

One would be that Venetian sailors were already engaged in the cowry trade with Africa. In the 14th cent., Ibn Baṭṭūṭah found the cowry currency extensively used in the basin of the Niger, a region well known to Italian traders of the time. It may also be that cowries were sold in Europe for ornaments. About the end of the 17th cent., LA LOUBÈRE was told that a cowry currency obtained in some parts of Hungary, and felt it hard to believe, because he thought cowries were not valuable enough to be carried there (*Descr. du Royaume de Siam*, I, 223). I agree that there was no cowry currency in Hungary, but there were cowries: as in ancient China, cowries were affixed to the bits of horses, and have been retained in the equipment of some regiments of central and northern Europe almost down to our day (cf. SCHNEIDER, 117). It is just possible that part of these cowries came from the East through Venice. I do not believe that cowries can have anything to do with the « pictures of porcelain » of the inventories.

As to the true nature of these « pictures », I have no safe solution to proffer, but may venture a suggestion. In his chapter on the « Great Tartar », i. e. the Great Khan, Jourdain Cathala says that, in his country, they make *vasa pulcherrima & nobilissima atque virtuosa et porseleta*. YULE was rightly puzzled by this strange wording, and tentatively translated « full of good qualities, and of fine enamelled surface »; CORDIER adopted « very fine vessels, and of high quality and enamelled » (*Les merveilles de l'Asie*, 92, pl. xv). Although CORDIER does not say so, Jourdain Cathala of course refers to china-ware, and YULE, in his *Hobson-Jobson*², 725, did not fail to include the passage among the early mentions of china-ware. But, if the text be correct, it would seem that Jourdain Cathala, an author of the first half of the 14th cent., used *porseleta* as a neuter plural of an adjectival **porseletum* which would mean not « enamelled », for which there were other and well-known terms, but « glazed ». If such be the case, the passage perhaps gives us a way out of our difficulty concerning the « pictures of porcelain » of 1363 and 1380; they may have been « enamels » of some sort, so called on account of a glazed surface which reminded of the brilliancy of the cowry, but were no more made of cowry shells nor of mother of pearl than china-ware itself. At any rate, if they were made of mother of pearl, this could only be mother of pearl of bivalve molluscs, or of prepared great gastropods of the conch type, and their designation as made of « porcelain » would be in a way a misnomer.

One ancient meaning of « porcelain » remains to be examined, that of « purslane », which is well attested at ancient date in French (cf. Vol. I, 164), has survived in Italian as *porcellana* (cf. Vol. I, 164), and has been also retained in English with a slight change of spelling. The Latin names of the purslane are *porcilaca* and *portulaca*; the latter exists in identical form in Italian alongside of *porcellana*, and is also represented, for instance, by German *portulak*. Etymologists are agreed that *porcellana*, when meaning « purslane », is corrupted from *porcilaca* and that the corruption took place in Italy; I do not doubt that they are right. It may be, however, that the attraction exerted by *porcellana*, « cowry », on the mediaeval derived form of *porcilaca* was helped by something more than phonetic analogy, and that the flower of the purslane was popularly compared with the *Cypraea* shells. I am not impressed by 豬子菜 *chu-tzŭ-ts'ai*, « pig-vegetable », given by TARANZANO (*Vocabulaire des Sciences*, I, 880) as one of the designations of « purslane »; I suspect it to be of European origin, and based on the etymology *porcus* of *porcilaca*. But the usual name of the « purslane »,