

WHICH FOOD IS BENEFICIAL FOR WHOM? DIETOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN 19TH-CENTURY BUKHARA CUISINE (BASED ON VOZEH’S WORK)

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Abstract: This article examines dietological perspectives formed within the gastronomic culture of nineteenth-century Bukhara, drawing on the work of Qori Rahmatulloh Vozeh, *Koni lazzat va xoni ne’mat*. The primary objective of the study is to identify the relationship between food preparation methods, their medicinal properties, and their effects on the human body as described in this source. The research employs historical-source analysis, comparative methods, and qualitative interpretation. The findings suggest that culinary practices in nineteenth-century Bukhara were not limited to nourishment alone but were closely connected with maintaining health and physical balance. In particular, the text reflects an individualized approach to nutrition, where different foods are recommended based on specific bodily conditions. Overall, the study demonstrates a meaningful continuity between historical gastronomic knowledge and modern dietological principles, highlighting the relevance of traditional culinary wisdom in contemporary health discourse.

Keywords: gastronomy, dietology, Bukhara, nineteenth century, Vozeh, *Koni lazzat va xoni ne’mat*, medicinal foods, traditional medicine, food culture

In the cultural life of Central Asia during the nineteenth century, food was regarded not merely as a means of daily sustenance, but also as an essential factor in maintaining human health. In particular, a number of works produced within the scholarly milieu of Bukhara contain valuable information on the composition of foods, their methods of preparation, and their effects on the human body. Among such sources are *Qarabadin-i Qodiriy*, *Zakhira-yi Khwarazmshahi*, *Tuhfat al-Mu’minin*, *Amal al-Salihin*, *Qarabadin-i Kabir*, *Matla’ al-‘Ulum*, *Iksir-i A’zam*, *Makhzan al-Adwiya*, *Taryaq-i Imami*, *Ganj-i Shoiqon*, and *Lazzat al-Visol*, among others.

In 1434, Abu Ishaq Hallaj At’ima’i Shirazi compiled a divan entitled *Kanz al-Ishtiha*, in which various dishes were described. However, the work of Qori Rahmatulloh Vozeh stands out as particularly valuable, as it provides a much more detailed account of the characteristics of foods, their ingredients, and their methods of preparation. Notably, this work was dedicated by the author to the Emir of Bukhara, Muzaffar Khan [1].

This work represents a unique source that systematized gastronomic knowledge in its time. It not only describes the methods of preparing various dishes, sweets, preserves, and pickled foods, but also outlines their medicinal properties. For this reason, the work can be evaluated not merely as a culinary manual, but also as a dietological and medical source.

In general, comprehensive gastronomic works of such breadth and detail as that of Qori Rahmatulloh Vozeh are extremely rare. Moreover, the text reflects the lifestyle and the level of material culture of the society in which it was created. Given that it also provides information on the therapeutic qualities of food, the work holds considerable significance from a medical perspective.

The work was written by Qori Rahmatulloh Vozeh in 1880-1881. It consists of two volumes and is structured into an introduction, two main sections, and a conclusion. The introduction and the first section are contained in the first volume, while the second section and the conclusion are presented in the second volume. In the introductory section of the work, information is provided on 18 types [2] of bread. The first main section discusses 227-228 [3] varieties of cooked dishes, while the second section is devoted to 169 types [4] of halva. The concluding part is further divided into

several chapters: the first chapter presents 23 types of salads, and the second describes 33 varieties of preserves.

The significance of the work lies in the fact that the author systematically collected culinary knowledge - essentially recipes - and refined them based on his own experience and expertise. As a result, the material is presented in a more structured and comprehensive manner.

In addition to documenting the culinary practices of Central Asian peoples, the work also includes descriptions of dishes and cooking traditions from other cultures, including Indian, Arab, and even Chinese cuisines [3]. This demonstrates the wide geographical scope of the author’s knowledge and highlights the intercultural character of the gastronomic traditions reflected in the text.

One of the most significant features of Qori Rahmatulloh Vozeh’s work is that it not only explains how dishes are prepared, but also describes their medicinal properties and their benefits for the human body. For example, alongside the methods for preparing cherry preserve, the author also elaborates on its health-related advantages.

