (*Y*, I, 247) had too much common sense to think otherwise, and *B*<sup>1</sup>, 438, has misunderstood him when he makes him look for Polo's Altai «immediately north of the Great Wall near Kalgan». Without too much precision in his mind, Polo certainly means, by Altai, the traditional place of Chinghiz-khan's burial, somewhere near the sources of the Onon and the Kerulen. Whether Qubilai and his successors were also buried there is another question, which however need not be here taken into account, as Polo left China before Qubilai's death. For the difficult problem of Chinghiz-khan's death and burial, see «Caagiu».

YULE (*Y*, I, 247) has said that the name of Altai was used in a rather loose way by «Sanang Setsen», but he is not quite correct. In «Sanang Setsen», it is said (SCHMIDT, 103) that Chinghiz-Khan died when his camp was on the southern side of the «Altan-ḡan» (not «Altun-ḡan») as in YULE; *altun* is Turkish, on the banks of the Qara-mörän (Yellow river). «Altan-ḡan» is Mongolian, and means «Gold Lord[-Mountain]», but the legend carries us far to the south-west of the Khingang YULE speaks of, and, unless we correct «Altan» to «Altai», there is nothing to prove that

«Sanang Setsen» here refers to any Altai. We must rather suppose that, in this passage, «Sanang Setsen» has in view the «Altan mountain» («Altan-alin»; *alin* is the Manchu word for «mountain») of D'ANVILLE's Map of Chinese Turkistan, 3rd sheet, at the north-western angle of the great bend of the Yellow river, also called Altan tebši (cf. MOSTAERT, *Textes oraux ordos*, LXIX, and POPOV, *Men-gu-yu-mu-czi*, 153). On the other hand, in another passage, the same Mongol chronicler (SCHMIDT, 109) says that Chinghiz-khan was buried between the northern side of the «Altai-ḥan» and the southern side of the «Käntäi-ḥan». Here, with a rather hazy geographical conception on the part of «Sanang Setsen», we rejoin Polo's text inasmuch as the Altai is really named in connection with Chinghiz-khan's burial.

This is not the oldest Mongol notion of the name of Altai. In the *Secret History* of 1240, the name of Altai occurs several times (§§ 144, 158, 161, 177, 194, 196, 198, 205) and is always applied to what we now call Southern Altai, which is in Western Mongolia. Such is also the use of the name in Rašidu-'d-Dīn when he gives the Altai mountains as one of the limits of the Naiman territory (cf. *Oh*, I, 425; *Ber*, I, 2, 108; II, 112; III, 3, 127; Rašidu-'d-Dīn uses Altai alone, or بزرى التاي Buzurg Altai, or يكة التاي Yäkä Altai, both meaning «Great Altai» in Persian and in Mongolian). The same Altai is meant when YS, I, 5*b*, says that Tayang-khan came from the 按臺 An-t'ai and camped at the Khanggai mountains, or when it sums up the history of the campaign led by the future Emperor Wu-tsung in 1300-1301 against Qaidu (YS, 22, 1*a*; see «Caidu»), in the course of which, Wu-tsung having reached the An-t'ai (Altai) mountains, the Naiman submitted to him (parallel texts in YS, 119, 10*a*, and 132, 3*a*, use the Chinese name Chin-shan of the Altai). From all these texts, we see that Polo's use of Altai for mountains in North-Eastern Mongolia must have been of popular, not official, origin, although «Sanang Setsen» gives us the proof that this undue extension of the name was still current several centuries later.

