

A cornucopia: a rich and valuable collection that ranges far and wide in its analysis of the dynamic and diverse powers – symbolic, material, economic, political and religious – of things in the early-modern world, and of the important questions that taking objects seriously raises for the historian of any era.

*John Brewer, California Institute of Technology, USA*

# EARLY MODERN THINGS

Objects and their histories, 1500–1800

*Edited by Paula Findlen*

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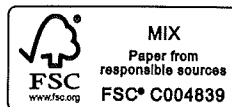
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To Jeff and Natalie,  
who fill my life with love and laughter

# 1

## SURFACE TENSION

### Objectifying ginseng in Chinese early modernity

*Carla Nappi*

#### **Object lessons: failing to do the history of a global commodity**

One night during the reign of Emperor Wen of the Sui Dynasty (r. 581–604), a man walked out of his home to look for the baby he heard crying his backyard.<sup>1</sup> The man was soon joined by his family and neighbors as they all searched, in vain, for the wailing child that screamed through their Shangdang hometown.<sup>2</sup> Eventually they located the source of the crying: it was not an infant, but instead a small herb growing within a mile of the man's house. They dug a deep pit around the herb and pulled out a root shaped like a man, complete with arms and legs. The crying stopped, though the story continues to ring through the literature of Chinese *materia medica*.

The root dug up by the Shangdang man, known as *tujing* 土精 or 'essence of the earth,' has come to be identified with the more common name *renshen* 人參, popularly translated as 'ginseng.' Present in Chinese texts on *materia medica* (known collectively as *bencao* literature) from the earliest instantiations of the genre, ginseng became one of the most tightly regulated commodities in early modern China, Korea, and Japan, and an extraordinarily important commodity in the contemporary global drug market. Prized globally as a pharmaceutical, ginseng has inspired many attempts to understand the history of this 'traditional' medical drug.

The rise of commercialism, commodification, and connoisseurship in the late Ming (1368–1644) and early–mid Qing (1644–1911) has been widely treated in recent years, and the story of ginseng could be written as one of many object histories in this expanding literature of the material and visual culture of early modern China.<sup>3</sup> Early modern ginseng would consequently be a character in a kind of vegetable *bildungsroman*: the story would trace its development from

a very local item of *materia medica* in northeast China, through its star turn as a North American supply of the drug was discovered after Jesuits and other European interlocutors wrote from China and the Royal Society published accounts of its seemingly magical qualities.<sup>4</sup> Finally, ginseng's story would close with its triumphant coming of age as it matured into a global commodity with a continuing history into today's pharmaceutical and consumable market.

Though I had begun this work thinking that I was going to tell such a story about ginseng as a commodity, about networks of exchange and the circulation of objects in global history, there was a problem: all of these ideas presuppose the existence of a stable entity, a coherent object that does the circulating. The main character may transform and morph over the course of its lifetime, but it remains recognizable on some level as the same individual we knew at the start of the story. However, when we attempt to trace ginseng through early modern history and its sources, it starts slipping through our grasp. Indeed, if we consider an object to be a recognizable entity that exists and persists across time and space, there was no trans-historical ginseng. What was there, then, if not a stable object that can be read back into early modernity and beyond?<sup>5</sup>

Early modernity in China was characterized by new modes of thinking about locality, new ways of observing, and new forms of translation. Taken together, these combined to form new ways of identifying objects, and thus new kinds of objects. Ginseng as we know it (an object with many varieties and names, a type of thing that can be sought and found in different localities) emerged in this period as a new kind of object.

This chapter is a history of the practices of identification (via location, observation, and translation) that created a new form of early modern objecthood from which ginseng emerged. It explores how what had previously been a collection of stories, images, names, and resemblances coalesced during early modernity into a coherent, individual whole. Whereas before the late sixteenth century there was an assemblage of names, images, and descriptions linked through statements of resemblance and comparison, by the eighteenth century we see an 'it' with varieties differentiated by locality and by comparison and observation of new, named parts of the object. This change was made possible through new modes of identification and a new system of standards and criteria, along with a shift from identification-through-resemblance to identification through new modes of observation geared toward judgments of quality.

The two main goals of this chapter are first, to introduce a case study that raises important issues surrounding the history and circulation of objects in early modern China; and second, to explore those broader issues as they speak to the larger field of object histories or studies of material culture. The turn to thinking about materiality in object histories, while productive and important, has obscured the need to understand and question the epistemic nature of the 'object' itself, considered not only as a physical thing but as an instantiation of a concept or a class of things. In telling a history of an object, we are always simultaneously creating and re-creating both that history and the object itself.

The problem, then, is one of the form of historical practice as well as the context of the historical narrative that such a practice seems to create. This story of the early modern objectification of ginseng is an invitation to think about the *instability* of objects, the lack of coherence of things, and what this might mean for the study of material culture in early modernity.

The modern 'ginseng' category subsumes and erases a vast set of names and objects and ideas and knowledge systems. In contemporary terms the descriptor is used to name any number of plant species, and in early modernity terms in Chinese, Jurchen, Mongolian, and Manchu texts were also used to describe several different kinds of plants. I've decided to use 'ginseng' here (when I don't use *renshen* or *shen* to indicate the specific language of some Chinese texts) *not* to imply that the entities described in this chapter can be unproblematically equated with modern objects and categories, but to give a name to the contemporary analytic object that emerges from the set of practices and enunciations outlined below. To put it another way, this paper is a kind of archaeology or genealogy of 'ginseng.'<sup>6</sup>

### The early modern object

Scholarship on material culture reminds us that objects are physical things that exist in space. Less obvious is the fact that objects also exist in time: things are always in flux, and not just on the scale of centuries, but also in a moment. In his work on Shakespearean things, Jonathan Gil Harris emphasizes the 'diachronic dimensions of materiality,' describing materiality as a process, and things both *in* and *as* motion.<sup>7</sup> Harris and others have insisted that things always exist – to the extent that we may say they exist at all – in flux. Conceiving of things in this way, they might be described as parasites or quasi-objects,<sup>8</sup> as palimpsests,<sup>9</sup> as multiplicities or machines,<sup>10</sup> as turbulent fluids or unstable networks.<sup>11</sup> Arjun Appadurai has conceived of objects as 'things-in-motion,' possessed of lives and biographies that trace the transformations in their meaning and value.<sup>12</sup> Despite their flux, there are still ways to study the histories of such objects. Historians have attempted to do so under the rubrics of historical ontology<sup>13</sup> or 'applied metaphysics,'<sup>14</sup> focusing historico-philosophical attention not on some presumed solidity of an object, but rather on the coming into being and receding of the thing in historical time.

The trans-historical object does not exist. Even if there is a stable material entity that persists over time, its meaning, identity, and thing-ness change, sometimes dramatically, in different (historical, geographic, epistemic) contexts.<sup>15</sup> One way to understand this is to understand that the particular ways of being in motion, the particular types of practice that constitute objects, are specific to particular times and place. Each of the authors discussed above acknowledges, on some level, the importance of historically situating their particular studies. However, in thinking about objects, that historical specificity ends to take a back seat to the idea of flux and motion as constituting objects.

A history of objects is a history of practices: in writing the history of a thing, we essentially write a history of resemblances, of practices of identification and similitude, of objectification, of translation, of the forming and re-forming of objects in the context of different rationalities.<sup>16</sup> But these practices emerge in particular historical contexts. This chapter will show that there was a particular way of being in motion, and a new way that the particular forms of motion constituted new modes of objecthood, in China's early modernity. The early modern object was constituted, I will argue, by practices of identification characterized by new modes of location, observation, and translation.

