

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 *ambracono* (57 D, 58 C). On Fra Mauro's map, the word is written *ambracon* (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 *ambraconi*, in Venetian *ambracon*. The origin of *ambracono* 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. کهربا *kahrubâ*, «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 撥拔力 *Pa-pa-li* (\*Puât-b'wât-ljæk), \*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 > -δ/-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 (蛟魚 *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 شاهیبری *šāhbarī*, a misreading of شهبوی *šāhboī*, «royal scent», one of the Persian