



Another Root

H

The first part of y<sup>e</sup> Stem

The Root

The middle of the stem

This Plant is here reduced to half its height.

Senex sculp<sup>t</sup>

*A Letter from Father Jartoux, Missioner  
of the Society of JESUS, to F. Procurator,  
General of the Missions of India and  
China,*

*Peking, April 12, 1711.*

REV. FATHER,

THE Map of *Tartary*, which we are drawing, by Order of the Emperor of *China*, has procur'd us the Opportunity of seeing the famous Plant, call'd *Gin-seng*, so highly valu'd in *China* and as little known in *Europe*. About the latter End of *July*, in the Year 1709, we came to a Village, which is but Four short Leagues from the Kingdom of *Corea*, and inhabited by *Tartars*, who are call'd *Calca-safze*. One of those *Tartars* went to the Neighbouring Mountains to fetch Four Plants of *Gin-seng*, which he brought to us entire, in a Basket. I took one of them at a venture, which I drew in it's full Dimensions, as exactly as possibly I could. I send you the Draught of it, which I will explain at the End of this Letter.

*Gin-seng  
Plants.*

The ablest *Chinese* Physicians have writ whole Volums of the Vertues of this Plant; they make it an Ingredient in almost all their Prescriptions to great Men, for it is too dear for the common Sort. They pretend it is a sovereign Remedy against all Faintness occasion'd by excessive Labour either of the Body or Mind; that it dissolves all Flegm, that it cures the Infirmities of the Lungs and Pleurisies; that it stops Vo-

*It's Vertues*

miting, and strengthens the Mouth of the Stomach and causes an Appetite; that it dispels Vapors; that it cures Weakness and Shortness of Breath, strengthening the Chest; that it invigorates the vital Spirits and makes the Blood Serous; to conclude, that it is good against Vertigos and Dizziness, and that it prolongs the Life of old Men.

It is not to be imagin'd, that the *Chineses* and the *Tartars* should put so great a Value upon this Root, unless it certainly did work good Effects. Even those who are in perfect Health make use of it very often by way of strengthening themselves. For my Part, I am persuaded, that were it put into the Hands of *Europeans*, who understand the Composition of Medicines, it would be an excellent Remedy; provided they had enough of it to make the necessary Experiments, to examine the Nature of it by Chemistry, and to apply the proper Quantity, according to the Quality of the Distemper, for which it may be of Use.

*Sudden  
Operation.*

This is most certain, that it thins the Blood; that it makes it circulate; that it warms it, that it helps Digestion, and that it sensibly Strengthens. When I had drawn that which I shall hereafter describe, I felt my own Pulse, to know how it then beat, after which I took the one Half of that Root, raw as it was, without any Manner of Preparation, and about an Hour after I felt my Pulse fuller and brisker, I had a good Appetite, found my self more sprightly, and was much better dispos'd to endure any Toil than I had been before.

*Wonderful  
Effects.*

However I did not rely much upon that Tryal, fancying that Alteration might be occasion'd by our resting that Day; but Four Days after finding my self so tir'd and spent with travel-  
ling

ling, that I could scarce sit my Horse, a *Mandarine* of our Company who perceiv'd it, gave me one of those Roots, I immediately took half of it, and within an Hour after felt no more Faintness. I have since made use of it several Times, upon such Occasions, and always with the same Success. I have also observ'd, that the Leaf, fresh gather'd and particularly the Fibres, which I chew'd, had almost the same Effect.

We have often made use of the Leaves of *Gin-seng* instead of *Tea*, as the *Tartars* do, and <sup>Us'd in-</sup> <sup>stead of</sup> <sup>Tea.</sup> it agreed with me so well, that I ever since prefer'd that Leaf before the best *Tea*. The Colour of it is no less agreeable, and when taken Two or Three Times, it has a Taste and Flavour which are very pleasant.