### Identification as location: locating early modernity

An abundant secondary literature treats the role of localities and local histories in early modern China.<sup>17</sup> Among the several types of 'place' that acted as coherent entities or identifying categories for the purposes of scientific and medical trade were linguistic communities; named states identified in Chinese texts; and named locations or location-terms that recurred as important textual categories of analysis, including several ways of describing 'foreign,' 'overseas,' or barbarian goods and peoples. Many of these latter location-terms operated as identifiers of places, peoples, and objects in texts about natural knowledge in the Ming and Qing.<sup>18</sup> Local identity was a crucial aspect of any description of *materia medica*, for example: place of origin was used to distinguish among varieties of a drug, to interpret its medicinal efficacy, and to determine its market value.

The nature of locality changed over the course of early modernity in China, and the practice of identification of natural objects through location transformed along with it. First, the surfaces of more types of bodies were mapped and used to identify entities – not just geographic bodies, but human and drug bodies as well. In addition, location was used to identify more places upon those bodies. The number of named localities in early modern texts about natural objects increased, both on the map of the empire and on the bodies of natural objects themselves, and as a result objects could exist in new and multiple localities. They also contained new spaces within themselves, and their boundaries and surfaces were defined more clearly, more firmly, and in more detail. As more drugs were cultivated, 'wildness' became a defining characteristic of natural objects (especially those regulated as commodities). Finally, more locations of all types were brought into relation with each other, and came to mutually define one another. Ginseng emerged as an early modern object in this context.

### Surface

The surface of the earth became knowable in a new way through the early modern period. This has been documented in studies of the importance of mapping geographic and political space to Qing imperial expansion.<sup>19</sup> This conceptual move to a privileging of knowing, seeing, and identifying surface

over depth extends to the literature of *renshen* (later translated as 'ginseng') in Chinese texts. As the spatial reach of *renshen* moved from a primarily vertically defined set of localities (defined in terms of depth) in the Ming to a more wide-ranging horizontal reach (defined in terms of extension across space) in Qing texts, the spatiality of *renshen* lore changed as well. Stories of deep-rooted crying *renshen* at the tops of mountains gave way to tales of wandering tigers protecting *renshen* supplies from the gatherers who roamed the Northeast and tried to spot the plant emerging from the ground's surface.<sup>20</sup> Folklore moved from a vertical dimensionality to a more horizontal one as the Qing expanded in the same direction and characterizations of botanical rootedness were replaced by concerns with herbal spread over surface terrain. A similar move out of the earth and across its surface can be noted in the change from pre-Qing textual characterizations of *renshen* that emphasized the anthropomorphism of its roots (the best kind resembled a man when it was in the earth) to a mid-late Qing focus on surface qualities of the plant and its root in evaluating its quality.

The surface of *renshen* itself also was mapped and identified in a new way, increasingly prioritizing surface-level characteristics in diagrams and verbal descriptions that characterized the object.<sup>21</sup> *Bencao* and other medical texts from the Ming and earlier typically described *renshen* in terms of extension in vertical space: its habitat in shady or shadowy areas, its presence being marked by clouds, the particular configuration of stalks and leaves and limbs popping out from its body. The highest grades of the drug were described as looking like a human body, and that was particularly manifest by the protrusion of limbs and a head from its central core. Emphasis was placed on the importance of digging to extract the buried drug from within the earth. In contrast, texts from the eighteenth century and later tend to (though this is not universal) start emphasizing more surface-level qualities: the wrinkle of the skin of the root, the number of rings or indentations on the surface, the shade of the markings on the body of the plant. In addition, diagrams of ginseng in late Ming and Qing *bencao* tend to emphasize surface detail more so than earlier representations of the drug, generally incorporating more hairs, markings, and protrusions evident on the outside of the object than earlier images had done (Figure 1.1).<sup>22</sup>

### Multiplying localities

During the early modern period more named localities were identified upon drug bodies, paralleling a similar process upon geographic bodies on maps of the empire and beyond. This transformation was reflected in texts about natural objects and *materia medica*, and extended across the early modern period and well into the nineteenth century.

Ginseng (usually as *renshen*) had been an important item of trade and tribute throughout the Ming, and featured prominently in texts on *materia medica* and medical prescriptions.<sup>23</sup> It was also frequently commented upon in *bencao* texts. Through the Song, *bencao* texts and the medical records cited within them tended

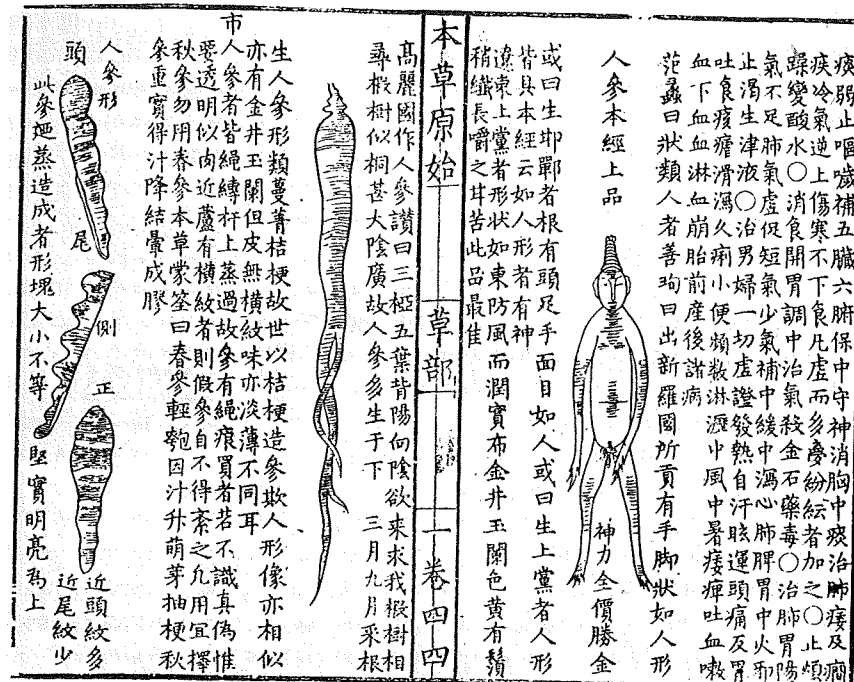


FIGURE 1.1 Image of ginseng from the Bencao yuanshi 本草原始

to locate the center of ginseng production (and the origin of the top quality of the drug) in the mountainous areas of Shangdang. The second most often-discussed area of production was Liaodong, in the area of the Northeast now known as Manchuria. Other localities associated with ginseng production included Handan (in what is known today as Hebei), Hedong, and mountainous regions including Mt. Taishan. A very famous variety of the plant praised by several Song *bencao* authors was *zituanshen* found on Mount Zituan (located in today's Luzhou, Sichuan), close relatives of which were found in other mountainous regions associated with the Taihang range. Several authors mentioned ginseng from areas now translated as 'Korea,' but they did not emphasize its importance or quality with respect to the material from the areas listed above.

