

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 said 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