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[CITATION]

Doğan, M. (2022). Evaluation of Gastronomy Elements in Babur-name, Memoir of Ghazi Zahīr ud-Dīn Muhammad Babur Shah (1483-1530). [Extensive Summary], *ART/icle: Art and Design Journal*, *2*(2), 130-157.

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Evaluation of Gastronomy Elements in Babur-name, Memoir of Ghazi Zahīr ud-Dīn Muhammad Babur Shah (1483-1530)

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Introduction

Babur-name is an important memoir by Gazi Muhammed Zahireddin Babur Shah (Babur). Babur was born in 1483 in today's Uzbekistan and founded the Babur State, which ruled India for 330 years. His father was Timur's grandson Omar Sheikh Mirza, and his mother was the daughter of Genghis Khan's grandson Yunus Khan. Babur was known for his courage from childhood and earned the nickname "Babur.".

In addition to his statesmanship, commandership, and politics, Babur is also known as a poet, writer, historian, traveler, and religious scholar. American historian Peter Benjamin Golden compares Babur to Caesar and describes him as a superior figure. Babur created cultural works in India, organized literary gatherings, and showed interest in art. Babur, who died in Agra in 1530, was later transferred to Kabul.

The Babur-name is an autobiographical work in which Babur recounts his life and the events he experienced. The work covers the period from 1494, when Babur ascended to the throne at the age of 12, to one year before his death. It was written in Chagatai Turkish and includes many subjects such as history, art, culture, geography, and gastronomy. The work consists of three sections: the Ferghana, Kabul, and India periods. Written in sincere and objective language, Babur-name vividly conveys Babur's observations.

Babur-name has been translated into various languages and is a scientifically important work. It was first translated into Persian in 1589 and has been translated into many languages. The most important copy is the Haydarabat copy translated into English by Annette Susannah Beveridge. The work was

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translated into Turkish by Reşit Rahmeti Arat. This study aims to determine and evaluate the gastronomy elements in the work Babur-nâme, which includes the memories of Gazi Muhammed Zahireddin Babur Shah, the founder of the Mughal State and an important figure in history and sheds light on history.

Conceptual Framework

Babur-nâme and Gastronomy

Babur's life is divided into three phases, and Babur-nâme is evaluated according to these three sections: Ferghana (present-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), Kabul (present-day Afghanistan), and India (present-day Northern India). Different gastronomic elements are prominent in each section. Fruits and kebabs are prominent in Ferghana, lamb and bread in Kabul, and sugar and rice in India. Babur adopted and blended the culinary culture of the lands he conquered. Food and drinks at events such as celebrations and weddings are described in detail in Babur-nâme. Babur's observations and memories of gastronomy vary according to geographical and cultural elements in each section of the book. While Babur speaks highly of the fruits and kebabs of Ferghana, he states that products such as sugar and rice entered the cuisine of India. Babur's work describes Kabul as a trade center where sugar and spices came from India and that grapes and honey were of high quality in Kabul. In his memoirs from India, Babur also shares his negative experiences with Indian food. Babur's interest in hunting and his hunting memories also hold an important place.

Method

This study employed qualitative research methods, with the document scanning method (document review) as the primary data collection tool. To evaluate the data, content analysis was applied. The document scanning method involves the systematic process of examining, recording, and evaluating texts for a specific purpose. One of the key advantages of this method is its high reliability, as the texts remain unchanged during the data collection process. Content analysis, on the other hand, is a method for making systematic, repeatable inferences from texts.

To ensure the study's reliability, the content analysis findings were reviewed by four different researchers, all experts in gastronomy, and consistent conclusions were drawn. The study was based on the first edition of *Babür-nâme*, translated into modern Turkish by Reşit Rahmeti Arat and published by the National Education Printing House in 1970. During the analysis of the work's gastronomy elements, the 2019 A to Z Gastronomy Dictionary of the Turkish Language Association (TDK) and the 2020 work by Sarıışık et al. were also consulted.