It would be interesting to study again the much debated problem of the possible relation of Altai (Altai) to Turk. *altın*, *altun*, Mong. *altan*, all meaning «gold», and to investigate the different values of the corresponding Chinese name of Chin-shan, «Gold Mountains» (the phonetic relation of Altai to *altan* might be of the same order as that of Alašai to Alašan [see «Calacian»]; Chinese texts have sometimes Altan for Altai; cf. POPOV, *Men-gu-yu-mu-czi*, 442, 464, and the index, p. 25, for the double name of a lake Altan-nōr or Altai-nōr). But that would greatly overstep the limits of the present note (cf. VLADIMIROV, in *Doklady Ross. Ak. Nauk*, 1929, B, 170). I wish only to call attention to three points. 1st : Kāšyarī, who does not mention any Altai, gives «Altunḡan» as the name of a mountain in the land of the Uigurs (BROCKELMANN, 240). 2nd : When the *Ming shih*, in its biographies, says of a number of people that they were originally «Tatar [= Mongols] of the Chin-shan», it is clear that this Chin-shan does not refer to our Altai, but to mountains in Eastern or South-Eastern Mongolia. 3rd : While Chin-shan is of early occurrence in Chinese texts (cf. provisionally CHAVANNES, *Doc. sur les Tou-kiue*, 338) and although we find an Altun-yiš in the Orkhon «runic» inscriptions, there is no mention of the Altai nor of any «Gold Mountain» in the *Hudūd al-'Ālam*. But BARTHOLD is mistaken when he says (*EI*, s. v. «Altai») that the name of Altai seems to appear first «at the time of the domination of the Kalmuks»; he has apparently forgotten all the mentions of it in the 13th and 14th cents.

## 21. AMBERGRIS

<i>ambra</i> L, LT, P, TA <sup>1</sup> , TA <sup>3</sup> , VB, VL; R	<i>ambre</i> F, FA, FB, TA <sup>3</sup> <i>ambrum</i> P, Z <i>ambra</i> , <i>anbran</i> V	<i>ambre</i> F <i>ambro</i> VA <i>walrodis</i> G
<i>ambracan</i> , <i>ambracano</i> R		

In BENEDETTO's Italian translation of Polo, «ambra» is mentioned in the chapters intitled «Tebet», «Males Island», «Scotra», «Mogedaxo», and «Çanghibar» (*B*<sup>1</sup>, 187, 351, 352, 357, 361). But the English versions by RICCI and ROSS and by MOULE speak of «amber» in the chapter on Tibet and of «ambergris» in all other cases. The modern common usage in Italian and in French is to employ «ambra», «ambre» indiscriminately for both products. The question may be raised, however, of the extent to which this confusion prevailed in Italy in Polo's time. For the sake of clarity, I wish to state at the start that, although «amber» (*ambrum*) is mentioned in the chapter on Tibet only by Z, I accept it as a genuine statement going back to Polo himself, and also that general historical data preclude the possibility of understanding *ambrum* as «ambergris» in regard to Tibet (on the use of amber in Tibet, cf. B. LAUFER, *Historical jottings on amber in Asia*, in *Mem. of the Amer. Anthropol. Assoc.* I [1907], 211-244, especially 230-231). On the other hand, «ambergris» is clearly meant in all the other passages.

In his admirable *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen-Âge*, HEYD seems to have taken it for granted that all mediaeval mentions of «ambrum», «ambra» «ambre», etc., at least in Italy and in France, refer to «ambergris» (cf. his Index, and especially II, 571-574). The case is simple enough with Oriental sources (when they are clearly rendered), since the Oriental names for «amber» and for «ambergris» are fundamentally different; and it is certainly remarkable that in FERRAND's *Relations de voyages*, the scores of mentions of «ambre» in the translations of Arabic and Persian texts should always be interpreted as «ambergris». In his recent edition of Pegolotti (pp. 412-413), EVANS questions the truth of HEYD's too absolute views on «ambergris». For EVANS, *ambra*, may be both «amber» and «ambergris», and it is only «ambracanno» which he considers as «ambergris» definitely. In one case, EVAN's argument is decisive: Pegolotti speaks of *ambra*, while the corresponding Latin version of the privilege, in 1317, gives *ambre vulgariter dicte bernsteen*; Flemish *bernsteen*, Germ. *Bernstein*, never meant «ambergris», but only «amber»; moreover a privilege issued in Flanders is in itself more likely to speak of Baltic «amber» than of «ambergris» of the Indian Ocean. It is more difficult to decide in other cases. EVANS says that both *ambra concia* and *ambracanni* (plural; this is the only mention of the word in Pegolotti) occur side by side in one passage (p. 78) and therefore cannot be identical. I agree; but *ambra concia* means «finished *ambra*», «worked *ambra*»; *ambracanno* might be the name of the same material, but in a raw or unfinished state. When EVANS says «I suspect that when Pegolotti referred to amber perforated for beads he meant yellow amber», I was at first ready to concur with him, until I noticed that in the documents studied by G. LUDWIG in *Italienische Forschungen*, I [1906], 293-294, out of thirty odd «paternostri» mentioned between 1512 and 1557, only one was of *ambra zalo* («yellow amber»), and all the others of *ambracan*. In Polo's



