

tale had « a remote flavour of the cotton-plant » (p. 126), and thought that the confusion of « melon » and the « cotton-plant » might be due to the phonetic similarity of the Persian *harbuz*, « water-melon », and *kārbās* or *kīrbās* « cotton ». But the connection between the « sowed sheep » and cotton is not peculiar to Odoric; it was the common belief in northern China in the 13th and 14th cents. The equivalence is unambiguously expressed by both Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai and Ch'iu Ch'ang-ch'un. WALEY (*The Travels of an Alchemist*, 86), commenting on Ch'iu Ch'ang-ch'un's text, almost hits the mark when he says : « The Chinese, being unfamiliar with cotton, could not believe that a stuff was obtained by cultivating a tree, and imagined that a lamb, being buried, produced a crop of fresh lambs next year. » If I qualify my approval of WALEY's note, it is because I agree with LAUFER in believing that the story of the « sowed sheep » did not originate in China. Nay, it may even be that the connection between the vegetable lamb and cotton was thought more or less possible in the West in the Middle Ages. Maundeville, in his motley forgery, mentions « Bacharia » in connection with the vegetable lamb, and elsewhere describes « Bacharia » as a country where cotton is sowed, so that « there is plenty of cotton at all times ». This is already symptomatic in itself, and, in view of the Chinese texts which locate the « sheep with heavy bones » in the region of Bokhara, it would be conclusive if it could be proved that Bokhara partly underlies the name and the description of « Bacharia ».

WALEY says that the story can be traced back to the 6th cent. in China; so we must assume that, like CHAVANNES, he connects the « sowed sheep » of the Mongol period with the « earth-born lamb » of T'ang and even pre-T'ang texts, but leaves the « water sheep » out of account. Like LAUFER (p. 117), I think, however, that there is an intimate interrelation of the « water sheep », the « earth-born lamb », and the « sowed sheep »; and, if I have been right in my dating of Ch'ang Shou-chieh's source, the « water sheep » and the « earth-born lamb » are practically contemporaneous. I have shown also that perhaps too much stress had been laid on the attribute « water » (cf. *supra*, p. 508-509). In LAUFER's learned monograph, much ingenuity has been expended to show that the « lamb » was a religious symbol brought over to China by Syrian Christians; I shall not discuss this opinion, for which I can find no support either in eastern or in western texts. Moreover, if the earliest mention of the « earth born lamb » goes back to the middle of the 3rd cent., this is too early a date for a Christian channel. On the other hand, the 3rd cent. of our era was a great epoch for the propagation of all sorts of legends between China and the West.

What is then at the base of this legend which, in the 3rd cent., appears under the double form of the « water sheep » and the « earth-born sheep »? LAUFER, like BRETSCHNEIDER, HIRTH and CHAVANNES, speaks of « byssus », but with much greater precision than his predecessors. BRETSCHNEIDER, followed by HIRTH and CHAVANNES, had said that « byssus » was the name of a textile woven from the excrescences of sea-shells, especially *Pinna squamosa*; but this view rested on a confusion. In classical Greek, *βύσσιος* was the name of a costly textile, generally white, sometimes yellow (the only one produced in Greece proper, in the vicinity of Elis in Achaia, was yellow); opinions are still at variance whether it was « cotton » or « flax », the balance of opinion being at present in favour of the latter (cf. FRAZER, *Pausanias*, III, 470-472); in any case, it was a vegetable stuff, which had nothing to do with sea-shells. On the other hand, our zoological nomenclature gives the name of « byssi » (plural of « byssus ») to the filaments secreted by the