As for the Root it must be boil'd a little longer than *Tea*, to give Time for Extracting <sup>In what</sup> <sup>Quantity.</sup> of the Vertue; so the *Chine'es* do, when they give it to Sick Persons, and then they use not above the fifth Part of an Ounce of the dry Root. As for those who are in Health and use it only by Way of Precaution, or on Account of some little Indisposition, I would not have them to make an Ounce serve less than Ten Times taking, nor would I advise them to take it every Day. It is prepar'd after this Manner. The Root is cut into small Slices and put into an Earthen Pot well glaz'd, with about Half a <sup>How boil'd</sup> *Winchester* Pint of Water, or near a Wine Pint. Care must be taken that the Pot be close stopp'd, and it must boil over a gentle Fire, and when the Water is consum'd to the Quantity of a large Coffee Dish, a little Sugar must be put into it, and then it is to be drank off immediately. The same Quantity of Water is again put upon the Root before boil'd, which is boil'd again after the same Manner, to extract all the Remainder

mainder of the Juice and Sprituous Parts of it. These Two Doses are taken, one in the Morning and the other at Night.

*Where it  
grows.*

As for the Places, where this Root grows, till such Time as they may be seen mark'd down in the Map, a Copy whereof we shall send into *France*, it may be said in general, that they are between the Thirtyninth and the Fortyseventh Degrees of North Latitude, and between the Tenth and the Twentieth Degrees of East Latitude, from the Meridian of *Peking*. There is a long Chain of Mountains, render'd almost impassable by the thick Woods which cover and encompass them. On the Sides of those Hills and in close thick Woods, on the Banks of Torrents, or about the Rocks, at the Feet of Trees and in the midst of all Sorts of Herbs, the Plant *Gin-seng* is to be found. There is none of it in the Plains, in the Valleys, in Marshy Grounds, in deep Hollows, or in very open Places. If the Wood takes Fire and is burnt down, that Plant does not appear there again till three or four Years after the Conflagration, which shows it is an Enemy to Heat, and accordingly it conceals it self from the Sun as much as possible. All this makes me apt to believe that if it be in any other Part of the World, it must be chiefly in *Canada*, where the Mountains and Woods, as those who have liv'd there report, do much resemble these here.

*Chineses  
not to gather  
it.*

The Places where the *Gin-seng* grows are altogether separated from the Province of *Quantong*, call'd *Leaotum* in our ancient Maps, by a Barrier of Palisadoes or Stakes, which incloses the whole Province, and about which there are Guards continually going rounds to prevent the *Chineses* going out to seek for that Root. However, notwithstanding all the Care taken, the  
Covetousness

Covetousness of Gain puts the *Chineses* upon finding means to slip into those Deserts, sometimes two or three Thousand of them in Number, with the Hazard of forfeiting their Liberty and the Product of their Labour, in case they happen to be taken either going out of or returning into the Province.

The Emperor being willing that the *Tartars* should make their Advantage thereof rather than the *Chineses* had given Orders, that same Year 1709, to 10000 *Tartars* to go themselves and gather all the *Gin-seng* they could find, upon Condition that each of them should give his Majesty two Ounces of the best, and the rest should be sold for it's weight in Silver. By that means it was reckned the Emperor would that Year have 20000 *Chinese* Pounds of it, which would not cost him above one fourth Part of it's Value. We hapned to meet with some of those *Tartars* in the midst of those dreadful Deserts. Their *Mandarines*, who were not far out of our Way, came one after another, to offer us Beeves for our Sustenance, pursuant to the Orders they had receiv'd from the Emperor.

I will give you an Account of the Order kept by that Army of Simplers. After having divided the Ground among themselves, according to their Standards, each Troop, being an Hundred in Number, stretches out in a Line a single Rank as far as the Boundary mark'd out, keeping a certain Distance between every Ten. Then they look out carefully for the Plant we are speaking of, advancing very slowly always right forwards, and thus within a certain Number of Days they search all the Space of Ground allotted them. As soon as the Time is expir'd, the *Mandarines* who are posted with their Tents in convenient Places for the Horses to graze, send

*Worth it's weight in Silver.*

*Manner of gathering it.*

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*Worth it's weight in Silver.*

*Manner of gathering it.*



send their Orders to every Troop, and inquire whether their Number is compleat. In Case any Man be missing, as frequently enough happens, either because he has lost himself, or that he has been devour'd by wild Beasts, they seek for him during one or two Days, after which, they begin again as before.

