

government taxes partly with cowries. In a well-informed note which appeared in the *North-China Herald* of 1889, p. 534 (it is reprinted in *JNCB*, XXIV [1890], 130-133), there is the following passage: « We are told that in 1578 the Government received from Yünnan 13,764 taels in paper money, 944 piculs of grain and 5,769 strings of shells. » The origin of the text is not indicated, but in fact it comes from WANG Ch'i's *Hsü Wên-hsien t'ung-k'ao*, 29, 20 a, and represents the amount of the annual ordinary taxes (*k'o-ch'ao*) which were imposed upon the province; extra taxes, for instance the « fish-tax » (*yü k'o-ch'ao*), implied only a payment in paper money and grain, without cowries (*ibid.*, 21 a). The translation is fairly accurate (« grain » stands for « rice and wheat » in the text; « picul » is misleading, as 石 *shih* must here be the measure of capacity of 100 pints, not the « picul » of 100 pounds; moreover, I doubt whether *shih*, even as a weight, in principle 120 pounds, could then have been, as in more recent times, the equivalent of the *tan* or picul of 100 pounds). But the fractions are omitted: the true figures are 13,764.255 taels in paper money, 944.8885 *shih* of grain, and 5,769 strings (*so*) 20 𠄎 *shou* of cowries (*hai-pa*). Now, as will be shown further on, the *shou* consisted of 4 cowries; but 20 *shou*, *i. e.* 80 cowries, made a complete « string » (*so*), so that there must be some mistake in the figure. The passage is, however, of real interest because it is the only one known to me where a subdivision of the *so* is actually used in an account.

Since the decisions of 1411 and 1576 had hardly been enforced, the importation of cowries into China by sea went on until a much later date. Some may have come from the Liu-ch'iu, the regular tribute of which included cowries (*hai-pa*; cf. WANG Ch'i's *Hsü Wên-hsien t'ung-k'ao*, 33, 10 a); but it is possible that these remained at the Capital to be used as ornaments, just as did the « gastropod shells » (*lo-k'o*; these were probably conches) of the same origin. The cowries intended for currency in Yün-nan were imported by regular maritime trade. According to the tariff of 1589, imported cowries had to pay a duty of 0.02 ounce of silver per *shih*, and, according to that of 1615, of 0.017 ounce (cf. *Tung-hsi yang k'ao*, 7, 10 b, 12 b). Cowries fell into disuse only in the middle of the seventeenth century, as can be deduced from the final reopening of the Mint in 1660 and also from a passage in the early *Yün-nan t'ung chih* which is in the Bibliothèque Nationale (COURANT, *Catalogue*, Nos 1785-1790, 7, 5-6). COURANT says that this copy is a reprint, made in Ming times, of the edition published in compliance with an Imperial edict of 1454. But he is mistaken. The edition speaks of the Ming as « Ming », not as « Ta-Ming », and mentions not only the latest reigns of that dynasty, including Ch'ung-chêng (1628-1644), but also the succeeding Ch'ing dynasty; so it is clearly a redaction of early Ch'ing times. The passage on the cowries is as follows: « Formerly cowries (*pei*) were in great use; popularly they were called 肥子 *pa-tzŭ*. One was called 莊 *chuang* (etc.; cf. *infra*, p. 549); then follows a long discussion on the use of cowries in ancient China, which, the authors thought, the custom in Yün-nan continued) . . . From [T'ien-]ch'i (1621-1627) and [Ch'ung-]chêng (1628-1644) of the Ming and afterwards, silver rose in value and cowries (*pa*) lost value; finally they were withdrawn and put out of use; the Barbarians adopted the currency system of Our dynasty (the Ch'ing), and for a long time they have not employed [the cowries] any more. But we give a full notice of them to preserve [the memory of] the ancient custom. »

In his *Pên-ts'ao kang-mu* (46, 22 a), LI Shih-chên, certainly drawing from an earlier Ming