

that the stuff woven from the hair of the «water sheep» might be the byssus, «a cloth stuff woven up to the present time . . . from the thread-like excrescences of several sea-shells (especially *Pinna squamosa*)». HIRTH (*China and the Roman Orient*, 260-263) adopted BRETSCHNEIDER's explanation not only for the «water sheep», but also for the lamb whose navel is attached to the ground according to texts of the T'ang period (and also probably pre-T'ang; cf. *supra*, p. 512); but he denied any connection between the latter and the lamb in ODORIC and SCALIGER (read HERBERSTEIN). ERMAN (*Reise um die Erde*, 1st part, Hist. Bericht, 1 [1833], 197-198) was the first to interpret the whole story of the *Agnus Scythicus*, to put it in YULE's terms, as «a mythical view of the cotton plant» (cf. Y¹, II, 242). Others followed. Referring to J. O. HALLIWELL's edition of Maundeville (London, 1839; reprinted 1866 and 1883; cf. CORDIER, *Bibl. Sin.*², 2024), where there is only, however, Maundeville's bare text (pp. 263-264) without comment, VINING, when publishing in 1885 his ill-fated book, *An inglorious Columbus* (p. 450), had no hesitation in stating that cotton bears «wool», «and hence may be considered as a vegetable-sheep». But the main exponent of the «cotton» theory was Henry LEE, throughout his *Vegetable Lamb of Tartary*. SCHLEGEL adopted it in part, but interpolated some notions referring to the camel, which it is needless to discuss. CHAVANNES (*TP*, 1907, 183), contrary to HIRTH, maintained that the «earth-born lamb» of T'ang texts had nothing to do with the «water sheep», but was the same as the *Agnus scythicus* of mediaeval folklore. LAUFER sided with CHAVANNES, and, above all, declared that LEE's «cotton» theory was a complete failure. «It is inconceivable», LAUFER says (124-125), «that in the fourteenth century, when cotton and the manner of its production were perfectly known in Asia and Europe, any such abstruse fable should have arisen in regard to cotton. The Indian cotton-plant became intimately familiar to the classical world, thanks to Alexander's campaign; and I do not know that it ever became the object of fables in India, China, Greece, or Rome, or in Syria, or among the Arabs. The Chinese of the sixth century, and assuredly of the T'ang period, knew very well what the cotton-plant and its products were; and neither is there in the Chinese documents regarding cotton any reference to lambs, nor is there the slightest allusion to cotton in the Ta-Ts'in or Fu-lin texts regarding the water-sheep and the earth-born lamb. The two groups of traditions are most clearly differentiated, and offer absolutely no point of contact.» This peremptory judgement has been summed up in *WY*, 483; yet it is already somewhat qualified in the very notes of LAUFER's paper, and I shall have to express more positive objections.

The best plan may be, perhaps, to take up the legend in reverse chronological order, and to start from its latest developments. There can hardly be any doubt that the *baranec*, «small sheep», of HERBERSTEIN is the still-born lamb, yielding «astrakhan». But this cannot be a purely western development of the legend, since JUAN K'uei-shêng also speaks of the caps made from the wool of the «heavy-bone sheep», and adds that there was no more than one which was grey for ten that were black, another distinctive feature of the «astrakhan» lamb. On the other hand, to judge from HUNG Liang-chi's text, the story of the «bone sowed sheep» seems not to have entirely died out among the Mongols as late as c. 1800.

We cannot tell how and when the story was transferred to the «astrakhan» lamb; but we may be certain that its meaning was quite different in the 13th and 14th cents., and here the