

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 Maldivé 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.*