



BEANS

BEANS. This term is used in English in a wide sense to designate several plants (and their seeds) of different genera of the vast family Leguminosae. In this article it will be confined to the two genera *Phaseolus* (Tourn.) L. and *Vigna* Savi, i.e., to what is commonly called *lūbīā* in Persian (for broad bean, *Vicia faba* L., see *bāqelā*).

The Arabo-Persian word *lūbīā*, as currently applied to a great many types of *Phaseolus vulgaris* L., said by Dāwūd Anṭākī (d. 1008/1599), *Taḍkera* I, p. 247, to be of Hindi (Indian) origin (an assumption repeated by some later authors, e.g., Tonokābonī, *Toḥfat al-mo'menīn*, pp. 772-73, and 'Aqīlī Korāsānī, *Maḵzan al-adwīā*, pp. 384-85), or asserted by some modern authors to represent the Greek *lóbia*, borrowed into Arabic through Syriac (M. Meyerhof, commentary on Maimonides' *Šarḥ asmā' al-'oqqār*, no. 210; cf. also Renaud and Colin, commentary on *Toḥfat al-aḥbāb*, no. 16, who consider the derivation from the Gk. *lóbos* [as used in Theophrastus] just possible), is, like the Gk. *lóbia*, ultimately derived from Akkadian *lubbu* (in Sumerian *LU.UB.ŠAR*) according to M. Levey, introd., *The Medical Formulary of al-Samarqandī*, p. 16. Some dialectal names for *lūbīā* are recorded by Bīrūnī, *Ketāb al-šaydana*, p. 334 (Ar. text): *rāžmūk* [?] in the dialect of Termed̄, *farāmong* [?] in Saǰzī (Sīstānī). Abū Bakr Kāšānī, in his Persian adaptation of the *Šaydana* (1st half of the 8th/14th cent.), says that "*līā*(') [an Ar. variant of *lūbīā*?] is called *žā'mak* [in *Borhān-e qāte'* II, ed. M. Mo'in, *žā'umak*] by some Persians, *fasūlon* [?] in Roman, and *ǰulā*, too" (*fasūlon* is a corruption of Lat. *phaselus*, Gk. *phasēlos*, which, ultimately, is the origin of the modern Ar. word for *lūbīā*, i.e. *fāšulīā/fāšulīā*);



jūlā [?] seems to be an alteration of the Hindi *čawlā*, which, properly, is *Vigna Catiang* Endl.; see W. Dymock et al., *Pharmacographia* I, p. 499). *Ġond-māš*, without dialectal specification, is also recorded in *Borhān-e qāṭeʿ* III, s.v.

Dioscorides' *Ketāb al-ḥašāʿeš* II seems to be the oldest source of systematic knowledge about *lūbīā* in Islamic works, Arabic and Persian, on materia medica. As quoted by Ebn al-Bayṭār, *al-Jāmeʿ* I, pp. 112-13, *lūbīā* corresponds to Dioscorides' *smilaqz* [actually, in Gk., *smilax (chēpaia)*], “the fruit of which some people call *asfārāḡos* [i.e., *asparagos*].” Then, Dioscorides, after a short botanical characterization which corresponds to that of some climbing variety of *lūbīā*, says that “[smilax] has pods . . . containing kidney-shaped grains [cf. “kidney-bean” in Engl.] of different colors: reddish, whitish, and blackish, . . . which, eaten like asparagus [*helyawn*], are diuretic” (but Aḥmad Ġāfeqī, 1st half of the 6th/12th century, quoted by Ebn al-Bayṭār, *ibid.*, says that “*lūbīā* is of two kinds, and the one with delicate, edible pods is called *s(a)mīlaqz* [misread or misprinted as *s(a)mīlaqn* in the text] in Greek”). The exact Greek form being unknown to most Arab and Persian authors, the arabicized form *smylqz* has been variously altered or misread by them and/or their copyists; *syʿhyn-sīāhīn* [?] in the printed text of Anṭākī, *ibid.*, *sylymyn-sīlmīn* [?] in Tonokābonī, *ibid.*, *sylyhyn-sīlhīn* [?] in ʿAqīlī, *ibid.*, etc. See, e.g., Deḥḳodā, *Loḡat-nāma*, s.v. *lūbīā*.

