

countries, and moreover its fur was never appreciated. BALDELLI-BONI (II, 475) supposed that ermines were meant. CHARIGNON (*Ch*, III, 279, 280) has translated « ercolins » by « glutton » (*Gulo luscus*) without any remark; but this is quite arbitrary. BENEDETTO (*B*¹, 404, 405, 406, 453) gives in Italian *ercolini* without any remark. RICCI-ROSS (*RR*, 420) give in their Index « erculin, an animal in Siberia », with a mere reference to *Y*, II, 483; but, in a page of Addenda and Corrigenda, they inserted : « ERCULIN — according to Pelliot = squirrel (écureuil). »

It is true that I believe the *ercolin* to be a squirrel, and such was already the view of the continuators of DU CANGE, who, under « erculinus », quoted Polo's passage, adding the explanation *sciurus*, « squirrel ». But from the point of view of phonetics, it does not seem possible to connect *ercolin* with Lat. *scuriolus*, *scorolius*, etc., or French *escureus*, *escuriau*, etc., the mediaeval forms of « squirrel ».

DU CANGE (*Diss.* I) quotes a passage of Aelian (*Hist. Nat.*, 6, 40) : « In an island of the Euxine Sea, called Heraklea because it was dedicated to Hercules, there were a great many of these rats (μύες) ». From the context in DU CANGE, it would seem that these Pontic rats were ermines, and this would agree with BALDELLI-BONI's explanation of *ercolins*; phonetically, the equivalence is unimpeachable.

Yet, I doubt that ermines are meant in Polo's text. First of all, he mentions in the same passages the « ermines » apart from the « ercolins ». It is true, that in the Middle Ages two sorts of « ermines » were distinguished, the « ermine » proper and a cheaper species, the « letice » (in Ital. *lattizzo*; cf. GAY, *Voc. archéol.*, s. v. « letice »); an ermine fur was also called « roserau » (cf. *infra*). Unfortunately, no term corresponding to « letice » occurs in the *Codex Cumanicus*, and *ermelinus* is left there (p. 98) without its Persian or Turkish equivalent; but we are well aware of the usual native names, which have of course nothing in common with *ercolins*. But the very order of the terms in Polo's three passages, which once is « ermines, ercolins, vairs » and once « ermines, vairs, ercolins », suggests that the « ercolin » must be an animal of the « vair », not of the « ermine » sort.

I have thought of a last solution. The « vair » was a fur in such great use in the Middle Ages that « vairie » had become a general name for the fur trade. This explains that Pegolotti, c. 1340, should bring under the heading *vai* a number of furs which are not all squirrels. The list is as follows (EVANS ed., 298, and see the Index, 432, s. v. Vaio) : « Nomi di vai : Organni Bolgari lunghi Ischiavi Pasquardini Ischeruoli Ermellini Orzeruoli Tutti questi sono vai. » I leave out « organni » for the moment. « Bolgari » means a vair from Bulγār (see « Bolgara »); « lunghi » may either be an epithet, « long », to be joined with « Bolgari », as EVANS took it, or stand for an independant name which I have failed to trace; « ischiavi » means « Sclavonian, Slav »; « pasquardini » means a vair of the land of the Bašyird; « ischeruoli » = squirrels, the « black squirrels » of the *Codex Cumanicus*; « ermellini » = ermines; *orzeruoli* = « roserau, roseruel, roix, reiz », an ermine fur (cf. GAY, s. v. « roix »), BUFFON's « roselet ». All these are included by Pegolotti among the « vairs ».

I have left out the kind of « vair » which Pegolotti calls *organni*. In a document dated « Caffa, May 5, 1289 », which is summarized in BRĂTIANU, *Actes des notaires génois*, 330, mention is made of money to be used in *varis organinis*. On p. 10, BRĂTIANU proposed, with a question mark, to