

ON THE KORARIMA
OR CARDAMOM
OF ABESSINIA

BEKE

1847

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(Communicated to the *Pharmaceutical Society* in a letter to Dr. Pereira.)

MY DEAR SIR,—As the information which you have collected from other sources and communicated to the PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY* respecting the *Koraríma* (*Amomum angustifolium*) is likely to lead to misconception as regards the place of growth of that spice, I would beg to trouble you with the following additional remarks on the subject :—

It is stated that in Shoa the *Koraríma* is called *Gurágie spice* (“Guraque” is a clerical or typographical error for “Gurague,” as the name is spelled by the Portuguese writers), and hence it is inferred that it is probably the produce of Gurágie, which country adjoins Shoa to the southwest. But this designation means only that the spice is brought to Shoa *from*, or *by the way of*, Gurágie; and it should no more lead to the conclusion that it is the produce of that country, than the name “Arab,” which is given in Abessinia to articles of coarse German cutlery *because they are imported from Arabia*, proves that they are of Arab manufacture. In addition to this, the elevation of Gurágie, which country lies near the easternmost edge of the Abessinian plateau, in about 8° or 9° N. lat., cannot be less than from 8000 to 9000 feet above the ocean, and consequently its temperature does not allow of the growth of this tropical fruit. And that, in reality, it comes from the much lower and hotter countries situate considerably further westward in the interior, is evident from the fact, that, while it is said that in the markets of Shoa “the priest merchants of Gurágie can obtain one piece of salt money [*ámule*], about two-pence halfpenny in English money,” for “a number varying from forty to fifty,” I obtained at Básó, in Gódjam, one hundred and fifty miles to the west of Shoa, no less than *one hundred* heads for the same money; and I make no doubt that a *native* would have got even more than that number. This difference of upwards of cent. per cent. in the price arises, of course, from the much greater distance of Shoa from the place of growth.

The idea of the possibility of the *Koraríma* being produced in Madagascar and sent as a spice to Abessinia “up the rivers still further south,” is incompatible with these facts, and with the further one that it is carried from so far inland as Básó (five hundred miles) to Massówah on the Red Sea, *to be exported from that place to India*.

* See pages 466—469.

† The notion that the interior of Africa may be reached by ascending the river *Gowín*, or Jubb—Sir William C. Harris’s pseudo-Gódjeb, or “Gochob”—is entirely unfounded; that river being identical with the *Wábbi-Giwéyna*, which descends merely from Hárrar and the easternmost edge of the Abessinian table-land.

After this explanation there cannot, I apprehend, exist any doubt that the *Koraríma* is neither the produce of Gurágie, nor is it *imported* into Africa; but that it comes from far in the interior of Africa, and, in fact, (as I was informed) from Túmhe, beyond the Blue River. Whether it is actually the produce of that district, or is brought thither from the lower parts of Wallégga, still further to the west, towards the Bahr el Abyad, *White River*, or Nile, has yet to be ascertained.

When Mr. Johnston and myself were together in the Red Sea in 1843, I gave him some of my specimens of *Koraríma*. I do not know from what other source that gentleman may have derived his information respecting the place of growth of this spice; but, at all events, he is under some great mistake in saying that it "is chiefly in the deep valley of the Abiah branch of the Bahr al Azzareeke [Bahr el Azrek], those you have received coming from that part of it which separates Guraque [Gurágie] from Gingiro [Djándjaro]." True it is, that Túmhe, which is known in Western Abessinia as "*the country of the Koraríma*," lies to the west of the Dedhésa, the direct southern arm of the Bahr el Azrek, or *Blue River*; but this is full one hundred and fifty miles away to the west of both Gurágie and Djándjaro; and those two countries are not separated from each other by that river or any branch of it, but by the Zebée, now called Gibbe by the Gallas, which joins the Gódjeb, a tributary of the Bahr el Abyad, or *White River*.

As to the fruit being "perforated and strung upon a strong thread for convenience of carriage and the usages of trade," this may possibly be the case among the retail dealers of Gurágie and Shoa; but at Báso it is certainly otherwise, those which I purchased having been counted to me *from a sack* in which they were loose, like coffee. Neither are they *invariably* perforated (although it is true that they are mostly so), for I have now before me some which are quite whole, and, if I mistake not, one of those which I had the pleasure of sending to you was the same. I have no doubt of the correctness of your own surmise, that they are thus perforated "for the purpose of hanging them up to dry," those found to be already sufficiently dry, of course, not requiring to be so treated. And I find indeed that the pierced fruit are of a somewhat lighter colour than those which are sound, as if the former had been gathered before they were perfectly ripe.

In conclusion, allow me to amend an *erratum* in the concluding portion of the first paragraph of my former information, printed in page 468 of the *Pharmaceutical Journal*: instead of "the Gódjeb, a tributary to the latter *now*, to the south," it should be "*more to the south*."

St. Mildred's Court, April 5th, 1847.



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