A distinct change in the localities associated with top-quality and plentiful ginseng appears to have taken place by the late Ming, away from Shangdang and toward the Northeast. Justifications for the change vary: according to Li Shizhen, for example, local production in Shangdang stopped when area people began blaming ginseng harvesting for recent disasters in the area.<sup>24</sup> Another explanation for the shift has also been proposed. From the twelfth century on, Jurchen and Mongol medical practices had stimulated demand for ginseng by prolific prescription of the drug as an item of *materia medica*. This apparently led to the depletion of ginseng supply in Shangdang (the famous area of *renshen*

production mentioned in the crying-baby anecdote that opened this paper) and other parts of China, precipitating an increase in demand for Jurchen ginseng and ultimately its establishment as one of three treasures of Manchuria, along with sable skins, and wu-la grasses used to make footwear.<sup>25</sup> Shifting geopolitical relationships from the Song to the Ming also undoubtedly played a role in the move to the Northeast as the reputed seat of optimal ginseng production: the region had been enemy territory outside Song control. With the Northeast under control of a Ming rulership with a capital in Beijing, locations therein (and thus potential localities of ginseng production) came under the ambit of Chinese textual practices. Whatever the explanation, the center of production and harvesting as reflected in late Ming *bencao* was focused in three localities on the Liaodong peninsula: Gaoli 高麗, Baiji 百濟, and Xinluo 新羅. These three terms were sometimes invoked independently in late Ming and early-mid Qing *bencao* texts to identify contemporary locations in Korea; were sometimes explicitly equated with Korea 朝鮮 or with the products sold in Ming and Qing markets after being brought by Korean traders; and were sometimes treated as a unit.<sup>26</sup>

The history of the plant changed dramatically with the rise of Manchu rule in China. The Ming court had stipulated ginseng as a tribute good from Choson Korea, and it was used as currency by Korean travelers to the Ming court.<sup>27</sup> In 1636 (after the second Manchu invasion of Korea), however, Taizong removed it from the list of tribute goods expected from Korea. The Qing didn't consider the root a local Korean product (*fangwu*); since the Ming couldn't access ginseng in the Northeast frontier region they considered it a Korean product, but the Manchus were used to the stuff growing in their homeland and it had contributed immensely to their rise in power.<sup>28</sup> Two recent scholars have argued that this drug was largely responsible for shifting the territorial boundaries of the Qing Empire in the Northeast: borders that were relatively porous in the Ming became marked and reinforced in the Qing, both shaping and in turn influenced by the ginseng trade.<sup>29</sup> Changbaishan, the sacred mountain on the border between China and Korea and the legendary birthplace of the Aisin Gioro family, was a particularly contested border area and space for ginseng gathering.<sup>30</sup> Ethnic identities were reinforced in Qing policy, as ginseng collection permits were selectively given out based on Manchu or Mongol identity, and Han collectors were barred from gathering and selling the valued trade item.<sup>31</sup>

Differentiation and identification of ginseng by the place in which it was collected was a central feature of Ming and Qing descriptions of the plant. Qing ginseng was graded, in part, on location of origin: Manchurian ginseng, especially from the Changbaishan area, was top quality; Korean material was next; Japanese material was considered less desirable (and fetched lower prices on the Qing market); and finally (as of the mid-eighteenth century), North American ginseng rounded out the list.<sup>32</sup> This represented a marked shift in identification of the location in which top-quality ginseng could be found.

Eighteenth-century discussions of ginseng characteristically included extended discussions of the geographical history and provenance of the drug(s). Texts devoted to *renshen*, including Huang Shucan's 黃叔燦 (1722–1806) *Shen pu* 參譜,<sup>33</sup> Lu Xuan's 陸烜 (fl. 1769) *Renshen pu* 人參譜, and Tang Bingjun's 唐秉均 (eighteenth century) *Renshen kao* 人參考 each provide focused attention to spaces famed for producing the drug. Together with Qing *bencao* accounts from the same period, they illustrate a very different spatial profile for ginseng. Zhao Xuemin's (1719–1805) *Bencao gangmu shiyi* (composed c. 1800, published in 1871), for example, significantly extends earlier discussions of the plant. Zhao identifies (as separate, individual drugs) not only more parts of the plant than were typically prescribed in earlier *bencao* (including leaves, stalks, seeds, and small 'hairs'), but also includes separate entries for many locally defined *shen* varieties.<sup>34</sup> In an important move, Zhao typically refers to *renshen* from the Northeast as *Liaoshen* (Liaodong *renshen*), and differentiates it from the *shen* produced in Gaoli and Xinluo, which he describes alongside other 'foreign' (*yang* 洋) *shen* from Japan and France. Here, we have a reflection in Qing *bencao* of the kind of change described above: by the late eighteenth century, material from the contested Northeast territory was no longer considered by one of the terms we might today translate as 'Korean.' Once the Qing solidified its boundaries in the Northeast, place terms that were commonly used in Ming *bencao* alongside other locations within the empire (Gaoli, Baiji, Xinluo, Chaoyang) were now used to describe varieties of ginseng that were considered foreign (and of relatively lower quality), while *Liaoshen* (Liaodong *renshen*) was coined to identify local, top-quality Qing ginseng from the Northeast.<sup>35</sup>

The core of localities associated with ginseng in Ming and earlier texts was transformed and expanded, now including markers of place like Ningguta and Fenghuang (in today's Hunan), *min* 閩, Ao 奧, Yunnan, Dongchuan (a province in today's Yunnan), Luofu 羅浮 (a mountain in today's Guangdong), France, and Japan (including a discussion of Suzhou stores specializing in Japanese *renshen*), in addition to many others.<sup>36</sup> Local 'ginsengs' were increasingly being produced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as scholars attempted to identify local variants of the drug. Attempts to cultivate local ginseng varieties in Japan resulted in the creation and regulation (by pharmaceutical authorities) of a local Japanese product.<sup>37</sup> Jesuit missionaries stationed in Qing China were also interested in discovering new varieties of the drug. After Pierre Jartoux (1669–1720) found 'Tartars' gathering ginseng in the early eighteenth century while surveying Manchuria for the Kangxi court, he wrote a letter to the Procurator General of the Missions of India and China, touting the benefits of the drug (after having tried it himself), and speculating that a type of ginseng could probably be identified in Canada as well. It was.<sup>38</sup>

From Ming to Qing, locality entered drug descriptions in a new way. Many Ming *bencao* authors had used local provenance to identify, characterize, understand, and grade medical drugs and their varieties. Texts such as the *Bencao*

*gangmu*, *Bencao mengquan*, and *Bencao yuanshi* often distinguished herbal drugs by place of origin. The *Bencao gangmu* by Li Shizhen (1518–1593) reflects a strong concern with mapping locality in time as well as space.<sup>39</sup> The ways in which locality was manifest in Qing *bencao*, in contrast, tended to differ from discussions in Ming texts. New genres focused on locality gained textual authority in the natural history canon, as Qing *bencao* relied much more heavily on gazetteers and travel accounts as credible sources of medical knowledge than was previously the case, including works on local *materia medica* in Tibetan, Manchu, Mongolian, and Uyghur scripts. In medical texts, identification and characterization became linked with locality in a new way in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Texts included more types of locations associated with the drug, and these new spaces of ginseng – the plant, the human body, the garden, the empire, the borderlands – became crucial to its identification. Increasing number of local 'ginsengs' were sought, cultivated, and named.

