Shu-Lang Root. (*Dioscorea rhipogonoides*, Oliver.)

Author(s): Augustine Henry

Source: *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew)*, Vol. 1895, No. 105 (1895), pp. 230-231

Published by: Springer on behalf of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4114978>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 04:11 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Springer are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew)*

pinnatis basalibus basi furcatis, lobis linearibus integris, venis immersis occultis, indusio lato continuo brunneo persistente glabro crenulato.

Habitat.—Somali-land: Golis range, in rocky gorges at Dara-as, alt. 5000 ft., *Miss Edith Cole, Mrs. Lort Phillips*.

Stipes 2–5 poll. longus. *Lamina* 3–6 poll. longa, 2–3 poll. lata.

Habit of *Cheilanthes farinosa*, Kaulf. The persistent indusia meet almost edge to edge at the midrib.

CCCCCLXXVI.—SHU-LANG ROOT.

(*Dioscorea rhipogonoides*, Oliver.)

Plants belonging to the monocotyledonous order *Dioscoreaceae* consist of climbing shrubs of which the black bryony (*Tamus communis*) with an acrid tuber and red berries is a familiar example. In the tropics the typical genus is *Dioscorea* producing the fleshy tuberous roots known as yams. These are widely cultivated and form the chief food in many tropical and sub-tropical countries. In China a *Dioscorea* described below is known as a “dye yam.” We are indebted to Dr. Augustine Henry, F.L.S., who has already done so much for Chinese Botany, for the following particulars:—

NOTE ON SHU-LANG.

Dioscorea rhipogonoides, Oliver, was first discovered by Mr. Ford in Hong Kong, and is described in *Hooker's Icones Plantarum*, tab. 1868. No mention is made there of its economic importance, and I believe it was not until Mr. Ford made his excursion up the Canton river that he became aware of the use of the root as a dye. The Chinese hunt for it in Hong Kong, and little of the plant is left there on that account.

In Formosa the plant occurs plentifully in the mountains; and the roots are brought to the coast, where they are much used by fishermen for dyeing and tanning their nets. I am not aware that any export occurs from Formosa.

The root (and plant as well) is known to the Chinese as *shu-lang*, and occurs in commerce as “dye-root” or “dye-yam”; while in Tonkin the French apply to it the name *faux gambier*. The Customs Trade Report for Pakhoi, 1882, says it is imported there from Annam, being a tuberous root called *shu-lang* or *faux gambier*. It is extensively used at Pakhoi in dyeing coarse native cotton cloth and fishing nets a dark brown or tan colour.

The lately opened Customs station on the Kwangsi-Annam frontier, Lungchow, is at present the seat of the trade; and the following quotations are from Customs Trade Reports on that port for the years 1889 and 1891.

“The principal article imported into Lungchow in 1889, was *shu-lang*, 3,700 piculs, value 4,437 taels (over 200 tons, 1,100*l*). It is a tuberous root growing wild in the hilly districts of Tonkin. It is now to a certain extent cultivated, but cultivation, strange to say, deteriorates the quality. It is usually gathered in spring and early summer and is sent from here down the West River to Canton, where it is used to dye

cloth that peculiar reddish-black colour one so often sees in the South. The value locally ranges from \$1½ to \$3 a picul."

"In 1891, the imports into Lungchow from Tonkin (districts of Thatke and Caobang) of *shu-lang* or *faux gambier* was 9,000 piculs, valued at 16,762 taels (over 500 tons, value 4,000*l.*)" The 1889 and 1892 Reports give some further details as to the trade.

At Canton, the root is chiefly used for dyeing grass-cloth (*i.e.*, the light fabric made from *Bœhmeria*) and the kind of silk material known as *Cantons*, both used much for summer clothing.

In the Chinese Illustrated Botany (*Chih-wu-ming*, IX., 26) *shu-lang* is figured and said to occur plentifully in the mountains of Fukien, Kwangtung, and Kwangsi provinces. Its uses are described to be for dyeing fishing nets. The Chinese author says the stem has small thorns and that the root is hairy. He is perhaps speaking of another species.

The specimens now sent are Formosan roots, and are, I think, unquestionably *Dioscorea rhipogonoides*. The leaf specimens, No. 105, were attached to the root, so that there is no doubt about these specimens.

Mr. Ford is sure that the Canton root is from the same plant. I have no specimens at present of Annamese *shu-lang*; these could be procured from Pakhoi or Canton,

Takow, 14 March 1894,

AUGUSTINE HENRY.

CCCCCLXXVII.—MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

The news has reached Kew of the death at the General Hospital, Madras, on the 17th August, of Mr. ANDREW JAMIESON, Curator of the Gardens and Parks at Ootacamund, Nilgiris. Mr. Jamieson was 53 years of age, and had been connected with the Ootacamund Gardens for nearly 27 years. He was formerly a member of the gardening staff at Kew and was appointed to Ootacamund in September 1868. He was in sole charge of the gardens on the Nilgiris for many years until they were placed under the control of the present Director.

Mr. Jamieson was a skilful and capable officer and his official reports were full of valuable information. On taking over charge of the Department in 1883, Mr. M. A. Lawson, M.A., the Director, bore the following testimony to Mr. Jamieson's services:—"I wish especially to record my obligations to the Curator, Mr. Jamieson, for the loyal manner in which he has on every occasion supported me in designing the alterations I wished to introduce, and for the skill and perseverance which he has evinced in carrying out those alterations to a satisfactory conclusion."

MR. JOHN HORNE STEPHEN, formerly of Kew, and lately Curator of the Lal Bagh Botanic Gardens at Bangalore, Mysore, has been appointed Superintendent of the Public Gardens at Nagpur, Central Provinces of India, in succession to the late Mr. J. R. Ward. Mr. Ward died in January last from smallpox complicated with other maladies. He had only held his post since 1893, but had already won general regard; his untimely death has cut short a career of promise.