inventory (Vol. I, 556), there are two mentions of «peroli danbro [= d'ambro]». RAMUSIO, in his version of Polo, speaks once of *ambra* (57 D) and three times of *ambracano* (57 D, 58 C). On Fra Mauro's map, the word is written *ambracan* (not «ambrazan» as in *Zu*, 52, and HEYD, II, 572). There is no doubt that «ambergris» is always meant, and it is the only value attached by Italian dictionaries to *ambracani*, in Venetian *ambracan*. The origin of *ambracano* is not clear. There is no foundation in the tradition that it is the name of an African fish; and *ambrum canum*, «white amber[gris]», suggested by TOMMASEO and BELLINI, lacks textual support.

Moreover, the double meaning which is given to «ambra» by Polo and at least once by Pegolotti and which is more common in texts and documents from Northern Europe, would have been deducible, even if it were not attested otherwise, since it is necessary to account for the change in the meaning of the word «amber». It is well known that our «amber», the yellow fossil amber, was called *succinum* in Latin; *succin* is still used in French occasionally. The West also used «carabe», borrowed through an Arabic channel from Pers. کهرابا *kahrubā*, «amber» (lit. «straw-attracting»); Cf. DOZY, *Glossaire*<sup>2</sup>, 247; LOKOTSCH, *Etym. Wörterbuch*, No. 1004; *Romania*, 1909, 139; LAUFER, *Sino-Iranica*, 521-522. As to the word «amber», it was borrowed in the 11th cent. from Arab. 'anbar, which does not mean «amber», but «ambergris» (for a possible Somali etymology of the Arab. 'anbar, cf. *JA*, 1925, I, 172). «Amber», as it is used in English, is historically a misnomer.

Polo's information on «ambergris», especially with the additional matter provided by Z, is by far the most accurate to be found in mediaeval sources, and even in modern times, down to the last century. Scientists are now agreed that «ambergris» is an intestinal concretion of the sperm whale, or cachalot, *Physeter macrocephalus*, and that the oil and the white waxy substance known as spermaceti («whale sperm») are obtained from the cavities of the huge head of the same animal. I deal with the oil and spermaceti under «Capdoille». Here I shall confine myself to some remarks on «ambergris», mainly based on Chinese sources.

The first known mention of «ambergris» in Chinese texts occurs in the *Yu-yang tsa-tsu* of c. 860, where the 阿末 *a-mo* perfume is listed as a product of the country of 撥拔 *Pa-pa-li* (\*Puât-b'wât-ljək), \*Barbarig, a Middle-Persian form of Barbara, Berbera, the Somali Coast (cf. *HR*, 128); the text has been copied into the *Hsin T'ang shu*, 221 B, 8 b. *A-mo* (\*'a-m'wât, with -t > -d/-r) certainly transcribes 'anbar, as is said in *HR*.