### Wildness

In mid-Qing texts, 'wildness' became a defining characteristic of natural objects. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts began to distinguish wild ginseng from cultivated varieties, and to describe practices instituted to regulate ginseng production as a commodity. In general, wild ginseng was treated as vastly superior in quality to (and commanded a much higher price in the marketplace than) the cultivated drug. Still, enough enterprising farmers kept hidden ginseng gardens that the Qing law code outlawed ginseng gardening until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> This was apparently a particular problem in the area of Jilin, on the northeastern borderlands of the empire. Supplies of wild ginseng gathered in Jilin and sent to the Qing court were largely deemed unacceptable, and from the early nineteenth century local farmers attempted to recover their losses by hiding ginseng plants deep inside garden plots devoted to other crops and selling the resulting cultivated drug as a wild variety. In roughly 1879, supplies of wild Manchurian ginseng were so low, and the returns on wild ginseng from other areas were so inconsequential, that the Qing reversed their earlier policy and started encouraging cultivation of the plant in order to have enough supplies available from which to collect decent tax revenue.<sup>41</sup>

In sum, by the eighteenth century, a single object with varieties emerged from a collection of resemblances. Ginseng became 'Chinese' in European writings,<sup>42</sup> it became effectively 'foreign' or 'local' in Chinese texts, and other local varieties were named and regulated both within and outside of China. It could also be 'wild' or 'cultivated' (and was regulated as such). With an explosion of new varieties and features identified on the plant, more locations of all types were brought into relation with each other, and used to mutually define one another. Texts began arguing anew whether different names, images, and descriptions did indeed refer to a single object, and people who worked with and wrote about ginseng began to observe the object in new ways.

### Identification as observation: observing early modernity

Observation practices changed in early modern China, and the practice of identifying objects through observation transformed along with it. This became manifest in the case of natural objects in at least two ways. First, the observation of an object increasingly entailed observing it within and in relation to a network of other objects. In addition, the trained observation of objects, especially of commodities, became a way to authenticate and characterize them, while (where possible) still keeping them intact.<sup>43</sup>

The earliest accounts of the names and images that early modern authors later identified as '*renshen*' (and that later were subsumed under '*ginseng*') defined types of the drug, and discussed its observable qualities, using levels of resemblance – to a human being, to other plants, to other drugs. The various materials described under the *renshen* rubric were fundamentally understood in relation to bodies and to other local varieties, and its medicinal effects described in terms of the effects of other simple drugs or forms of treatment. This way of conceptualizing *renshen* extended to the ways that it was observed, and the ways those observations were recorded.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, modes of observing ginseng shifted from merely observing likeness and resemblance to observing via a set of criteria used to characterize both the drug and the new network of objects associated with it. Ginseng consequently emerged as a new kind of object defined by a network of other various objects (paper certificates and inscriptions, texts, roots, skin, leaves, cauldrons, trees, maps, images, animals, people, recipes, names, boxes and packaging, gifts, grain) that were each meant to be observed (when gathering, preparing, buying, and selling) in a specific way. The collection of ginseng, for example, was to be undertaken in a prescribed way: when found, if a ginseng plant was too young for harvesting it was surrounded by a fence and watered. If it was deemed to be mature enough (discerned from visual evidence by the trained eye of collectors), bone or wood implements were used to carefully extract the root, and measurements of the plant's location were taken with respect to the ground and nearest tree.<sup>44</sup> In order to prepare the ginseng specimen for the next phase of its life as a gift, form of tax payment, or commodity, it went through a rigorous process of treatment that involved using specific implements to clean and process the root, watching carefully for evidence of changes in qualities like color, moisture, and surface imperfections caused by insects. Each step of this process involved special kettles, specific grains the root was to be steamed with, and a carefully dictated set of other objects that were to be used to make raw ginseng into a specimen suitable for use. It was then dried and packaged with similar care. Every step in the unearthing and production of this object was regulated and made possible by informed and trained observation.

The second change was in the types of observations made. Observers of ginseng were instructed to examine the size and form of the roots (slender

and firm roots with rings, knobs, and a close-fine grain were most highly prized); whether the material was wild or cultivated (as discussed above, wild was considered vastly superior); the age of the root (it was not considered fully developed before six or seven years of growth); the season of gathering (late fall was best); and whether the material was worm-eaten or improperly dried or stored. As emphasis shifted to the new localities on the surface of the object, eighteenth-century texts tended to identify and describe more parts of the drug as well: leaves, skin, nodules, etc. There is no doubt that some of this training was a kind of folk knowledge, and that folk knowledge of some sort was involved in finding and preparing the root prior to early modernity in China. However, the observable criteria for deeming a specimen of ginseng suitable for use as a commodity within the empire and beyond, along with textual codification of this knowledge in written inscriptions, largely emerged in the Qing period. Identification became a form of trained observation practices that were regulated and textualized.

As of the eighteenth century, observation of ginseng was more dependent on visually discerning complex surface images, and less so on perceiving characteristics of the object through smell, taste, and sound. Whereas in Ming texts, you altered the material body of a drug and used your sensory apparatus to observe changes in its color, smell, sound, or texture in order to authenticate it, in Qing texts, authentication of drugs maintained the integrity of the object to a greater degree.<sup>45</sup> Highly valuable objects such as ginseng were treated as commodities that needed to remain intact.

As the processing and market for ginseng became much more tightly regulated, new standards and criteria for assessing the quality of ginseng emerged. Government assessors were trained to observe the object for evidence of quality based on processing, color, moisture, timing of collection, storage, and other markers of authentication. Thus, producers and sellers of the drug needed to train themselves to look at the root in this way as well if they wanted to make money from their wares. These criteria were codified through inscriptions that circulated through a tightly controlled market and administrative system. As ginseng moved more, it accreted inscriptions and other objects that moved with it.

In sum, there was a shift from identifying an object through narration-based resemblances to identifying it through notions of quality emphasized and created by new forms of inscription (maps, rules, permits, quotas). Through these new practices of observation, ginseng became an object, the integrity of which needed to be maintained (especially in the case of the higher-grade specimens used as commodities in gift and market networks). Trained observation allowed people to differentiate samples based on surface characteristics. The possibility of varieties of ginseng (discerned visually, even distinguishing between specimens from a single locality) in turn helped create the idea that these varieties were different instantiations of a single object.



### Identification as translation: translating in early modernity

We have seen that two modes of identification, new attributions of locality and new kinds of observation, developed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and both helped to concretize ginseng as a new kind of object. In an increasingly multilingual empire with a ramifying bureaucracy devoted to translation, along with an increasing number of natural history texts translated from non-Chinese sources, translation was also an increasingly important mode of identifying and characterizing objects. As more objects entered Chinese texts from foreign languages, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors celebrated the coexistence of multiple names for an object. In this context, ginseng became a translated object.

Under the reigns of the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors, Qing landholdings doubled in size between 1660 and 1760. At its height, the Qing ultimately controlled an empire larger than the modern People's Republic of China and brought new peoples with new languages and ways of understanding the natural world into its borders.<sup>46</sup> As its imperial boundaries shifted, relationships of exchange shifted along with them, and translation became exceptionally important both as a strategic and administrative tool of the court, and to scholars who rendered texts (including natural history texts) into Chinese and Manchu. In these contexts, at least three important types of text were concerned with and reflective of the naming, identification, and equation of natural objects across spatial, temporal, and linguistic divides: dictionaries or glossaries, *bencao* texts, and monographic treatises (or *pulu*). All of these texts were not only concerned with 'translation' in a broad sense, but specifically with identifying and characterizing plant, animal, stone, and other material entities. The practices they used to identify and translate these entities took a number of forms, all of which were on some level concerned with practices of etymology or synonymy. In addition to reconciling Chinese lexicographical history with the terminology in official documents in many languages, translators compared stories, observations, and literary accounts in Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uyghur.

