



## FENNEL

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**FENNEL** (*rāzīāna* < \**rāzīānag*, arabicized as *rāzīāna(j)*), the aromatic sweetish potherb and medicinal plant *Foeniculum vulgare* Mill. (= *Anethum foeniculum* L., etc.; fam. Umbelliferae).

A Persian synonym for *rāzīāna* in some classical Persian sources (e.g., Jorjānī, p. 599; Tonokābonī, p. 144; *Borhān-e qāṭeʿ*, ed. Moʿīn, s.v. *rāzīām*) and in some contemporary regional uses is *bādīān* (e.g., in Afghanistan, Hooper, p. 120; in Bardsīr [in Kermān] and in Arāk, Parsa, VIII, p. 82), which, however, properly designates anise (for the three botanical acceptations of *bādīān*, see Alam, s.v.). Other synonyms are *rāzīām* (obsolete), *rājūma* (in Jahrom; Parsa, p. 82), *bād-toḵm* (lit., “wind [=flatus] seed”; “in the idiom of Sīstān,” according to Bīrūnī/Kāsānī, I, p. 314), and *bādīān-e sabz* (lit., “green bādīān”; Parsa, p. 82.; said of fennel seeds in Tehran and Hamadān, according to Hooper, p. 120). Some classical writers (e.g., Heravī, p. 165; Anṣārī, p. 184; the author of *Borhān-e qāṭeʿ*, s.v. *rāzīām*) have recorded the names *rāzīāna(j)-e rūmī/šāmī* (Byzantine/Syrian fennel) for *anīsūn* “anise.”

In Persia, fennel is cultivated “a little” (Ṭabāṭabāʿī, I, p. 722) mainly for its medicinal seeds, which are also called *rāzīāna*. Wild fennel has also been reported from places in Māzandarān and Kermān (Moḡaffarīān, p. 105).

The medicinal virtues attributed to fennel by Arabic- or Persian-writing authors of the Islamic period are, on the whole, traceable to old Greek sources, particularly to Dioscorides and Galen. (For the relevant quotations from these and other early medical writers, see Rāzī, no. 378, pp. 535-39; Ebn al-Bayṭār, II,



pp. 134-35). The most important of these properties, as presented by Heravī (4th/10th cent.; p. 165), are as follows: *Rāzīānāj* is “moist hot” and “dry” in the first degree; its seeds are hotter and drier; it is galactopoietic, diuretic, emmenagogue (consequently, abortifacient), and carminative (cf. the appellation *bād-toḳm* above); a decoction of the seeds used as eye salve prevents cataract, and strengthens the eyesight. Modern local medicinal uses of fennel include the following: A decoction of the seeds is given at Torbat-e Ḥaydariya (Khorasan) for colic and for gastric troubles (Parsa, p. 82); among Kurds in Persia, the seeds are used as galactopoietic against children’s insomnia, and for belly ache (Şafīzāda, p. 92); an infusion of fennel root with the seeds of bishop’s weed (*zenyān*) is prescribed as carminative, and an infusion of the root alone for toothache and to relieve postpartum pains (Field’s note, in Hooper, p. 120). A miraculous virtue reported from Adam for fennel seeds by the Moroccan scholar Şarīf Edrīsī (d. 1166 C.E.) from “the author of *al-Felāḥat al-nabaṭīya*” and uncritically repeated in some Islamic sources (e.g., Ebn al-Bayṭār, II, pp. 134-35; Anşārī, p. 184; *Borhān-e qāte’*, s.v. *rāzīām*), is this: Anyone who daily ingests one dirham of fennel seeds with one dirham of sugar for the three months from the first of Aries to the first of Cancer every year “certainly will not fall ill all his life long, and his senses will be all right until death.” In fact, Ad(a)mī (vocalization uncertain), confused by our authors with the Biblical Adam, is one of the ancient Kasdānī (Nabatean, Babylonian) authorities whom the famous Ebn Waḥşīya (author or translator?) often quotes in *al-Felāḥat al-nabaṭīya* (but the present writer could not locate this particular statement in Toufic Fahd’s edition of this work, I, Damascus, 1993).

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