

**Review: Dr Stephen Fulder, *The Ginseng Book: Nature's Ancient Healer*,
Avery Publishing Group., NY, 1996**

Pages: 108

Amazing "All-Health" Root

This obscure Eastern root has amazing properties and is highly prized as a life-extending and old-age defying medicine.

The author gives its history, botany, and qualitative evidence on efficacy, as well as a handful of encouraging Western scientific studies available. On this last point, the author is quite astute in saying Western medicine will never advance in this field given its obsessions with "active ingredients" as opposed to the whole plant, also, its desire for "quick fix" rather than sustained long-term treatment. Big Pharma is simply opposed to natural medicine since it can't profit from selling herbs and roots alone.

Readers should be encouraged to DYOR, whether adding this adaptogen will help them improve health at their current stage of life.

The few Eastern Yin Yang religious aspects mentioned can be completely ignored.

Preface (pp. ix-xi)

Ginseng [G] has prolonged human cells in vitro.

I) A Natural Health Enhancer (pp. 1-7)

Panax derives from Greek for "all healing".

G combats vitality loss from aging.

G belongs to the *Araliaceae* family which includes, Indian root, sarsaparilla and ivy. It has pale green flowers at two years and bright red

edible berries. The medicinal part is the thick, fleshy, carrot-like root. Fresh root is bitter.

G is a deciduous perennial (above-ground foliage dies off in winter).

Each year adds a wrinkle on the neck above the root to gauge the plant's age.

Manchuria has the best G.

North American G is *Panax quinquefolium*.

There is also *Panax pseudoginseng* in China, and a Japanese variety.

Mandrake knocks one down.

Emperor Shen Nung was a TCM founder and wrote *Shen Nung Pen Xiao Ching* ("Pharmacopoeia of the Heavenly Husbandman"), 2ndC BC.

The Chinese kept G in Pb-lined boxes wrapped in silk and tissue paper to prevent it losing "life-giving radiations".

Ginseng derives from *jen shen* ("man root"). It also means, "like the constellation of Orion".

The Koreans call G Korean phoenix (poughwang).

Indians call it "brother of Soma (the life-giving plant of India)".

II) The Basis of Herbal Medicine (p. 8-26)

Herbal medicine puts little difference between food and medicine. There is also no "cure-all" concept, rather, there is "all health".

G alleviates tiredness, headache, exhaustion, amnesia, anaemia, and old age effects.

TCM uses mild herbs first; powerful ones are a last resort. Its goal is to ensure continued health, with doctors paid only while patients are healthy, *not* when they are sick!

Ephedra is ephedrine, a bronchodilator.

G is found in a quarter of TCM preparations. *Chieh-pin Chang*, AD 960 lists 500 formulas with it.

Chinese soldiers used G as a stimulant while on sentry duty.

G's effect is *cumulative*.

III) From Cultivation to Purchase (pp. 27-37)

G is cured and dried to allow root preservation for years. Some are steamed making them deep red and translucent ("red G"). Steaming is a preferred method. Non-steamed roots are yellow and opaque ("white G").

The majority of U.S. G is exported to the East.

Russia's G substitute is a thorny shrub *Eleutherococcus senticosus*. This is also grown in China and Korea.

Prices depend on: colour (red is preferred); quality, size, age (older is better), density (root must be hard); taste (a little sweet); region; shape (man-like is the best).

IV) Beyond Stimulants and Sedatives (pp. 38-53)

Soviet soldiers taking G on a cross-country run were able to reduce times by six percent.

A daily dose of 1-2 grams is recommended, split morning and evening.

G stimulates basic neural processes without creating disequilibrium. Paradoxically, it has both stimulatory and sedative effects.

G is protective against X-rays, alcohol, barbiturates and chloral hydrate. As an adaptogen, it improves efficiency of hormone messenger systems.

G increases corticosteroid hormone release in the hypothalamus and pituitary glands.

V) The Active Ingredients (pp. 55-58)

Twenty different *ginsenosides* (terpenoidal glycosides) have been coined by Japanese researchers. These are tagged "Ra", "Rb", "Rc", etc.

G also contains plant phenols like maltol, antioxidants, polysaccharides and silicic acid.

VI) Ginseng and Disease (pp. 59-67)

G is an *immunomodulator* which boosts WBCs and interferon.

Eleutherococcus is chemo-protective and can prevent secondary tumour growths.

VII) Ginseng and Aging (pp. 68-76)

The desire is to increase the body's resistance such that it is healthy and active till the final day of death at old age.

Mao Tse-tung took G regularly.

The American Gerontological Society's motto is "To Add Life To Years, Not Years To Life".

A German clinical trial of 95 old people showed mood enhancement in 58 (61%) which lasted for months.

VIII) When and How to Take Ginseng (pp. 77-90)

Yi Sun is the finest G costing hundreds per ounce. It is wild G transplanted into a forest bed for several years.

Top Korean grades are all red: Heaven; Earth; Man.

G is only harmful at 1000X the effective dose.

Traditional preparation is to boil the root for six hours.

IX) Balancing the Old and the New (pp. 91-97)

Over 2,000 scientific reports have been published in China, Russia, Japan, and Korea on G.

The pharmaceutical industry is opposed to natural medicine since it can't profit from selling herbs and roots alone.

Digitalis for heart stabilising was derived from foxglove, morphine from the poppy, quinine tree bark, and chemotherapeutic vinblastine and vincristine from *Vinca rosea*.