*Hardships  
endur'd by  
the Ga-  
sberers.*

Those poor People suffer enough, during that Expedition; they carry neither Beds, nor Tents, each of them being sufficiently loaded with his Provision of Millet, toasted in the Oven, on which he is to feed all the Time he is abroad. Thus they are oblig'd to take their Night's Rest under some Tree, covering themselves with Boughs or what Bark they find. The *Mandarines* from Time to Time send them some Pieces of Beef, or Venison, which they devour, after having just shown it the Fire. Thus those Ten Thousand Men spend Six Months of the Year, and yet notwithstanding those Fatigues, they were Lusty, and seem'd to be good Soldiers. The *Tartars*, who were of our Guard, did not fare much better, having only the Remains of a Bullock that was kill'd every Day, of which Fifty Persons were to feed before them.

Now to give you some Idea of that Plant, which the *Tartars* and *Chineses* put so great a Value upon, I will explain the Figure I send you, which I have drawn as exactly as possibly I could.

*The Root.* *A*, represents the Root in it's natural Size. When wash'd it appear'd white and somewhat rugged, as generally the Roots of other Plants are.

*The Stem.* *B, C, C, D*, represent the Stem, of it's full Length and Thickness; it is quite smooth and pretty round; the Colour of it is red somewhat darkish; unless about the first Part at *B*, where it

it is whiter, by Reason of it's nearness to the Earth.

The Point *D*, is a Sort of a Knot, form'd by *Branches.* the Production of Four Branches, which shoot from it as from a Center, and then spread a-broad at an equal-Distance from each other, without departing from the same Level. The under Side of the Branch is Green with a Mixture of White; the upper Part is much like the Stem, that is, of a deep Red, inclining to Murray. The Two Colours join on the Sides falling off naturally. Each Branch has Five Leaves, of the same Size and Shape as in the Cut. It is to be observ'd that those Branches separate themselves equally from one another, as they do from the Horison, to fill up with their Leaves a round Space almost Parallel to the Ground the Plant grows on.

Tho' I have only drawn the one Half of one *Leaves.* of those Leaves exactly at *F*, all the rest may be easily conceiv'd and finish'd by that Part. I do not know that I have ever seen such large Leaves so thin and fine. The Fibres are very well distinguish'd; they have underneath some little Hairs, somewhat whitish. The small Film which is between the Fibres, rises a little about the Middle above the Level of the said Fibres. The Colour of the Leaf is a dark Green at the Top, and a whitish Green underneath, somewhat brightish. All the Leaves are indented and the Points are indifferent sharp.

From *D*. the Center of the Branches of this Plant, there shot up a second Stem, very strait and smooth, somewhat whitish from the Bottom to the Top, at the End whereof was a Cluster of Fruit, round and of a beautiful Red. The Cluster contain'd Twenty Four of those Fruits. *The Fruit.* I have drawn only Two of them in their natural

tural Size, and mark'd them with the Figures, 9, 9. The Red Skin their Fruit is cover'd with is very thin and smooth, and the Pulp is white and softish. Those Fruits being Double, for there are some Single, they had two rough Stones, about the Bigness and Shape of our common Lentiles, but separate from each other, tho' lying on the same Level. The Edges of those Stones are not sharp, like the Lentiles, but they are almost of an equal Thickness in all Parts. Each Fruit hung by a smooth Stalk, alike on all Sides, pretty slender and of the same Colour, as that of our Red Cherries. All those Stalks proceeded from the same Center and separating exactly like the Radij of a Circle, form'd a Round Head of the Fruits they bore. That Fruit is not good to eat, the Stone is like other common Stones of Fruit and contains the Kernel. It always lies upon the same Level with the Stalk that bears the Fruit. For this Reason the Fruit is not round, but somewhat flatted on both Sides. When Double it has a Sort of Dent in the Middle, where the Two Parts it is compos'd of join. It has also a small Beard diametrically opposite to the Stalk it hangs by. When the Fruit is dry, there remains nothing but the Skin shrivell'd up, which clings about the Stone, and then it turns to a Dark Red, almost Black.

This Plant falls and sprouts out again every Year. The Years of it's Age are known by the Number of Stems it has put out, whereof something always remains, as may be seen <sup>e</sup> in the Plate by the small Letters, *b, b, b*, By which <sup>vn</sup> it appears, that the Root *A.* was in it's Seventh Year, and the Root *H.* in it's Fifteenth.

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As for the Flower, and Blossom, not having *The Flower.* seen it, I cannot give the Description of it; but have been told it is white and very small. Others have assur'd me, that this Plant has none, and that no Man has ever seen it. I am rather apt to believe it is so small and inconsiderable that they do not take Notice of it, and what confirms me in this Opinion is, that those who seek for the *Gin-seng*, being only intent upon the Root, commonly despise and throw away the rest, as of no Use.