The Qing Empire was ruled by a Manchu-speaking, non-Chinese people, and many of its rulers both insisted on the use of the Manchu language in official court communications and celebrated multilingual rule. The phenomenon of Qing multilingualism has been addressed by historians of China in recent years, but its ramifications for the history of medicine are just beginning to be explored, and its significance for understanding transformations in natural history is largely unwritten.<sup>47</sup> As landholdings expanded through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, texts on the natural and medical resources of the Qing translated the names and knowledge of plants, animals, and stones from the borderlands into Chinese, Manchu, and other Qing languages.<sup>48</sup> Local gazetteers listed and described the products and customs of the areas coming under Qing rule. On the heels of a commercial publishing boom in the mid-sixteenth century, many printed editions of medical books and encyclopedias were available, and they

often included lists of recipes and medical drugs available in the pharmacological marketplace.<sup>49</sup>

Many of the institutions that mediated and facilitated multilingual activities in the early Qing were modified forms of institutions that had predated Qing rule. A number of official organizations were set up in the Ming in an attempt to manage and control the translation and interpretation of official documents and foreign texts. At least one Interpreters' Station (*Huitong guan* 會同館) in the capital was charged with accommodating, entertaining, and keeping tabs on the movements of foreign envoys. A Translators' College (*Siyi guan* 四夷館), established in 1407 under the aegis of the Hanlin Academy, was responsible for translating foreign (*fan* 番) scripts and languages.<sup>50</sup> With the onset of Qing rule in 1644, the name of the Bureau of Translators was changed from *Siyi guan* 四夷館 to *Siyi guan* 四譯館 (with the *yi* changed to reflect a shift from 'Barbarian' to 'Translation'). The Qing moved the *Siyi guan* to a new building in 1653, and finally absorbed it into the *Huitong guan* to create a single *Huitong siyi guan* in 1748.

### Dictionaries and glossaries

The *Siyi guan* and *Huitong guan* left a number of memorials, glossaries, and manuals that were concerned with identifying and naming early modern objects. The *Siyi guan* texts included accounts of raw materials and aromatics, plant and animal trade, culinary habits, and the general organization of people responsible for translating between *fan* states and China. These manuals were generally of two or three types: *zazi* 雜字 and *yiyu* 譯語 manuals were glossaries of important terms arranged by categories, while *laiwen* 來文 manuals were meant as guides for translating official memorials from foreign to Chinese script and vice versa.<sup>51</sup> The *laiwen* manuals include paired memorials in Chinese and other scripts recording the tribute of goods like jade, coral, metals, horses, daggers, and camels by envoys from these countries, in exchange for Chinese tea leaves, ceramic vessels, cloth, gold-flecked paper, and medicines.<sup>52</sup> The *zazi* and *yiyu* glossaries include lists of plant, animal, mineral, astronomical, and other terms of interest to Chinese translators, categorized according to major topics based on traditional Chinese lexicographical categories. The *Huitong guan* also left a series of glossaries, largely without foreign scripts and consisting solely of Chinese terms and transliterations of their foreign equivalents. These latter manuals, often named *yiyu*, covered different languages than those treated at the *Siyi guan* and were probably intended for oral communication.<sup>53</sup> They are similarly divided into topical categories.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the manuals produced by official bureaus, the Qing also commissioned dictionaries from a wide range of other sources.<sup>55</sup> One of these, the [*Yuzhi*] *Wuti Qingwenjian* (often translated as the 'Qing Pentaglot'), appearing in 1708 and revised through the eighteenth century, included 18,671 entries rendered in Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, and Chinese script.<sup>56</sup> This

dictionary included several extensive topical sections devoted to terminology for plants, animals, and other natural objects used as drugs and foodstuffs.

Interestingly, few accounts of *renshen* or other *shen* varieties are recorded in late Ming and early Qing polyglot dictionaries in any languages other than Jurchen, Manchu, and Mongolian. The only *Siyi guan* or *Huitong guan* manuals to record ginseng synonyms were the Mongolian-Chinese *Huayi yiyu*, a Mongolian manual of the *Siyi guan*, and a Jurchen glossary from the *Huitong guan*.<sup>57</sup> This relative lack actually tells us something interesting. Since the manuals were compiled from official court documents, including records of the items traded and offered in tribute, it seems clear that ginseng was not an item of trade or tribute by the peoples administered by the other states controlled by the bureaus. The relative silence on ginseng in glossaries thus speaks to another way of construing the importance of locality to ginseng textual history, confirming that early modern ginseng was identified with a very specific set of regional localities.<sup>58</sup>

By the Qing, in contrast, countless names were devised for ginseng varieties and instantiations, in Chinese as well as many of the other languages that were used in the period. The *Wuti Qingwenjian* was created for a different purpose than the manuals and records a very different range of ginseng names, including separate names for ginseng in addition to at least two additional surface features of the plant. In eighteenth-century texts, individual parts of the plant were increasingly differentiated by separate-but-related terms.<sup>59</sup>

In part thanks to lexicography and the efforts of translators, ginseng was translated into an early modern object. Dictionaries, however, were not the only early modern texts in which ginseng and other natural objects were reconstituted through identification as translation.

### ***Materia medica and monographic natural history texts***

Proper naming was a central goal of any naturalist. Confucius had urged students to study the *Shijing* to learn the names of plants and animals, and was famous for urging scholars to pay heed to the 'rectification of names' (*zhengming*).<sup>60</sup> Medical authors in the Ming and early Qing regularly used their prefaces to accuse earlier scholars of misnaming drugs, often using this accusation to justify the need for a new text. *Bencao* texts typically included discussions of alternate names for each of the drugs described in the text, often explaining their derivation or source. Scholars collected these names wherever they could find them: local dialects, oral vernacular and slang, and (increasingly as of the late Ming) a wide range of medical and non-medical texts, including foreign-language texts.<sup>61</sup> Qing pharmaceutical works increasingly incorporated materials from the borderlands of the empire, making greater use of gazetteers than earlier collections of *materia medica* had done and often emphasizing the importance of local variation in drug types, names, and usage.<sup>62</sup> Medical recipes worked as empires in microcosm, blending individual ingredients into compound wholes and reflecting a new medical cosmopolitanism.

The late Ming and early Qing also saw the flourishing of a genre of monographic texts devoted to individual natural and artificial objects. These *pulu*, often translated as 'treatises' or handbooks, covered a great deal of information on the history and use of whatever object they treated.<sup>63</sup> Several *pulu* were devoted to ginseng, and all of them contain some discussion of naming or treatment of alternate names. In both *bencao* and *pulu*, early modern treatments of *materia medica* tended to identify objects with an assemblage of synonyms.

While identification and synonymy were key concerns throughout the Ming and Qing, a significant shift in the way synonymy was constituted, and in the characteristics that were used to identify and name objects, emerged in late Ming and early Qing literature and lexicography. There was a shift in this period from a primarily historical and narrative-based etymology to a locality-based synonymy, or to naming and identification practices based largely on locality and local identities.

The treatment of names and multilingual descriptions of ginseng paralleled the development of observable characteristics of its body: similar to the way a plurality of visually distinguishable varieties created an epistemic whole (or type) of which they were parts, an individual 'ginseng' emerged from a plurality of synonyms. Ginseng became a composite object in early modernity: a collection of synonyms textually equated to each other.

### **Conclusion: disassembling the early modern object**

This chapter has begun to trace the emergence of an early modern object (ginseng) from a network of practices and texts that were in some way concerned with identification. From its early turn as a subterranean being that mimicked a crying baby to its later existence as a tightly regulated global commodity, ginseng was at the same time ordinary and extraordinary, natural and supernatural, local and global. It epitomized the new ways of moving across time and space characterized by early modern objects in China. Natural objects were constituted through practices of identification, and ginseng was simultaneously created through new modes of location and observation and through translation out of a collection of synonyms. Changing notions of locality and local identity helped bring about new synonyms and identities for ginseng in the context of the Qing Empire. Ultimately, there was no single ginseng.