The following excerpt clearly illustrates Vozeh’s approach to interpreting food as a medically functional entity:

«Мураббои олуча... галабан сафро (ро) биншонад ва ташнагиرو сокин гардонад. Бигиранд олучаи султони ҳар қадар ки хоҳад ва дар дег санғй кунанд ва ду-се чўш дода фуруд гиранд, дигарбора бо асал ё канде шакар табх (қиём) намоянд [4]» (Cherry preserve... reduces the dominance of bile and alleviates thirst. Take as much of the ‘sultani’ cherry as desired, place it in a stone pot, and boil it two or three times; then remove it from the heat and cook it again with honey, candy sugar, or sugar until it reaches a thick consistency)

An analysis of this passage demonstrates that Qori Rahmatulloh Vozeh regarded food not merely as a source of nourishment, but as a means of regulating balance within the human body. The expression “reduces the dominance of bile” reflects the conceptual framework of classical Eastern medicine, particularly the humoral theory, which emphasizes the equilibrium of bodily fluids and temperaments. Within this system, an excess of bile is associated with an increase in “hot and dry” conditions; therefore, cherry preserve is characterized as a product with cooling and moisturizing effects. The phrase “quenches thirst” further highlights its hydrating and symptom-relieving properties. In this respect, Vozeh’s perspective reveals clear elements of preventive dietotherapy.

The technological aspect of the recipe is equally significant from a scientific standpoint. The text recommends the use of a stone pot (*degi sangi*), which ensures even heat distribution, minimizes chemical interaction with the food, and helps preserve its natural flavor as well as its bioactive components. The instruction to boil the mixture two or three times serves to reduce undesirable microflora and to soften the fruit’s structure, thereby facilitating the subsequent osmotic integration with honey or sugar.

Finally, the process of cooking the mixture “until it thickens” reduces water activity, prolongs shelf life, and increases concentration, thereby enhancing its functional efficacy. Thus, the passage demonstrates that in Vozeh’s work, the pharmacodynamic description of food (such as reducing bile and relieving thirst), the technological procedures (boiling stages and choice of utensils), and methods of preservation and optimization of biological value are presented in an integrated manner. This allows *Koni lazzat va xoni ne’mat* to be regarded not only as a gastronomic text, but also as a dietological and practical medical guide.

In Vozeh’s work, more than ten dishes based on meat and legumes are mentioned, each characterized by specific dietological properties. These types of dishes are particularly recommended for individuals suffering from gastrointestinal disorders, as well as for the elderly. Such an approach

indicates that the author viewed food not merely as a source of energy, but as a means of restoring and maintaining bodily health.

The prominence of legumes alongside meat as key ingredients is not accidental. Legumes are known for their digestibility, nutritional value, and their ability to strengthen the body. When combined with meat, they form a balanced nutritional composition that is especially beneficial for weakened organisms, providing restorative effects. This observation suggests that Vozech’s views closely align with principles of practical dietology.

However, some of these dishes are gradually falling into obscurity today due to their infrequent preparation and declining presence in everyday diets. This reflects the gradual loss of an important part of historical gastronomic heritage. In this context, Vozech’s work serves not only as a historical source but also as a valuable scientific foundation for the revival of forgotten traditional dishes.

Notably, the fact that separate chapters are devoted to dishes such as *khalisa* and *kichiri* [3] indicates their widespread popularity and common consumption during that period. These dishes were not limited to the Bukhara region but were also well known among Iranian peoples, including Tajiks, as well as among Uzbeks and Indians. This suggests that such dishes emerged through intercultural gastronomic interactions and that their wide geographical distribution reflects significant processes of cultural and culinary exchange.

Thus, Vozech’s discussion of meat- and legume-based dishes demonstrates that nineteenth-century Bukhara cuisine incorporated concepts of healthy nutrition, restorative foods, and dietological approaches. This further enhances the significance of his work not only from a gastronomic perspective but also in terms of its medical and cultural value.

This work by Qori Rahmatulloh Vozech has made a significant and lasting contribution to the development of culinary traditions among the peoples of Central Asia and to the broader history of world gastronomy [1]. Of particular importance is the fact that the author provides detailed descriptions of the medicinal properties of foods, their compositional characteristics, and their methods of preparation. As an illustration, several types of food can be highlighted based on Vozech’s explanations and descriptions.

In conclusion, *Koni lazzat va xoni ne’mat* represents an important example of nineteenth-century Bukhara’s gastronomic thought. In this work, food is interpreted not merely as sustenance but as a means of preserving human health. This demonstrates that dietological perspectives had already taken shape during that period. The text stands at the intersection of gastronomy, medicine, and culture, making it a unique scholarly source that retains its relevance even today.

Moreover, the work can still be used as a practical reference in contemporary contexts. It also holds considerable ethnographic value, offering insights into the lifestyle and everyday practices of the population of Bukhara in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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