In the *Hsi shih chi* of 1263, a paragraph is devoted to «ambergris», which reads as follows (WANG Kouo-wei's edition, 9-10; BRETSCHNEIDER's translation in *Br*, I, 152-153, is extremely inaccurate): «The 撒八兒 *sa-pa-êrh* comes out of the Western Ocean (*hsi-hai*); it must be the sperm (遺精 *i-ching*) of the sea-turtle (搆玳 *tai-tai*, an unusual combination, perhaps faulty for 玳瑁 *tai-mei*). The bonitoes (鮫魚 *chiao-yü* = 鮫魚 *chiao-yü*; cf. *TP*, 1933, 416-418; it is the *tunnus*, 'tunny', of Z; the bonito is allied to the tunny) eat it and vomit it; after years it conglomerates. Its price equals that of gold. The false product is made of rhinoceros excrements.» This name *sa-pa-êrh* (miswritten 撒巴爾 *sa-pa-êrh* [a «Ch'ien-lung» transcription?]) in *HR*, 237, from where I repeated it in *TP*, 1933, 436) was equated by BRETSCHNEIDER to «*sahabiri*» or rather شهابری *šāhbarī*, a misreading of شهبوی *šāhboī*, «royal scent», one of the Persian

epithets of «ambergris» (cf. also *HR*, 237). In *TP*, 1933, 436, I questioned the likelihood of a Chinese transcription being based on such a misreading (but, by a most unfortunate slip, I then adduced a Ming form 撒白值 *sa-po-chich* which actually refers to «amber», not to «ambergris»; *sa-po-chich* must be the Arab. *sabaġ*, «jet», which has given Span. *azabache*, Port. *azeviche*; cf. Dozy, *Glossaire*<sup>2</sup>, 221). I now think that *sa-po-êrh* is only one of the many corrupt forms which have crept into the present text of the *Hsi shih chi*, and that we must correct *sa*[撒]-*pa-êrh* to *an*[俺?]-*pa-êrh*, the very name 'anbar of «ambergris». As a matter of fact, although only in Ming times, 俺八兒 *an-pa-êrh* (\**ambar*) occurs three times as a transcription of 'anbar (cf. *TP*, 1915, 159; 1933, 420; the three mentions, however, are derived from one and the same original).

There was much discussion among mediaeval Arabic and Persian scholars as to the origin and nature of «ambergris»: some saw in it the outflow of a submarine spring, others a dew which, emerging from the rocks, flowed into the sea and there coagulated; others yet maintained that it was the excrements of an animal. The upholders of the spring or of the dew hypotheses easily accounted for the presence of «ambergris» in the intestines of birds or of fish: birds and fish were so fond of «ambergris» that they greedily swallowed it, although it choked and killed them (cf. DEVIC, *Le pays des Zendjs*, 188-194). But, for the capture of the «fish» who has swallowed lumps of «ambergris», Abū Zayd Ḥasan of Sirāf, c. 916, gives certain information which, although less detailed, agrees somewhat with that of Polo (FERRAND, *Voyage du marchand arabe Sulaymān*, 132-133): «Ambergris is also found floating on the sea in lumps of considerable weight; sometimes these lumps are more or less the size of a bull. When the fish called *tāl* (?) sees a lump of ambergris, it swallows it; but when the ambergris reaches the stomach of the fish, the fish dies of it and floats on the water. There are people who keep a look-out in boats, knowing the season when the fish swallow ambergris. So, when they get sight of a fish floating on the water, they draw it to the coast with iron harpoons which are driven into the back of the fish and to which strong cords are attached. Then they open the stomach of the fish and take out the ambergris. . . » The most noticeable difference between Abū Zayd and Polo is that the former speaks of *dead* fish harpooned by fishermen. Neither of the authors was an eye-witness of the capture. Moreover, Abū Zayd had heard from an eye-witness how fishermen had cut into pieces one of these «fish» which had been stranded in the vicinity of Sirāf. I think that Abū Zayd's error is due to an instinctive disbelief in the possibility of fishermen capturing with harpoons and killing the huge monsters which had swallowed «ambergris». Some similar feeling is probably responsible for Polo's statement that the «whales» are inebriated with tunny brine and so do not feel the harpoons driven into their backs.