How early modern is this phenomenon, and how specific is it to ginseng? This is a preliminary investigation into one of potentially many similar early modern objects. Similar practices may have operated in forming other early modern objects, especially ones that functioned as highly regulated commodities, like tea.<sup>64</sup> Many of the practices described here were no doubt present before the Ming and Qing periods. It is their combination and degree that was particular to early modernity, and that led to the formation of new objects. The example of ginseng encourages us to supplement existing

object histories with a history of practices and processes of identification and characterization, reconceptualizing what an object is, how it emerges, and what kind of access we have to it.

If we think of objects in general, and early modern objects in particular, as constantly in the process of coming into and out of being through epistemic, perceptual, and discursive practices, this replaces the notion of an object as singular with that of an object as always multiple. This construction raises several questions for the early modern historian. Whence the materiality of objects in this history of objectification? If there is no singular object, what does this do, if anything, to discourses about 'circulation' of objects in early modernity? (What is doing the circulating?)

In the end, this is not a history of ginseng as a stable object, but as a thing constantly in flux, in fact *produced by* that flux and meaningless outside of it. It is a history of the practices that bring into being, albeit momentarily, something that allows people to speak to and interact with each other, but it is also the beginning of a history of what it has meant in one early modern context to identify and characterize things.

## Notes

- 1 A brief account of this story can be found in Li Shizhen, *Bencao gangmu*, *juan 12* (*renshen.shiming*). There are a great many editions of the *Bencao gangmu* available, and citation to the text is most useful for readers when presented in terms of sections of the text rather than page numbers in any single edition. For this chapter I have consulted (and I recommend to interested readers) Li Shizhen, *Bencao gangmu*, ed. Liu Hengru and Liu Shanyong (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2002), 2 vols. For a detailed study of Li's text, see Carla Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot: Natural History and its Transformations in Early Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Similarities between *renshen* and mandrake lore in global history have been noted by previous authors. See, for example, Berthold Laufer, 'La Mandragore,' *T'oung Pao* 18.1/2 (March–May 1917): 1–30; and John T. Appleby, 'Ginseng and the Royal Society,' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 37.2 (1983): 121–145 (esp. 124).
- 2 Shangdang is a town in southeastern Shanxi, a province bordering Inner Mongolia in northeastern China.
- 3 For examples of this flourishing field, see Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); and Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010). On the rise of trade networks in the context of Ming maritime relations, see for example Angela Schottenhammer, ed., *The East Asian Mediterranean: Maritime Crossroads of Culture, Commerce and Human Migration* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008).
- 4 On the Royal Society's interest in ginseng, see Appleby, 'Ginseng and the Royal Society.'
- 5 The 'early modern' in China is itself a relatively new object. It has been located anywhere from the tenth through the nineteenth centuries: some locate Ming trade networks or Qing imperial expansion within a globalizing early modern world, while others cite Song commercialization as evidence of a dynastic early modern identity.

For the purpose of this chapter, 'early modernity' in Chinese history roughly covers the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, or the late Ming through high Qing periods. For an excellent introduction to the debates on early modernity in China, see Lynn A. Struve, ed., *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia, 2004).

- 6 In thinking of this phenomenon as a history of practices, I've been inspired by Paul Veyne, 'Foucault Revolutionizes History,' in *Foucault and his Interlocutors*, ed. Arnold Davidson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 146–182.
- 7 Jonathan Gil Harris, 'Shakespeare's Hair: Staging the Object of Material Culture,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52.4 (Winter 2001): 479–491, especially 483.
- 8 Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
- 9 Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).
- 10 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
- 11 Serres, *The Parasite*.
- 12 Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,' in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. idem (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–63.
- 13 See especially Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Ursula Klein and Wolfgang Lefèvre, *Materials in Eighteenth-Century Science: A Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
- 14 Lorraine Daston, 'The Coming into Being of Scientific Objects,' in *Biographies of Scientific Objects*, ed. idem (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1–14.
- 15 In his treatment of commodification as part of the life cycle of objects, Appadurai makes this point nicely.
- 16 Paul Rabinow, *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), x.
- 17 Examples of this abundant and growing literature include Peter Bol, 'The Rise of Local History: History, Geography, and Culture in Southern Song and Yuan Wuzhou,' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61.1 (2001): 37–76; and idem, 'The "Localist Turn" and "Local Identity" in Later Imperial China,' *Late Imperial China* 24.2 (2003): 1–51. The importance of medical regionalism in particular has been recently treated in Marta Hanson, *Speaking of Epidemics in Chinese Medicine: Disease and the Geographic Imagination in Late Imperial China* (New York: Routledge, 2011). Ethnological studies of regional medical knowledge (or myths thereof) on the southwestern Chinese frontier include Norma Diamond, 'The Miao and Poison: Interactions on China's Southwest Frontier,' *Ethnology* 27.1 (1988): 1–25 (a spirited historical context for which can be found in H. Y. Feng and J. K. Shryock, 'The Black Magic in China Known as Ku,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 55.1 [1935]: 1–30). On local identities in Ming China, see also Leo Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- 18 For a list of some general works of this type see Wolfgang Franke, *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 201–207.
- 19 For examples of this literature see Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and James Millward, "'Coming onto the Map": "Western Regions" Geography and Cartographic Nomenclature in the Making of Chinese Empire in Xinjiang,' *Late Imperial China* 20.2 (1999): 61–98.
- 20 For an account of these sorts of more horizontally defined stories, see V. K. Arseniev, *Dersu the Trapper* (Kingston, NY: McPherson, 1996). Van J. Symons draws heavily

