

gaurus, etc.). Prompted by this identification, LAUFER proposed in 1900 (*Ein Sühngedicht der Bon-po*, 20, 52) to see in «*beyamini*» a transcription of the Tibetan name of the *gayāl*, *ba-men* (or *ba-man*); he has repeated it in *Chinese Pottery of the Han Dynasty* (1909; p. 260), and through a letter of his, it finally found its way in 1920 into *Y*, III, 83. Sven HEDIN (*Southern Tibet*, I, 139) approved of it, and even saw there a faint indication that one of the four languages acquired by Polo may have been Tibetan, which is most unlikely. In 1924, VLADIMIROV (*Doklady Ross. Ak. Nauk*, 1924, B, 118, «*Beyamini*» *Marco Polo*), unaware of LAUFER's explanation, proposed it independently.

But I doubt very much that Polo, who never went to Tibet, but who must have seen Tibetans south-west of Ch'êng-tu towards Ya-chou, speaks here of *gayāl*. There are four other mentions of the «wild ox» in his book. The first, in the chapter on «Ergiuul» (cf. Vol. I, 179), gives a minute description of the yak, and of the cross-breed of yak and common cow. The second, in the account of the great Imperial hunts (cf. Vol. I, 227), must refer to some kind of bovine animal which cannot be the yak. The third is at the end of the chapter on Burma (cf. Vol. I, 294), which is based only on hearsay information; no particulars are given, and it may or may not be the *gaur*. But later, in his description of Ma'bar (Coast of Coromandel; cf. Vol. I, 401), Polo says that the people attach to the head of their horses, or fix on their shields, or wear as plumes, «hair of the wild oxen of which I have spoken before». YULE (*Y*, II, 359) has not failed to see that Polo refers here to the use of yak-tails, so widely spread over the whole of Asia. But since Polo's «wild ox» is here the yak and since he has spoken of it before, the natural conclusion is that the «wild ox» of Tibet is not a *gayāl*, but the yak (long before Polo, Cosmas also describes the yak under the name of «wild ox»; cf. *Y*¹, I, 223). And that is what one might expect. The yak is the most conspicuous animal of Tibet. On the very page preceding his note on *beyamini*, YULE reproduces a drawing of a «Village of Eastern Tibet on Sze-ch'wan Frontier»; there are three yaks depicted in the courtyard.

This would not be fatal to LAUFER's and VLADIMIROV's *ba-men*, since VLADIMIROV says that the Mongols have borrowed Tib. *ba-men* under the form *bamin* or *bamên*, and apply it sometimes either to the yak or to the calf of the half-breed *hainuh* buffalo. If *beyamini* was really a word used by Polo, *ba-men* is the best attempt so far made to explain it, although it is not quite satisfactory from the phonetic point of view, and although there is no support for LAUFER's surmise of dialectical forms like *beu-men* or *beu-min*. Still I feel somewhat sceptical about *ba-men*. Polo would not have come into touch with the Tibetans themselves or spoken to them in their own language; the words he uses are those which were accepted in Persian-speaking circles. Now the yak is widely known in Asia under the Turkish name *qutuz* (given in Kāšyarī as a «wild cow»; BROCKELMANN, 167; > Russian name Kutuzov) or *qutaz*, which has passed into Persian under the form *qutās* (cf. VULLERS, 728-729; QUATREMÈRE, *Hist. des Sult. Mamlouks*, I, 228) and applies to the yak itself and to the ornament made from a yak-tail (it has also been explained as a «sea-ox», and as such has been borrowed, I think, in the *hutū* of the Arabs and the *ku-tu-hsi* of the Chinese; cf. LAUFER in *TP*, 1913, 315-370; 1916, 348-389; *Sino-Iranica*, 565-567). Failing that word, Polo might have used the Mongolian name of the yak, *šarluḡ* (> Russ. *šarlik*). But *beyamini* is disconcerting. On the whole, I am not sure that it is not the result of some misunderstanding.