Birds and dragons have also been connected sometimes with «ambergris» in Mussulman lore. The theory which makes «ambergris» the dung of birds was heard from the «Moors» by Barbosa at the beginning of the 16th cent., and still is, according to THORNE, the opinion of the natives of the Malabar coast (DAMES, *Barbosa*, I, 106-107). But it occurs half a century before Barbosa, on Fra Mauro's map, where, close to the Maldive Islands, we read the following notice (*Zu*, 52): «This line of islands which gird the Indian Ocean. . . is inhabited by various species of birds. In that sea ambergris (*ambracan*) is found. The people of those [parts] say that it (*i.e.*

the ambergris) is produced in these islands and that the sea in washing the shores carries it afterwards with the currents into the Indian Sea. Others believe that it is the sperm of the whale. It must be noticed that when sailors see the birds of the aid islands, it appears to them that they have come too near their coasts and they move away, because beyond that there is so deep a darkness that the ships who would happen to enter there could no more advance or go back, and it is known from experience that those who have gone there have perished.» Mauro's source for the present passage is not known. It may be that there is here some dim connection between the deep darkness of the islands and the traditions relative to the birds so big that in their flight they mask the sun (see «Ruc»). Or it may have something to do with the thick air breathed out by dragons, which is mentioned in the Chinese texts quoted below. A French *Lapidaire* of the early 12th cent. speaks of «ambra» as of a stone produced by a sea-fish or by the breath of whales (cf. Ch.-V. LANGLOIS, *La connaissance de la nature et du monde*, 1927, 34, taking into account p. 29, n. 1). A Chinese text of 1520, doubtless copying an earlier authority, speaks of the birds who pick up the spittle (= ambergris) vomited by dragons (TP, 1915, 392).

The dragon theory is the one that was current in the Far East. I know only of one exception: «ambergris» has been sometimes called in Japanese 鯨糞 *gei-fun*, «whale excrements», and the term may go back to some local Chinese trade-name, although I cannot trace it; it seems more probable that *gei-fun* was coined in Japan, perhaps under direct Mussulman influence. All Chinese texts, from Sung times downwards, employ only one name for «ambergris», that is 龍涎 *lung-hsien*, «dragon's spittle» (*lung-hsien* is the usual pronunciation, but *lung-yen* is also possible; PHILLIPS [JNCB, xx, 221] and ROCKHILL [TP, 1915, 158-159] transcribe *lung-yen*; the Sino-Japanese *ryūyen* is also based on a pronunciation *lung-yen*; another form of the term, 龍泄 *lung-hsieh*, with the same meaning, is listed in the dictionaries, but I do not know of any example of it in ancient texts). The term *lung-hsien* occurs in Chinese as early as the 9th cent. (cf. *P'ei-wên yün-fu*), but without any specific meaning. The first mention of it that I can trace with the designation of the «ambergris» occurs in one of Su Shih's poems (1036-1101), and the first datable description of the product is the one given in 1178 by Chou Ch'ü-fu in his *Ling-wai tai-ta* (*Chih-pu-tsu-chai ts'ung-shu* ed., 7, 9a). As it was copied almost *verbatim* in 1225 by Chao Ju-kua, it can be said to have been translated in HR, 237: «the fishermen (? 鮫人 *chiao-jên*; the term generally designates a kind of 'mermaid', but can be used metaphorically for a 'fisherman'; it is surprising, however, that such a poetical term should occur in the present text) gather it.» Chao Ju-kua also altered Chou Ch'ü-fei's text by suppressing, before the remark that the «ambergris» has no scent in itself, the words: «As I had to go to P'an-yü (= Canton), I saw it (*i. e.* 'ambergris').» As a matter of fact, all the rest of that passage is not merely hearsay information, but the result of Chou Ch'ü-fei's personal observations while he was at Canton.