- from this text in his assessment of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century ginseng gathering culture in Manchuria in Van J. Symons, 'The Ch'ing Ginseng Monopoly' (PhD diss., Brown University, 1974).
- 21 In relating built (or in this case, grown) structures to the architecture of the human body, I am building on the work of Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), especially his treatment of nests and shells; and Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005).
  - 22 Of course exceptions can be found, but a survey of visual and textual images of *renshen* seems to indicate this general trend. One example of an attention to surface detail is found in the *Bencao yuanshi* 本草原始 (1612) by Li Zhongli 李中立 (*jinshe* 1595) (Figure 1.1). This text often mentions place of origin as one of the defining characteristics of *materia medica* and the images included are striking. Often bearing little resemblance to the depictions included in previous *bencao*, the images in the *Bencao yuanshi* frequently depict cross sections of plants and animal parts, and feature a high degree of interplay between text and image on its pages. For a brief description of the *Bencao yuanshi*, see Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Pharmaceutics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986): 248–249. After its initial publication it was later reprinted in a small, pocketbook edition (1754) and then with significant revisions in 1844. The copy that I've used is a reprint of a Wanli era edition, included in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), vol. 992–993.
  - 23 For a brief account of Ming *renshen* policy and trade, see Seonmin Kim, 'Borders and Crossings: Trade, Diplomacy and Ginseng between Qing China and Choson Korea' (PhD diss., Duke University, 2006), 41–47.
  - 24 See Li, *Bencao gangmu*, juan 12 (*renshen*.jijie).
  - 25 On the 'three treasures' of Manchuria, see Cong Peiyuan 丛佩远, *Dongbei sanbao jingji jianshi* 东北三宝经济简史 (Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1989). *Renshen* is treated on pp 1–174. See also Symons, 'The Ch'ing Ginseng Monopoly,' 14–21. Prior to the rise of the Qing, revenue from the Jurchen ginseng trade was a key factor in the rise of Jurchen power that ultimately made the establishment of Qing rule possible.
  - 26 *Xinluo* is often translated as 'Silla' today, though care should be taken to understand the terms *Xinluo*, *Gaoli*, and *Baiji* in a late Ming and early-mid Qing *bencao* context as place markers and not as dynastic names. On 'Silla' ginseng in Chinese texts, including its presentation to Tang court as tribute, see Soyoung Suh, 'Korean Medicine between the Local and the Universal: 1600–1945' (PhD diss., UCLA, 2006), 39–42.
  - 27 On Ming–Korean tributary relations, see Donald N. Clark, 'Sino–Korean Tributary Relations under the Ming,' in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 272–300.
  - 28 Kim, 'Borders and Crossings,' 73–74.
  - 29 Kim, 'Borders and Crossings,' 93. This argument was also featured in Symons, 'The Ch'ing Ginseng Monopoly.'
  - 30 Seonmin Kim, 'Ginseng and Border Trespassing Between Qing China and Choson Korea,' *Late Imperial China* 28.1 (2007): 37–38. On Jurchen and Qing *renshen* gathering in the Changbai area, see *Qing dai Dongbei shen wu* (Jilin wen shi chubanshe, 1991).
  - 31 Prior to 1730, ginseng collection was largely managed by Manchu bannermen. After 1730, regulation of ginseng trade was primarily conducted by the Ministry of Finance. This particular attention to the ethnicity of ginseng gatherers is discussed in several works, including Kim, 'Ginseng and Border Trespassing,' 37–38.
  - 32 On the emergence of a Canadian ginseng trade as a result of Jesuit investigations in northeast China, see Appleby, 'Ginseng and the Royal Society,' 136–140.
  - 33 The edition I have dates from Renzong 13 (1808).

- 34 These include *nansha shen*, *fangfeng dang shen*, *shangdang shen*, *turen shen*, *jian shen*, *xiyang shen*, and *dongyang shen*, among others. The descriptions run for several pages. On the change of emphasis in Qing texts from Shangdang *renshen* from the Shanxi area to *renshen* from the Northeast, see Jiang Zhushan 蒋竹山, 'Qingdai de renshen shuxie yu fenlei fangshi de zhuanxiang 清代的人参书写与分类方式的转向,' *Journal of Huazhong Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 47.2 (March 2008): 69–75. Jiang characterizes a shift from pre-Qing discussions of *renshen* as a curiosity of natural history to Qing emphasis on the drug as a commodity. That perceived shift might, however, be an artifact of the very different type of sources of evidence invoked in many Qing *bencao* when compared with Ming and earlier *bencao*.
- 35 In its extended discussion of local *renshen* production, Tang Bingjun's *Renshen kao* (see esp. 1–3) also invokes *Liaoshen* as a particularly good variety of the drug.
- 36 'France' in these texts may well have referred instead to North America, indicating ginseng variants from Quebec.
- 37 By the late eighteenth century, ginseng was an expensive and highly sought-after drug in Japan, and doctors worried about counterfeiting. On the regulation and effort to control the quality of ginseng, and on the relationship between Korean imports and locally produced ginseng in early modern Japan, see Guillaume Carré and Christian Lamouroux, 'Faux produits et marchandises contrefaites dans la Chine et le Japon prémodernes: réglementations, corps de métiers et contraintes éthiques,' *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 32 (2010): 115–161.
- 38 An English translation of Jartoux's French letter (dated 12 April 1711) can be found in *The Travels of Several Learned Missioners of the Society of Jesus, into Divers Parts of the Archipelago, India, China, and America* (London: R. Gosling, 1714), 215–225. Symons, 'The Ch'ing Ginseng Monopoly,' 1 provides an account of early eighteenth-century writings by Jesuits Pierre Jartoux and Jean Baptiste Regis, whose account of their survey of Manchuria for Kangxi included descriptions of meeting 'Tartars' gathering ginseng for 'mandarins.' The first western-language account of ginseng was reportedly published in French in 1643, but perhaps the most famous such account was recorded in Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description de la Chine* (1736). See also Appleby, 'Ginseng and the Royal Society.'
- 39 In this massive late Ming encyclopedia of the practice and natural history of *materia medica*, Li frequently invoked chronological lists of precursors, arranging accounts of medical drug history by publication date and (where previous *bencao* had not included accounts of materials, such as when discussing clothing and tools) explicitly historicizing local lore in some of the chapters of his work.
- 40 See Symons, 'The Ch'ing Ginseng Monopoly,' 110–118, including a brief account of Jilin *renshen* guilds.
- 41 By 1750, returns on *renshen* and animal trapping in Mongolia were so inconsequential that Mongol gatherers were instructed to focus on collecting bee honey instead. Symons discusses this ('The Ch'ing Ginseng Monopoly,' 28), but an extended treatment of these rules is also available in (and Symons largely bases his analysis on) the *Da Qing Huidian*.
- 42 See Appleby, 'Ginseng and the Royal Society.'
- 43 On connoisseurship in early modern China, see Clunas, *Superfluous Things*. On the language of observation as applied to visual artifacts, see Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 111–133. On the language of observation as applied to pharmaceuticals, see Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot*, 34–44.
- 44 Symons, 'The Ch'ing Ginseng Monopoly,' 53–58 provides a detailed treatment of this process and of the qualities used in grading Qing ginseng.
- 45 On changing objects to authenticate them in Ming drug literature, see Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot*, 41–44.
- 46 See Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*.

- 47 On Qing multilingualism see Pamela Kyle Crossley, 'Manchu Education,' in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman and Alexander Woodside (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 340–378; and Evelyn S. Rawski, 'Qing Publishing in Non-Han Languages,' in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 304–331, and citations therein. On Manchu medical sources see Marta Hanson, 'On Manchu Medical Manuscripts and Blockprints: An Essay and Bibliographic Survey,' *Saksha* 8 (2003): 1–32; and idem, 'The Significance of Manchu Medical Sources in the Qing,' in *Proceedings of the First North American Conference on Manchu Studies* (Portland, OR, May 9–10, 2003), ed. Stephen Wadley et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 131–176.
- 48 A number of these texts in Tibetan and Manchu, with occasional texts in Uyghur and other scripts, have been reprinted in *Zhongguo bencao quanshu* (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1999), esp. vol. 395–398.
- 49 On publishing in the late Ming, see Lucille Chia, 'Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing,' in *Printing and Book Culture*, 107–151, esp. 135–136 on medical works; and Joseph McDermott, *A Social History of the Chinese Book: Books and Literati Culture in Late Imperial China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), which treats the late Ming in each of its thematically organized chapters. On the wide distribution and circulation of daily-use encyclopedias in the late Ming, see Wei Shang, 'The Making of the Everyday World: Jin Ping Mei Cihua and Encyclopedias for Daily Use,' in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond*, ed. Der-wei Wang and Wei Shang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2005), 67–74.
- 50 1407 was also the year that Zheng He returned from his first voyage. There were initially eight bureaus of the Siyi guan: Mongol (*Dada* 韃靼), Jurchen (*Ruzhen* 女真), Muslim (*Huihui* 回回), Tibet (*Xifan* 西番), Uyghur (*Gaochang* 高昌), Baiyi 百夷, Burma (*Miandian* 緬甸), and India (*Xitian* 西天). A *Babai* 八百 bureau was added in 1511, and a Siam (*Xianluo* 暹羅) bureau was added in 1578. The most complete treatment of these organizations in western languages can be found in F. Hirth, 'The Chinese Oriental College,' *Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* New Series, 27 (1887): 203–219; Paul Pelliot, 'Le Hoja et le Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming,' *T'oung Pao* Second Series 38.2/5 (1948): 81–292 (esp. 207–292); and Norman Wild, 'Materials for the Study of the Ssu I Kuan (Bureau of Translators),' *BSOAS* 11.3 (1945): 617–640.
- 51 The *yiyu* translation manual also includes a *Huihui* section, though it provides only Chinese transliterations for *Huihui* words, rather than Arabic or Persian script. For the *Huihui* material in Chinese transcription, see *Yiyu* 譯語, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1987), *Jing bu* 經部, vol. 6, 607–612. For a brief introduction to the *Yiyu*, see Hu Zhenhua 胡振華, 'Zhengui de huizu wenxian Huhuiguan yiyu 珍貴的回族文獻《回回館譯語》,' *Zhongyang minzu daxue xuebao* 中央民族大學學報 2 (1995): 87–90.
- 52 Several paired memorials (Chinese/Persian) are collected in *Huihui guan laiwen*. Among briefer accounts are more extensive memorials recording, for example, envoys asking for imperial blessing on a recently built mosque, and an envoy who had not eaten cooked food in several years, subsisting only on fruit and seeds, paying tribute.
- 53 The surviving *yiyu* glossaries include Japanese, Ryukyuan, Tibetan, Korean, Vietnamese, Persian, Uyghur, Jurchen, and several southeast Asian languages. Some of these have been studied by scholars interested in linguistic reconstruction of past spoken dialects. See, for example, Daniel Kane, *The Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary of the Bureau of Interpreters* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1989), esp. 90–98.

