



JUJUBE

JUJUBE, *ʿonnāb* (Ar.; usually pronounced *annāb* in Pers.), the edible drupe of the jujube tree *Ziziphus jujuba* Miller (= *Z. sativus* Gaertn., *Z. vulgaris* Lam.), a spiny arborescent, deciduous brush or a tree of *Rhamnacea* family (for morphological details, see Browicz, p. 5), native to the East Mediterranean regions. Trees grow to about 30 ft. with a crown diameter of up to 15 ft., have shiny small green leaves, and bear olive-like fruits. The fully ripened fruit has a thin, wrinkled, red skin over the whitish, rather sweet flesh around a single hard stone, and varies in shape from round to elongate. The general distribution of the jujube tree, both spontaneous and cultivated, includes Central and Western Asia, the Caucasus, India, China, Korea, and North African countries. It has also been introduced into North America. Kazimierz Browicz provides details about its distribution in the *Flora Iranica* area, summarized as: 1) Persia (Gorgān, Gilān, Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Baḳtiāri, Fars, Bušehr, Kerman, Sistān, Khorasan, etc.); 2) Iraq (Kurdistan, Kirkuk, etc.); 3) Turkmenistan; 4) Afghanistan (Herāt, Kabul, Nangrahār, Jalālābād, Laḡmān, Nurestān, Badaḳšān, etc.); 5) West Pakistan (Swāt, Kurram, etc.).

In his article on *ʿonnāb*, Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh Hamadāni (q.v.; d. 718/1939), besides describing the methods of jujube tree propagation, has made several interesting observations. According to him, there are several varieties of *ʿonnāb*, depending on soil quality and weather. Its tree thrives both in cold (*sardsir*) and warm (*garmsir*) regions. It has numerous uses because of its edibility (whether fresh or dried) and its medicinal virtues. In this realm (i.e., Persia), good jujubes are found in some villages of Jorjān (Gorgān); those of



Ḳatāy (Cathay, i.e., Ghina: cf. the archaic Ar. synonym *ḡorbayrā' al-Ṣin* for 'onnāb below) and of Oyḡorestān (country of Uighurs in Mongolia and eastern Torkestān) are “extremely large, good and palatable, much better than those of other countries” (Rašid-al-Din, pp. 30-40).

Present vernacular names for jujube in Persia include Kurd. *šilān* and provincial variants of 'onnāb, for instance, Azeri Turk. *innāb*, Luri *ennāv*, and *o/unnāf* in some localities in Gilān. Obsolete names mentioned in some older dictionaries or pharmaco-medical works include: *šeylāna(k)*, *tabarkun/ṭabarkun*, whose absolute synonymy with 'onnāb is uncertain (see Dehḡodā, s.v. both spellings); *senjed-e Jilān*, lit. “oleaster of Jilān” (not to be confused with Jilān, the Arab. form of Gilān, the Caspian province in Iran; here Jilān most probably refers to Jilān, a village in Bāhrud sub-province, in Semnān Province, whose flora includes a large number of oleaster trees; see Edāra-ye joḡrāfiā'i-e arteš, XXIX, p. 15); and *ḡorbayrā' al-S'in* (e.g., Biruni, ed. Said, p. 274, ed. Zaryāb, no. 733; cf. the Pers. tr. by Kāsāni, and note 731 in Moḡaffarzāda's tr.: “In Farḡāna [q.v.], a mountainous region in Central Asia, it is called *senjed-e Jilān*”; in connection with China, cf. the Eng. synonym “Chinese date” for jujube). According to Wikipedia (s.v. jujube), “*Z. jujuba* ... is thought to be native to North Africa and Syria, but it moved east through India to China, where it has been cultivated for over 4,000 years [!].”

Local people do not dislike eating unripe jujubes (when the stone inside is soft enough), but more esteemed and used are the ripe ones (either fresh or dried) that look like oleasters, with dark-red exocarps and sweetish pulps, supposed to have medicinal virtues.

The Galenic *mezāj* (temperament) of jujubes is indeterminate (for different opinions in this regard, see Ebn al-Bayṭār's quotations from several *ḡakims*, “physicians,” II, pp. 191-92). The prevailing view nowadays at least in Iran is that 'onnāb is “cold in the first degree” (as already stated by some Persian authors of the past; e.g., H'osayni Tonokāboni [comp. 1080/1669-70], pp. 613-14). As such, its mucilaginous decoction is believed to be effective for sore throat, bronchitis, as an expectorant, and for abating the *ḡedda* (hotness, calorificity) of blood, for “purifying” the blood and decreasing arterial hypertension.

In classical Persian literature, some poets have compared to 'onnāb the (red small) lip(s) of their beloved and rarely his/her fingertips. A number of these far-fetched comparisons are to be found in Dehḡodā. In the following distich,



the poet Zahir-al-Din Fāryābi (d. 598/1202, q.v.) has referred both to this comparison and to the jujube's reputed property of cooling and soothing the ardor (of love):

Āe-rā hawā-ye lab-at kun-e man ba-juš ārad;

Agar nešāndan-e kun az kawāšš-e 'onnab ast?

(If abating [the ardor of] blood is one of 'onnab's virtues, why [the mere] yearning for thy lip brings my blood to the boil?; Dehḵodā, s.v. 'onnāb).

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/jujube>