A notice on «ambergris» occurs in a 香譜 *Hsiang p'u*, «Repertory of perfumes», quoted, perhaps at second-hand, by the modern dictionary *Tz'ü yüan*. This is not the anonymous Sung *Hsiang p'u* in 2 ch., available for instance in the *Hsüeh-chin t'ao-yüan*. But it may be the *Hsiang p'u* in 4 ch. compiled by 陳敬 Ch'ên Ching probably at the end of the Sung dynasty (it has a later preface of 1322, by another scholar; cf. *Ssü-k'u*. . ., 115, 28 a-b), which

I do not have at my disposal. The quotation given in the *Tz'ü yüan* offers no original information.

The next Chinese source of importance has not yet been made use of by Western scholars; it is the notice on «ambergris» compiled by 張世南 Chang Shih-nan in his 游宦紀聞 *Yu-huan chi-wên* of 1232 (*Chih-pu-tsu-chai ts'ung-shu* ed., 7, 4 b-5 b). I think it is worth translating here. The text is as follows: «Of all perfumes, ambergris (*lung-hsien*) is the most appreciated. At Kuang-chou (Canton), its market value per ounce is not under a hundred thousand (coins); the second quality itself is worth fifty to sixty thousand (coins); it belongs to the [class of] goods which are a State monopoly among the barbarians (cf. DEVIC, *Le pays des Zendjs*, 189, on the handing over of stranded 'ambergris' to the local authorities in Arabia). It is produced in the country of the Ta-shih (Arabs; see 'Arabie'). Near the coast of the sea, when there is a cloudy vapour that hangs over the land lying between mountains, one knows at once that a dragon is asleep below. It (*i. e.* the vapour) lasts half a year, or two, [or] three years; men in turns keep it under observation and wait until the cloud dissipates; then they know that the dragon is gone. They go and look, and are certain to obtain 'ambergris' (lit. 'dragon-spittle'), either five or seven ounces, or more than ten ounces; and they divide (the quantity) equally according to the number of men who have kept observation. If they did not do it equitably, there would be a fight between them and murder. Others say that dragons coil in great numbers on big rocks in the ocean; while lying, they let out spittle; the fish assemble and swallow it; and when the natives see it, they instantly dive and take it. Others again say that in the great ocean there is a whirlpool, at the bottom of which there is a dragon. His spittle gushes out and, heated by the sun, coagulates in pieces which the wind drifts floating to the shore. People then take it and hand it over to the officials. I have questioned the perfume-makers (合香人 *ho-hsiang-jên*) of Ch'üan[-chou] (see 'Çaiton') and Kuang-chou (Canton) and they have said: 'When ambergris is added to perfumes, it can present the scent of camphor and musk; even after several decades, the scent is still there'. The statements of the 嶺外雜記 *Ling-wai tsa-chi* (= *Ling-wai tai-ta*) are as follows: 'Ambergris («dragon spittle») is produced in the [country] of the Ta-shih (Arabs). In the Western Ocean, there are many dragons. When one falls asleep while resting on a rock, his spittle floats on the water, and on accumulation it hardens. The fishermen (*chiao-jên*) gather it as a most valuable substance. When it is fresh, its colour is white; after some time, it becomes purple (紫 *tzü*; not «red» as in *HR*, 237); after a long time, it becomes black. Others again say that the white ambergris is like 百藥煎 *po-yao-chien*, with unctuous stripes; the black one is inferior to it; it is like 五靈脂 *wu-ling-chih*, but brilliant; its scent is almost rancid (nothing of the present sentence occurs in the *Ling-wai tai-ta*; at the same time, the text shows that the comparison with the *po-yao-chien* and with the *wu-ling-chih*, which I had first found in a work of 1520 [*TP*, 1933, 415], and afterwards in another of 1388 [*TP*, 1936, 222], actually goes back to Sung times; the *wu-ling-chih* is the dung of the bat; the *po-yao-chien* has not been identified). It resembles pumice-stone, but is lighter. Some say that it has an extraordinary scent, others that its smell is rank [or that it] can bring out the scent of other perfumes, but all that is erroneous. [Ambergris] does not improve or spoil [other] perfumes, it has merely the power of preserving their fumes together. If one in mixing perfumes employs genuine ambergris, when [the prepared perfume]