- 54 These dictionaries were often produced in stages over time, and by many hands. Each language in the manuals was written by a different individual, and the responsible scribes may never have known or come into physical contact with each other. Some were clearly copying from other texts, and seem not to have mastered the script they were writing.
- 55 On court patronage of translation and dictionary projects under the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors, see Rawski, 'Qing Publishing,' 305–306. For an excellent introduction to polylinguistic dictionaries in the Qing, see *ibid.*, 314–317.
- 56 A three-volume, 1957 Beijing reproduction of a late eighteenth century manuscript edition is widely available in North American libraries. On this text and the other dictionaries to which it was related, see Pamela Kyle Crossley and Evelyn S. Rawski, 'A Profile of the Manchu Language in Ch'ing History,' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 53.1 (1993): 83–87.
- 57 Specifically, these were the late Ming *Zengdang Hua Yi yiyu: Dada guan* (ostensibly from the *Siyi guan*), the late Ming *Hua Yi yiyu*, and the (likely early Qing) *Ruzhen guan yiyu* (a Jurchen-language transliteration manual ostensibly from the *Huitong guan*). The dating and provenance of these manuals is debated.
- 58 All three texts simply record equivalents for the term *renshen*, without specifying any further types of *shen* or parts of the plant. The Mongol manuals both include the Chinese term, a rendering in Mongol script, and a transliteration of the Mongol term into Chinese: *gu-wen-hu-er-ban-ha-er-a-li* 古溫忽兒班哈兒阿力. The Jurchen glossary includes simply the Chinese term and a Chinese transliteration of the Jurchen term: *O-r-ho-da* 斡兒火答, or *Orhoda*, being *orho* (grass, or *cao* 草) + *da* (root, or *gen* 根). For the translation of this term see Kane, *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary* (a study and translation of the same Jurchen manual that I discuss here), 210.
- 59 Further specification or identification of parts of other plants, especially grains and aromatics, was relatively common in these texts.
- 60 On naming in early Chinese thought, see John Makeham, *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994). On naming in Chinese thought and history see the articles in *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 15: *Le Just Nom* (1993), and Christoph Harbsmeier, *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 7.1: Language and Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 52–60 and 311–326.
- 61 The *Bencao gangmu*, for example, included discussions of names from Sanskrit, as well as local oral dialects.
- 62 For one example of this trend, see Zhao Xuemin (1719–1805), *Bencao gangmu shiyi* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995).
- 63 For an extensive treatment of *pulu* literature, see Martina Siebert, *Pulu: Abhandlungen und Auflistungen' zu Materieller Kultur und Naturkunde im Traditionellen China* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006). *Pulu* topics included plants (the *Luoyang mudan ji* [Treatise on Luoyang tree peonies] by Ouyang Xiu, the *Zhupu* [Treatise on bamboo] by Dai Kaizhi); animals (The *Xiepu* [Crab treatise] by Fu Hong, the *Qin jing* [Bird classic] by Shi Kuang); implements (the *Mojing* [Ink classic] by Zhao Guanzhi, the *Xiangpu* [Treatise on incense] by Hong Chu); and foodstuffs (the *Chajing* [Tea classic] by Lu Yu), to name but a few examples. Many of these have been collected and published in modern collectanea.
- 64 The literature on early modern objects as commodities in Chinese history is young, vibrant, and growing. Recent studies on commodities such as ginkgo, rhubarb, tea, opium, and other materials include Kuang-chi Hung, 'Within the Lungs, the Stomach, and the Mind: Convergences and Divergences in Medical and Natural Histories of *Ginkgo biloba*' (unpublished talk presented at the Princeton Workshop on Medical Commodities in Early Modern East Asia, Princeton, New Jersey, February 11–12, 2012); Chang Che-Chia, 'Origins of a Misunderstanding: The Qianlong Emperor's Embargo on Rhubarb Exports to Russia, the Scenario and

its Consequences,' *Asian Medicine* 1.2 (2005): 335–354; Yangwen Zheng, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Frank Dikötter et. al., *Narcotic Culture: A History of Drugs in China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004). My work tends to differ from these (excellent) studies by taking an approach that problematizes the methodology enabling a historian to identify a commodity in texts across time and space.

## 2

### GOING TO THE BIRDS

Animals as things and beings in early modernity

*Marcy Norton*

#### Introduction

Let us compare a hawk trained for falconry and a chicken raised as poultry.<sup>1</sup> In early modern Europe people believed, approached, and celebrated the beingness of the hawk, its identity as a noble, collaborative predator. On the other hand, avian husbandry was organized around chickens as things (edible flesh, useful feathers) and as producers of things (eggs). Hunting and husbandry can be thought of as meta-structures, or what I term 'modes of interaction,' that emphasize respectively the beingness and thingness of animals. We find rather different circumstances in pre-Hispanic America, where there were practices and beliefs around animals in which thingness and beingness constituted one another. In Caribbean, Amazonian, and Mesoamerican societies, predation and adoption operated as modes of interaction that existed on a continuum of incorporation: one took on the attributes of a consumed animal, or one made it into a family and community member. The eagle's awesome ferocity and predatorial acumen manifested in its feathers; accordingly a human ritually outfitted in eagle feathers embodied these qualities. Baby parrots were taken from their nests and became adopted kin.

This is a micro-global history of avian-human relationships with two nested objectives. The first is to demonstrate how modes of interaction produce particular subjectivities; in other words, to identify and investigate the contexts in which humans relate to birds as vassals, foodstuff, marvels, sacred beings, kin, and, finally, pets. The second is to explore how the entanglement of the cultures of Native America and Europe, inaugurated by Columbus' arrival in the Americas, mutually affected European and Amerindian modes of interaction. In particular, this chapter will focus on the transmission of Amerindian featherworks and parrots into Europe.<sup>2</sup>