Considering that the present-day cultivated *lūbīā*, *P. vulgaris*, is native to Central and South America and that it was introduced into Europe only in the 16th century (cf., e.g., H. Leclerc, *Légumes*, p. 22, and *Grand dictionnaire encyclopédique Larousse* V, Paris, 1983, s.v. *haricot*), it would seem that the earliest references of Arabic-writing authors of the Islamic period to *lūbīā*, corresponding to the *dolichos* and *lóbos* in Theophrastus, and to *smilax* and *phasēlos* in Dioscorides, concerned other genera of Leguminosae (*Dolichos*, *Lathyrus*, and *Vigna*) of Asian origin (cf. Renaud and Colin, *ibid.*, and M. Meyerhof, *ibid.*).

Whatever the botanical identity of these genera of *lūbīā* in the Mediterranean basin and in the Middle East, early works on medicine and materia medica (both Western and Eastern) seem to have considered *lūbīā* varieties a medicinal plant rather than a food plant. Some of the properties of *lūbīā*, as expounded by the Classical authors quoted by Ebn al-Bayṭār, *ibid.*, are as follows: *Lūbīā* is a moderate “coolant” (*mobarred*), a diuretic; it fills the head with “vapor”, and, if eaten raw, induces bad, frightening dreams (author of *al-Felāḥa* [Qoṣṭos al-Rūmī?]); it is “warm” and “moist” [Galenically speaking], the



red variety being “warmer”; it acts as emmenagogue when taken with nard oil and galbanum (Ebn Māsūya, d. 243/857); it is very flatulent, and, therefore, not only is it unfit for the stomach but it nauseates too, and fills the head with vapors (Rāzī, d. 313/925); it is less flatulent than broad bean (but more so than vetch), more easily digestible and not less nutritive than it; it is good for the chest and lungs (Ebn Sīnā, d. 428/1037); the water in which red *lūbīā* is cooked cleanses the body from puerperal blood, causes the expulsion of dead fetuses and the afterbirth (Ġāfeqī). Aḳawaynī Boḳārī (d. ca. 373/983?), author of the oldest extant medical treatise in Persian, *Hedāyat al-mota’allemīn*, ed. J. Matīnī, mentions *lūbīā* (without qualification) along with emetic drugs such as nux vomica, and horseradish (*torb*) seeds (p. 637), red or black *lūbīā* among “warm” foodstuffs (p. 520), and red *lūbīā* in two different emmenagogic decoctions (pp. 522, 523). For a full account (in Persian) of *lūbīā*’s virtues, uses, and harmful effects, see ‘Aqīlī Ḳorāsānī, loc. cit., who, however, does not specify his sources.

In our time in Iran the common *lūbīā*, *P. vulgaris*, is used only for food. There are two main forms of consumption: 1. whole *lūbīās* (green pods containing immature seeds), cooked and used in various indigenous or Western-style dishes, and 2. mature seeds (also called *lūbīā*), cooked and preserved, or directly used in the preparation of some dishes. Not all the varieties of *lūbīā* may be used for both purposes (see below). Following is a short description of cultivated *lūbīā* varieties coming under *P. vulgaris*, and of a single species under *Vigna*. (For wild genera and/or species, all native to Baluchistan, namely *Phaseolus aconitifolius* Jacq., *P. mungo* L., *Vigna Catiang* Endl., *Cajanus indicus* Spreng. [locally called *arhar*], *Rhynchosia memnonia* Del., and *R. minima* DC., see A. Parsa, *Flore* II, pp. 469-73.)