Content analysis was applied to the gastronomy elements identified through document scanning, and both main and sub-themes were developed based on the theoretical and conceptual framework. These elements were categorized and listed alphabetically, with their frequencies and percentages calculated using SPSS 22. The selected gastronomy elements were presented along with their corresponding passages from the work, without any corrections to spelling or grammar. For any unclear terms, the Khwarezm Altınordu Turkish Dictionary and the Chagatai Turkish Dictionary were referenced. Finally, the findings were interpreted in the context of gastronomy, and relevant suggestions were provided.

Results

In this study, a document review of *Babur-nâme* was conducted, identifying a total of 90 distinct gastronomic elements. Content analysis was then applied to these elements, organizing them into three main themes: (1) elements related to animal foods, (2) elements related to plant foods, and (3) elements related to cuisine. A total of 17 animal food-related elements, 31 plant food-related elements, and 42

cuisine-related elements were identified. Each theme was evaluated separately, and the frequencies and percentages of these elements were calculated.

Gastronomic Elements Related to Animal Foods

The animal foods mentioned in *Babur-nâme* were examined in terms of gastronomic elements. A total of 17 such elements were identified, and their frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 1. Notably, 72% of the elements related to hunting and game animals. This finding offers valuable insights into the food culture of Babur's time and highlights the importance of hunting in the Central Asian Turkish nomadic culture.

The text details hunting activities involving game animals such as quail, pheasant, deer, and duck. Babur vividly recounts his hunting experiences and the hunting practices of the period. In addition to land-based hunting, fishing is also prominently featured in the memoirs, with detailed descriptions of fishing techniques.

The second section of *Babur-nâme* discusses camel meat, which was unfamiliar to the Turks, and provides insights into fishing activities in Afghanistan. The third section covers animal foods in India, including peacock meat and the Gini ox. Babur offers detailed accounts of these foods, sharing his personal observations and experiences.

Gastronomic Elements Related to Plant Foods

In examining plant foods in *Babur-nâme*, 31 elements were identified, which are listed in Table 2 with their frequencies and percentages. The plant foods highlighted in Babur's memoirs reflect the geographical and climatic differences of the regions of Ferghana, Kabul, and India. Fruits are frequently mentioned, while vegetables are rarely noted, likely due to the meat-based food culture influenced by nomadic traditions.

Born in the Ferghana region, Babur praises the grains and fruits grown there. He particularly lauds the melons and grapes of Andijan, as well as the pomegranates and plums of Merginan. He describes the melons of Ferghana as possessing an unparalleled flavor.

After settling in Northern India, Babur expresses his disappointment with the melons of India, longing for those of Ferghana. He also fondly remembers the fruits of Samarkand, such as grapes and apples, and praises the fruits of Bukhara, especially melons and plums.

In Kabul, Babur highlights the abundance of citrus fruits and other local fruits, noting the diversity of plant products grown there due to its varied climate. He also planted cherry saplings in Kabul.

Babur provides detailed accounts of mangoes, bananas, and other local fruits in India. He explains that mangoes are harvested when raw and ripen after picking and that mangoes make excellent jam. He also discusses the distinctive characteristics of banana tree leaves and fruit. Other native fruits of India mentioned include Indian gooseberry, kirnî, câmen, kemrek, kedhi, bedhel, and bir.

Babur's rich descriptions of plant foods in his memoirs reflect the geographical, climatic, and cultural nuances of the time and offer a valuable source of information on the diverse plant products cultivated in the various regions he encountered.

Gastronomy Elements Related to Cuisine

Babur-nâme contains numerous gastronomic elements related to culinary culture, which reflect significant traces of the social and cultural structure of the period. Through descriptions of drinking assemblies, banquets, food types, and table manners, the text offers valuable insights into Babur's lifestyle, political relations, and cultural preferences.

The descriptions of drinks and drinking assemblies in Babur-nâme provide a broad perspective on the drinking habits of the elite class during that time. These assemblies were not only organized for entertainment but also served diplomatic and political purposes, where decisions were made and bureaucratic affairs discussed. Babur's relationship with alcohol evolved over time; he drank in his youth but ceased drinking in his later years. The organization of such assemblies reflects the drinking culture within the social life of the period and highlights the interactions that took place.