burns a blue smoke floats in the air and gathers without dissipating. The guests can use scissors to divide the thread of the smoke. The reason for that is that the ambergris still retains some of the virtue of that dragon breath which produces buildings and terraces' (this is the end of the quotation from the *Ling-wai tai-ta*). Others yet say: '[Ambergris] is the spittle ejected by the dragon on the sea when he comes out or plunges in. There are three sorts [of it]; the first is called «water-drift» (汎水 *fan-shui*); the second, «sand-leaked» (滲沙 *shên-sha*); the third, «fish-eaten» (魚食 *yü-shih*). The «water-drift» [ambergris] lightly floats on the surface of the water; good seamen watch the coming out and plunging in of the dragon, and following him they pick it up. The «sand-leaked» is [ambergris] that has been drifted by waves and billows to main lands and islands. It is that which has coagulated and accumulated for many years, wind and rain have soaked it, and all its scent has leaked into the sandy earth. As to the «fish-eaten» [ambergris], when the dragon emits his spittle (=ambergris), the fish vie with each other in eating it; when digested by them, it becomes dung which is scattered in the sandy desert (a somewhat curious location for fish excrements!); its smell is rank and dirty. Only the «water-drift» [ambergris] can enter into the [composition of] perfumes; the other two [sorts] are inferior. 鄧灝 Têng Hao of 曲江 Ch'ü-chiang (in Shao-chou-fu, Kuang-tung), after comparing the three opinions, said that the third one is nearest to the truth. The sayings of the various authors do not agree, and I do not know which one is correct. But according to my humble judgment, the first one must be fairly near the mark'.

Later works, with one exception which will be noted below, have little to add to the information collected by Chang Shih-nan. «Ambergris» entered Chinese pharmacopoeia only in the Ming dynasty, with 汪機 Wang Chi and after him with Li Shih-chên (cf. *Pên-ts'ao kang-mu*, 43, 7a; *Br*, I, 152). But Chang Shih-nan's text on the three sorts of «ambergris» finds a remarkable counterpart in Barbosa (ed. DAMES, II, 106-109), who also heard of three qualities of «ambergris», which agree, as to nature and as to order, with the Chinese description.

Wang Ta-yüan's *Tao-i chih-liao* of 1349-1350 mentions an «Ambergris Island», Lung-hsien-hsü [嶼], which also occurs on the Chinese map of the early 15th cent. and is made the subject of an independent paragraph in Fei Hsin's *Hsing-ch'a shêng-lan* of 1436. The island lay off the north-western coast of Sumatra. PHILLIPS (*JNCB*, xx, 221) identified it with Pulo Way; FUJITA (*Tao-i chih-liao*'s commentary, ed. *Hsüeh-t'ang ts'ung-shu*, 10-11) decided in favour of Pulo Bras; ROCKHILL, going back to an ancient opinion of GROENEVELDT, pronounced in favour of Pulo Rondo (*TP*, 1915, 158); I think that the identification with Pulo Bras is correct. The two notices on Lung-hsien-hsü have been translated by ROCKHILL (*TP*, 1915, 158-159), but the translation is sometimes incomplete and often inaccurate. The middle part of the *Tao-i chih-liao* paragraph in particular must be understood as follows: «The colour of the [dragon] spittle is sometimes blacker than 'black incense', and sometimes it resembles pumice-stone. If smelled, it has a somewhat rancid scent. But if it be used in combination with various perfumes, then their aroma becomes extremely pure and penetrating. Even such perfumes as calambac-wood, crystal camphor ('plum flower camphor'; cf. *HR*, 193), sandal, musk, gardenia flowers, gham-wood, and rose-water must have some of it to bring out [their full scent].» In other words, Wang Ta-yüan, like some other earlier authors, maintains that «ambergris» is not a perfume in itself, but an excipient

