

the Chinese. F. DE MÉLY¹ argues that *nao-ša* is written ideographically, and that the text of the *Pen ts'ao kan mu* adds, "Il vient de la province de Chen-si; on le tire d'une montagne d'où il sort continuellement des vapeurs rouges et dangereuses et très difficile à aborder par rapport à ces mêmes vapeurs. Il en vient aussi de la Tartarie, on le tire des plaines où il y a beaucoup de troupeaux, de la même façon que le salpêtre de houssage; les Tartares et gens d'au delà de la Chine salent les viandes avec ce sel." Hence F. de Mély infers that the Persians, on their part, borrowed from the Chinese their *nao-ša*, to which they added the ending *dzer*, as in the case of the bezoar styled in Persian *badzeher*.²

The case, however, is entirely different. The term *nao-ša* is written phonetically, not ideographically, as shown by the ancient transcription 饒沙 in the Sui Annals (see below) and the variant 饒砂 (properly *nuñ-ša*, but indicated with the pronunciation *nao-ša*);³ also the synonyms *ti yen* 狄鹽 ("salt of the barbarians") and *Pei-t'in ša* 北庭砂 ("ore of Pei-t'in," in Turkistan), which appear as early as the Sung period in the *T'u kin pen ts'ao* of Su Sun, allude to the foreign origin of the product. The term is thus plainly characterized as a foreign loan in the *Pen ts'ao kan mu*. This, further, is brought out by the history of the subject. The word is not found in any ancient Chinese records. The Chinese learned about *nao-ša* in Sogdiana and Kuča for the first time during the sixth century A.D. The *Pen ts'ao* of the T'ang period is the earliest pharmacopœia that mentions it. Su Kuñ 蘇恭, the reviser of this work, and the author of the *Čen lei pen ts'ao*, know of but one place of provenience, the country of the Western Žuñ 西戎 (F. de Mély's "Tartary"). It is only Su Sun 蘇頌 of the Sung period, who in his *T'u kin pen ts'ao* remarks, "At present it occurs also in Si-lian and in the country Hia [Kan-su] as well as in Ho-tuñ [Šan-si], Šen-si, and in the districts of the adjoining regions" 今西涼夏國及河東陝西近邊州郡亦有之 [note the additions of 今 "at present" and 亦 "also"]. And he hastens to add, "However (然), the pieces coming from the Western Žuñ are clear and bright, the largest having the size of a fist and being from three to five ounces in weight, the smallest

¹ L'Alchimie chez les Chinois (*Journal asiatique*, 1895, II, p. 338) and *Lapidaire chinois*, p. LI.

² All this is rather lack of criticism or poor philology. The Persian word in question is *pāzahr*, literally meaning "antidote" (see below, p. 525). Neither this word nor *nušadir* has an ending like *dzer*, and there is no analogy between the two.

³ According to the *Pie pen ču* 別本注, cited in the *Čen lei pen ts'ao* (Ch. 5, p. 10, ed. of 1587), the transcription *nuñ-ša* should represent the pronunciation of the Hu people; that is, Iranians. Apparently it was an Iranian dialectic variation with a nasalized vowel *u*. It is indicated as a synonyme of *nao-ša* in the *Ši yao er ya* of the T'ang period (see *Beginnings of Porcelain*, p. 115).