

foot of the *Pinna* and other bivalve molluscs. From these filaments, textiles can be obtained they are mentioned in Greek texts from the 2nd cent. A. D. (perhaps already at the end of the 1st cent., if *πινικόν* of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* really refers to them); but they are never called «byssus». These pinna textiles were famous in hellenistic times; as late as the 10th cent., Iṣṭahṛī and Maqdisī attribute the pinna wool, «of silken hue and golden colour», to an animal which, at a certain period of the year, runs out of the sea and leaves the wool on stones against which he rubs himself (cf. *TP*, 1907, 183; LAUFER, *The Story of the Pinna*, 111). So there is a solid foundation for LAUFER's conclusion that the «water sheep» of the *Wei lio* is no other than the *Pinna* shell. I may add that the *Pinna* wool of the Mediterranean seems to have come again to the knowledge of the Chinese, but to have then been connected with a purely Chinese legend. Tso Ssū's «Ode on the Wu capital», *Wu tu fu* (second half of the 3rd cent.), already alludes to the mermaid who weaves silk (絹 *hsiao*) in the depth of the sea. In the *Shu-i chi* (6, 13 a; cf. *supra*, p. 518), the mermaid is called 鮫人 *chiao-jên* (see «Ambergris»), and the silk woven by her is 鮫絹 *chiao-hsiao*, «mermaid silk». Now, the *Ling-wai tai-ta* (3, 3 b) and Chao Ju-kua mention *chiao-hsiao* as one of the typical products of the Mediterranean (cf. *HR*, 141, 142; in fact, the *Han hai* ed. of Chao Ju-kua gives 絞絹 *chiao-hsiao*, a form which also occurs in Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai's *Chan-jan chü-shih chi*, *Ssü-pu ts'ung-k'an* ed., 5, 5 a); apart from the inaccurate use of «byssus» as the designation of the textile meant, HIRTH and ROCKHILL seem to have been right in regarding this «mermaid silk» as a textile made from the byssi of the *Pinna*.

Yet I wonder whether this solution covers all the facts of the case. As we have seen, Chinese mediaeval accounts of the «sowed lamb» undoubtedly refer to cotton. Passage from an animal to a plant or a mineral, or *vice-versa*, is of common occurrence in hellenistic and mediaeval science. Even our modern nomenclature would favour such confusions. If we had no knowledge of the subject beyond the names, what legends could not arise from such modern terms as 羊毛樹 *yang-mao shu*, «sheep wool tree», now adopted in Chinese for an *Eriodendron*, or *srinbal*, lit. «worm wool», one of the names of cotton in Tibetan (cf. for instance, *Mahāvvyutpatti*, No. 5870), or «vegetable sheep», which is the English name of a white woolly plant of New Zealand! LAUFER thought that it took several centuries for the legend to develop from the «water sheep» to the «full-fledged ovine species equipped with phenomena of plant-growth». But, as a matter of fact, the western counterpart of the «water sheep» has not been traced, so far, to a text earlier than the Arabic accounts of the 10th cent.; while, on the other hand, the term «earth-born sheep» seems to occur in Chinese texts just as early as the «water sheep», *i. e.* in the 3rd cent. My impression is that both the «water sheep» and the «earth-born sheep» belong to a composite legend, the western prototype of which still escapes us, and for which the *Pinna* textiles furnish only some of the elements (but there is no reason to bring in also the legends concerning the big-tailed sheep, as was done by DE GOEJE in *TP*, v [1894], Supplement, 63). Another consideration makes me hesitate to follow LAUFER. If the famous «West of the Sea cloth» of Ta-Ch'in were merely a *Pinna* textile, «byssus», as the designation of a textile, ought to be left out of account entirely. Now, it is a striking fact that it is precisely *byssus* which has given the usual names of cotton stuff throughout northern Asia (cf. *supra*, p. 427). I have no authority to express a personal opinion on the true value of *βύσσοσ* or to decide