for other perfumes. The accounts concerning this «Ambergris Island» seem to be to a great extent legendary. At the end of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th cent., Mussulman sailors also knew of an «Ambergris Island», *Jāzīrāt al-‘Anbar*, the name of which was taken over in 1554 into the *Muḥīt* of the Turkish admiral Sīdī ‘Alī Čālābī (*Fe*, 537). Although its location is not easy to determine, it seems to lie far away from the «Ambergris Island» of the Chinese. In European nomenclature, if we leave out the Ambergris Island of the Gulf of Honduras, and also the «Cap d’Ambre» at the northern end of Madagascar, the etymology of which is doubtful (cf. GRANDIDIER, *Hist. de la géogr. de Madagascar*<sup>2</sup>, 69), there is a «capo de ambra» and a «riuo de ambra» in the Egerton ms. of c. 1508 [cf. KAMMERER, *La Mer Rouge*, II, App. I (7)]. Moreover, the name of «Ile d’Ambre» was applied in the 18th cent. to a small island close to Mauritius. In 1744 the *Saint-Géran* was wrecked in its neighbourhood, and that gave BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE part of the subject of *Paul et Virginie*, including the mention of «Ile d’Ambre».

I have still a few words to say on two points. The first is the use of the name of the «dragon» in Chinese. There is in Chinese a regular name of the «whale», 鯨 *ch’ing*, and the texts give a good description of the animal; we know also of several synonyms of *ch’ing*. The notion and the traditional representations of the dragon, *lung*, are totally different. Yet there is no doubt that the monstrous appearance of the huge Cetacea which were sometimes stranded on the coasts of China suggested to the popular mind an association with the proteiform and mysterious dragon. With some reserves as to the details of the case, I can only concur with what has been said on this point by SCHLEGEL (*TP*, 1895, 38-43), LAUFER (*TP*, 1913, 341-342) and ROCKHILL (*TP*, 1915, 158).

But, and this is the second point, even granting that we may to some extent substitute «whale» for «dragon» in the Chinese texts referring to «ambergris», it is somewhat surprising that the Chinese should have given the name of «spittle» to what is an intestinal product, while on the other hand Western belief attached the name of «whale sperm», *spermaceti*, to a product mostly found in the head of the animal (see «Capdoille»). The explanation of these apparent contradictions seems to me to lie in a confusion which has sometimes been made in China as well as in the West between «ambergris» and *spermaceti*. When a Chinese text of 1520, probably quoting from an earlier source, mentions the boats of the Maldivé islands as «caulked with melted ambergris (‘dragon spittle’)», there is a great likelihood that *spermaceti* and oil are actually meant, not «ambergris» (cf. DEVIC, *Le pays des Zendjs*, 226, for such caulking). In English, «white amber» has been used in the sense of *spermaceti*, and in 1598 FLORIO gives the definition «*ambra*, amber, also amber greece, also the sperme of a whale called *Spermaceti*». This confusion is well illustrated by a passage of *Pantagruel* (RABELAIS, ed. LEFRANC, IV, 252) : When Panurge has received from a lady of Paris a letter which looks like a sheet of blank paper, Panurge resorts to various devices to reveal the writing, one being meant to ascertain whether the letter was written «avec sperme de baleine qu’on appelle ambre gris». The confusion must have originated in the East since the *Hsi shih chi* of 1263, the information in which was collected in Persia and is independent from Chinese traditional lore also speaks of «ambergris» as being the sperm of an animal, although the great sea-turtle takes in this case the place of the dragon, or whale, or mysterious *tāl* (?) fish of some Mussulman writers.