(a) There exist numerous cultivars or hybrid strains of *P. vulgaris* in Iran, some of them now taken for “native,” and some others labeled as “imported” or “foreign”; only the commonest “native” varieties will be mentioned here (for a full account, see M. Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Applied Botany* I, forthcoming); 1. *lūbīāčītī* (chintz-like), sometimes also called *l. qazvīnī*, cultivated mainly in Āstārā and Qazvīn for its relatively large pinkish variegated seeds; 2. the same, having pink or red seeds with lighter patterns on them, mainly grown in Sarāb both for its seeds and pods; 3. *l. marmarī* or *safīd* (marmorean or white), grown both for its pods and for its white seeds in southern Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermānšāh, Hamadān, Malāyer, Isfahan, etc.; 4. *l. qermez* (red bean), kidney-bean, grown mainly in Ḳūzestān, Shiraz, and Marvdašt for its



pods and—more importantly—for its seeds; 5. *l. darham* (lit. “mixed-up beans”), having smallish variegated seeds, grown for its seeds in Isfahan, Kāšān, K̄vānsār and Arāk; 6. *l. pīāzī* (onion-colored), cultivated for its dainty buff seeds mainly in Āstārā; 7. *l. taryākī* (opium-colored), probably of foreign provenance, grown both for its seeds and pods in Gīlān (Rašt, Šawme‘a-sarā, Fūmanāt); 8. *l. ‘adasī* (lentil-colored), probably a rather recent crop, grown for both its seeds and pods.

(b) *Lūbīāčāšm-bolbolī* (nightingale-eyed; called *sīā(h)-čāšm* “blackeyed” in Qazvīn; cf. the older *sīāh-čāšmak* below), blackeye (bean), *Vigna sinensis* Endl. (whitish or cream-colored seeds having a white-centered black hilum), is extensively cultivated in Iran only for its seeds in many places in Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, Khorasan, Qazvīn, Zanjān, etc.

Culinary uses. In a cookbook of the Safavid period, *Kār-nāma*, written in 927/1520-21 by a certain Moḥammad-‘Alī “the Cook from Baghdad” for a grandee of the time of Shah Esmā‘īl I, ed. Ī. Afšār, pp. 53-54, dried *lūbīā* seeds are used as a minor component of a *boḡrā* (a sort of *āš-e rešta*, see below) called *morašša‘* (bejeweled *boḡrā*), and in another opuscle of the same period, *Māddat al-ḥayāt*, written in 1003/1594-95 by a certain Nūr-Allāh, cook at the court of Shah ‘Abbās I, ed. Ī. Afšār, p. 246, *lūbīā* as well as *sīāh-čāšmak* (the little black-eyed one, i.e., blackeye bean) figure among the grains to be used in the so called *āš-e Āšūrā* (the *āš* [to be cooked and doled out on the occasion of the mourning day] of ‘Āšūrā’). Modern cookbooks offer a far greater number of uses for *lūbīā*. Some larger varieties of *lūbīā* seeds, especially kidney-beans and *čītī* beans, canned or freshly cooked, referred to as *lūbīā(-ye) poḡta* (cooked beans), are eaten by themselves with appropriate seasoning as a relatively cheap snack, or added to some salads. *Marmarī* beans are one of the ingredients of the popular *āb-gūšt* (a kind of broth containing, beside meat, potatoes, tomatoes, onions and chickpeas, with turmeric as the principal spice). Blackeyes are used mainly in *k̄voreš(t)-e qorma-sabzī* (a kind of stew meant to be eaten with pilaf, composed mainly of finely chopped specific herbs, meat, and this kind of beans, to which some people prefer the daintier kidney-beans), in a kind of *lūbīā-polow* (a pilaf cooked only with dill and these beans), and in some *āšes*, especially *āš(-e) rešta* (a kind of very popular pottage, the main ingredient of which is *rešta*, i.e., strips of dough, but nowadays usually replaced by commercial spaghetti), and *āš-e šola-qalamkār* (a hotchpotch composed of meat, onions, rice, vegetables, vetches, chickpeas, lentils, and these beans). Green *lūbīā* pods (with still unripe seeds), referred to



as *lūbīā-sabz/-tāza* (green/fresh beans), form the specific component of *lūbīā-polow* (a pilaf also containing dill and minced meat, seasoned with some tomato juice), *ḵvoreš(t)-e lūbīā* (a kind of stew meant to be eaten with pilaf, the specific ingredient being chopped *lūbīā-sabz*), and one of the principal components of some stews to be eaten without pilaf.

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