



DĀRČĪNĪ

DĀRČĪNĪ (i.e., *dār-e čnī*, lit., “Chinese tree/wood,” < Mid. Pers. **dār ī čēnīg*; cf. Arm. lw. *daričenik*; Hübschmann, *Armenische Grammatik*, p. 137; Ar. *dāršīnī*), or commonly *dārčīn*, the dried aromatic (inner) bark of many plants of the genus *Cinnamomum* (fam. Lauraceae) found in eastern, southeastern, and southern Asia (for a description of species, varieties, and their habitats, see Balfour, I, pp. 598-99, 731-32).

History. Some Persian medical authors of the Islamic period have referred to the use of *dāršīnī* and the related *salīka* (see below) in early prescriptions traceable to Galenic pharmacology, which was practiced at the Jondīšāpūr hospital (see **BĪMĀRESTĀN**) in the Sasanian period, though there is no specific evidence of their use there. These prescriptions included the vaguely characterized *jowārešn* (< Pers. *govārešn*) *al-šahrīārān* “the digestive [compounded] for kings” and *ma’jūn Qobād al-malek* “the electuary of King Qobād” (Ebn Sīnā, III, pp. 314, 350, 333-34; Jorjānī, p. 691).

Cinnamon has been found in Egyptian tombs of the pharaonic period (Meyerhof and Sobhy, in *Ġāfeqī*, pp. 471, 475), and cinnamon and cassia bark are mentioned several times in the Old Testament (Heb. *qinnāmōn/kinnamon* and *qēšī’āh/kezi’ah* or *kiddah*; see, e.g., Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, p. 542 n. 3; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. cinnamon) and by such early authors as Herodotus, Theophrastus, Strabo, and Pliny (Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, p. 541). Although some modern scholars have inferred from the literal sense of *dārčīnī* that the ancients obtained cinnamon by land from China (Renaud and Colin, pp. 129-30 no. 291; Meyerhof in Ebn Maymūn, p. 50 no. 95; Dietrich, p. 197; Dymock et al.,



p. 204; Mazahéri, p. 441), the sinological evidence does not support their view (Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, pp. 542-44). It seems more likely that in antiquity cinnamon and related products came mainly from Ceylon and India (cf. Strabo, 1.4.2, 15.1.22, 16.4.19, 16.4.25; Balfour, p. 732).

In the 1st century C.E. Dioscorides described many species or varieties of *kassía* and *kinamómon* (1.12-13) without, however, indicating their origins. The 9th-century Arab translators rendered them as either *dāršīnī*, traditionally identified with the bark of *Cinnanomum cassia* Bl., or as *salīka* (lit., “excoriated (bark)”; Renaud and Colin, pp. 129-30), usually believed to have come from *Cinnanomum iners* Reinw. (or other Indian or Indo-Chinese species; Dymock et al., p. 203). The earliest author of the Islamic period to have provided an independent inventory of *dāršīnī* species was the Egyptian Eshāq b. Solaymān Esrā’īlī (ca. 243-343/858-955; in Gāfeqī, Ar. text, p. 107; cf. Ebn al-Bayṭār, I/2, pp. 83-84). A contemporary of Esrā’īlī, Yūḥannā b. Māsūya (d. 343/955; p. 19), mentioned three kinds of *qerfa* (lit., “rind, skin, bark”): *qerfat al-qaranfol*, the best; *qerfa* that smelled like camphor; and *qerfa* that smelled like *dāršīnī*. ‘Alī b. Sahl Ṭabarī, author of the earliest surviving medical compendium of the Islamic period (comp. 236/850), named only *qerfa* (p. 398) and *salīka* (p. 397).

Abū Manṣūr Mowaffaq Heravī (fl. ca. 370-80/980-90), author of the oldest known pharmacological work in Persian, included separate articles on *dārčīnī* and *qerfa* (p. 154) and on *salīka* (p. 185). On the other hand, Abū Bakr Rabī’ Aḳawaynī Boḳārī (d. ca. 373/983), who wrote the earliest medical treatise in Persian, used the terms *dārčīnī*, *dārčīnī-e čīnī* (Chinese *dārčīnī*, pp. 250, 390), *qerfa*, and *salīka* (pp. 250, 390 and passim). Ebn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) merely summarized Dioscorides’ information. The latest, partly original account of cinnamon in Persian is that by the 18th-century author Moḥammad-Ḥosayn ‘Aqīlī Ḳorāsānī, who appears to have known most of the species and varieties and their sources (pp. 410-11: *dāršīnī*, 688: *qerfat al-dārčīnī* [sic], 513: *salīka*). According to him, the best varieties came from Ceylon.

Although William Dymock and his colleagues (p. 203) insisted that cinnamon had not been cultivated in Ceylon before 1770, Alphonse de Candolle (p. 146) claimed that it was native to Ceylonese forests and had always been a principal product of the country. Bozorg b. Šahryār of Rāmhormoz, a Persian ship captain, had mentioned *al-qerfat al-sehīlānīya* “Ceylonese bark” in the 10th century (p. 180).

Medicinal and culinary uses. The numerous uses found for *dārčīn* in post-



Galenic and folk medicine were derived principally from its identification as “hot” and “dry” (e.g., Ṭabarī, pp. 397-98; Heravī, p. 154). According to Ebn Sīnā (III, p. 289), when taken internally it would counteract venoms and poisons, relieve catarrh and cough, and cure dim eyesight caused by thick “moisture” in the eyes and liver obstructions. Applied externally, it would cure sores, tetter, freckles, and the like.

Like most other Galenic simples, *dārčīnī* has gradually fallen from use for medical purposes. Nowadays in Persia powdered *dārčīn* is used (in infusions, and usually with *nabāt* “rock candy”) only as a “hot” drug against *sardī* (“coldness” of the humoral constitution) and as a stomachic, carminative, or (because of its tannin content) antidiarrheal. A hot infusion of *dārčīn* popularly called *čāyī-dārčīn* (lit., “cinnamon tea”) is occasionally drunk, especially in cold weather, as a mild tonic; until not very long ago sidewalk barbers used to serve it to their clients while shaving their heads. Gisho Honda and his colleagues have reported only two kinds of *dārčīn* available in Tehran: *dārčīn-e dorošt* (coarse cinnamon) and *dārčīn-e narm* (soft/delicate cinnamon), identified as from *Cin-namomum cassia* and *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* respectively (p. 3). In 1937 David Hooper and Henry Field reported (p. 100) that “the small, black fruits of the cinnamon tree from China are sold in the bazaars” [of Tehran] under the name *qorfa* (sic) and that “the leaves of cinnamon (taken internally for rheumatism)” were called *barg-e sādaj* (*sādaj* leaf) in Tehran and *sādaj-e hendī* (Indian *sādaj*) in Isfahan.

Powdered *dārčīn* is sprinkled on a kind of rice pudding called *šol-e zard* and is included in some pastries, stews, and such regional dishes as the Kermānī pilaw with kohlrabi.

In 1368 Š./1989-90, 27,835 kg (total value: 4,293,195 rials) of “*dārčīn* and *dārčīn*-tree blossoms” were imported from Dubai, which was obviously an intermediary for exports from elsewhere (Gomrok, p. 21).

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