

ninth and the tenth century, the word penetrated from the Arabic into Syriac.¹ In Armenian it is *kahribā* and *kahribar*. The same word migrated westward: Spanish *carabe*, Portuguese *carabe* or *charabe*, Italian *carabe*, French *carabé*; Byzantine *κεραβέ*; Cumanian *charabar*. Under the Ming, amber is listed as a product of Herat, Khotan, and Samarkand.² A peculiar variety styled "gold amber" (*kin p'o* 金珀) is assigned to Arabia (T'ien-fan).³

The question arises, From what sources did the Persians derive their amber? G. JACOB,⁴ from a study of Arabic sources, has reached the conclusion that the Arabs obtained amber from the Baltic. The great importance of Baltic amber in the history of trade is well known, but, in my estimation, has been somewhat exaggerated by the specialists, whereas the fact is easily overlooked that amber is found in many parts of the world. I do not deny that a great deal of amber secured by the Arabs may be credited to the Baltic sources of supply, but I fail to see that this theory (for it is no more) follows directly from the data of Arabic writers. These refer merely to the countries of the Rūs and Bulgār as the places of provenience, but who will guarantee that the amber of the Russians hailed exclusively from the Baltic? We know surely enough that amber occurs in southern Russia and in Rumania. Again, Ibn al-Baiṭār knows nothing about Rūs and Bulgār in this connection, but, with reference to al-Jafiki, speaks of two kinds of amber, one coming from Greece and the Orient, the other being found on the littoral and underground in the western portion of Spain.⁵ Pliny informs us that, according to Philemon, amber is a fossil substance, and that it is found in Scythia in two localities, one white and of waxen color, styled *electrum*; while in the other place it is red, and is called *sualiternicum*.⁶ This Scythian or South-Russian amber may have been traded by the Iranian Scythians to Iran. In order to settle definitely the question of the provenience of ancient Persian and Arabic amber, it would be necessary, first of all, to obtain a certain number of authentic, ancient Persian and Arabic ambers, and to subject them to a chemical analysis. We know also that several ancient amber supplies were

¹ Cf. E. SEIDEL, *Mechithar*, p. 146; and G. JACOB, *ZDMG*, Vol. XLIII, 1889, p. 359.

² *Ta Miñ i t'unñ ĩi*, Ch. 89, pp. 23, 24 b, 25 (ed. of 1461).

³ *Ibid.*, Ch. 91, p. 20.

⁴ *L. c.*, and *Arabische Handelsartikel*, p. 63.

⁵ LECLERC, *Traité des simples*, Vol. III, p. 209.

⁶ Philemon fossile esse et in Scythia erui duobus locis, candidum atque cerei coloris quod vocaretur electrum, in alio fulvum quod appellaretur sualiternicum (XXXVII, II, § 33).