There are some Plants, which besides the Cluster or Circle of Fruit above describ'd, have *Other Remarks.* One or Two more of those Fruits, exactly like the others, growing out about an Inch, or an Inch and a Half, below that Cluster, or Head; and then they say, the Point of the Compass those Fruits point to is to be nicely observ'd, because it seldom fails but that some of the said Plant is to be found within a few Paces on the way it points or near it. The Colour of this Fruit when it has any on, distinguishes this Plant from all others, so that it may be immediately known; but very often it happens to have none, tho' the Root be very Old. Such a one was that I have denoted in the Figure by the Letter *H*, which bore no Fruit, tho' then in it's Fifteenth Year.

Tryal having been made of sowing the Seed, *Fable of the Gia-seng.* it has never been known to grow up, and it is likely that has occasion'd the following Fable, which goes for current among the *Tartars*. They say a Bird devours it, as soon as put into the Ground, and not being able to digest it, only cleanses it in it's Stomach, and then it grows up in the Place where the Bird has dropp'd it with the Dung. I am rather inclin'd to be believe, that the Stone lies very long

long in the Earth, before it takes Root, and this Notion seems to me to be well Grounded, because some of these Roots are found, no longer and not so thick as a Man's Little Finger, tho' they have shot out above Ten Stems successively in as many several Years.

*Number of  
Branches  
uncertain.*

Tho' the Plant I have describ'd had Four Branches, yet there are some that have but Two, and some have Five and sometimes Seven, and those are the most beautiful. However every Branch has always Five Leaves, like that I have drawn, unless the Number has been diminish'd by some Accident. The Height of the Plants is proportionable to their Thickness and the Number of their Branches. Those which bear no Fruit, are generally small and very low.

*Height.*

*Root.*

The Root which is largest, most uniform and has fewest Threads, is always reckoned the best, and therefore that which is mark'd with the Letter *H.* excels the other. I know not why the *Chineses* have given it the Name of *Gin-seng*, which signifies, *Representation of Man*; I have not seen any that had the least Resemblance, and those, whose Profession it is to seek it, have assur'd me, that there are none found any more resembling Man, among the other Plants, which are sometimes accidentally of extraordinary Shapes. The *Tartars*, with more Reason call it *Orhorn*, that is, *The first, or the chiefest of Plants.*

*Name.*

*Grows not  
in China.*

It is not true that this Plant grows in *China*, as *F. Martini* has writ, upon the Testimony of some *Chinese* Books, which have affirm'd it grew in the Province of *Peking*, on the Mountains of *Yong-pinson*. It was easy to be deceiv'd in that Point, because it arrives there, when brought out of *Tartary* into *China*.

*Curing of  
it.*

Those who go to seek for this Plant, preserve only the Root, and they bury all they can gather

ther for the Space of Ten, or Fifteen Days in one Place. They take Care to wash the Root very well and cleanse it, rubbing off with a Brush all that does not belong to it. Then they steep it for a Moment in Water that is almost boiling, and dry it in the Smoke, of a sort of Yellow Millet, which imparts to it something of it's own Colour. The Millet being close stopp'd up in a Vessel with a little Water, is boil'd over a gentle Fire; the Roots laid on little Sticks plac'd over the Vessel, dry gently under a Cloth, or some other Vessel that covers them. They may also be dry'd in the Sun, or at the Fire; but tho' they then retain their Virtue, they do not contract that Colour, which the *Chineses* are fond of. When those Roots are dry, they must be kept up close in a very dry Place, else they would be in Danger of Rotting, or of being Eaten by Worms.

I wish, Reverend Father, that the Description I have given of the *Gin-seng*, which is so highly valu'd in this Empire, may be acceptable to you, and those you shall Communicate it to. We are upon the Point of going into *Tartary*, to finish the Map of that Country, for we have yet the West and North-West to survey. I will send you as soon as possible the Map of the Province of *Peking*, by *F. Martini*, call'd *Peheli*, and by the *Chineses Tcheli*, or *Lipafou*. I recommend my self to your Prayers, and am with much Respect,

*Reverend Father,*

*Your most humble and most  
obedient Servant in our Lord,*

J A R T O U X, *Missioner of  
the Society of JESUS.*  
Q *Extract*