Food culture holds an important place in Babur-nâme. Babur noted that meals were generally served in accordance with protocol and were often combined with gatherings such as drinking parties. The variety and richness of the foods indicate the advanced food culture of the period. Furthermore, it is evident that the ingredients and cooking methods used in meals varied depending on geography. For instance, Babur's shift toward consuming more vegetables after moving from Samarkand to India symbolizes a significant change in food culture. The meals served at banquets, the presentation of dishes, and table manners all serve as reflections of the social hierarchy of the time.

Other gastronomic elements related to cuisine in Babur-nâme include various types of meals from that era. In addition to dishes such as bread, kebabs, boza, kalye, wheat paste, and halva, the period's culinary diversity also featured a variety of drinks and cold appetizers. Some dishes, especially the "Yılkıran meal," provide intriguing insights into the eating and drinking habits of the time.

Although the Yılkıran meal is a special dish mentioned in Babur-nâme, there is some debate about its exact nature. Beveridge's translation attempts to explain the etymological meaning of the term "yılkıran," but it may not be entirely accurate in the cultural and linguistic context. In particular, the suggestion that "yılkıran" etymologically means something like "Atlıkaran-Elden Gelen" may not be the most suitable explanation.

In Chagatai Turkish, the word "yılkıran" is associated with an epidemic or pandemic. This suggests that the Yılkıran meal was a celebratory dish offered during times when the people were freed from epidemics. The Yılkıran meal is not the name of a specific dish but rather a traditional meal that marked the days of liberation following epidemics.

Babur's memoirs suggest that the Yılkıran meal was celebrated on specific days each year in the fall. This indicates that meals, in a historical and cultural context, provide important insights into the social and psychological structure of societies, extending beyond their biological necessity. The tradition of celebrating such events with food highlights that food culture is not just a physical necessity but also a symbol of unity, solidarity, and healing.

Thus, while the Yılkıran meal is technically a dish, it carries a deeper cultural and social significance. The various interpretations of its etymology and cultural meaning illustrate how meals can be understood differently across historical contexts and how they evolve across cultures.

The Babur-nâme is a rich source that offers insights not only into the life of a ruler but also into the gastronomic, social, and cultural fabric of the period. Elements like food, drink, and table manners reveal

much about Babur's relationships with his society, his diplomatic strategies, and the daily life of the time.

Conclusion

The history of gastronomy has been shaped by the nutritional needs of humans, while the food itself is influenced by dynamic biological, social, cultural, religious, political, and economic factors. For this reason, many elements have impacted the culture and history of food throughout time, ranging from individual tastes to broader cultural influences. In this context, the *Baburname* stands out as an important document in the history of gastronomy, warranting careful examination.

Examining food culture, or gastronomic elements, through the memoirs of Babur—who, with the empire he founded, left a lasting influence on a vast geographical area for three centuries—holds significant value, particularly in literary terms. In addition to the food culture Babur brought from Central Asia, his interactions with Afghan and Indian food cultures, influenced by Iranian cuisine, resulted in the creation of a new and rich culinary tradition. A closer look at the cuisine described in Babur's memoirs, from both social and cultural perspectives, reveals an evolution from a nomadic, freer food culture to a more urbanized and Iranian-influenced food culture. The gastronomic elements identified through a content analysis of the *Baburname* offer valuable insights into how food culture was shaped socially, culturally, and politically.

Several key points can be summarized:

1. **Evolution of Food Culture**: Babur's life in different geographies played a crucial role in the evolution of his food culture. The shift from a nomadic to a more urban, culinary approach highlights that food is not merely a biological need but also an integral part of cultural identity.

2. **Diversity of Gastronomic Elements**: The identification of 90 different gastronomic elements in Babur's memoirs reflects the richness of his food culture. From animal foods to plant-based ingredients, from beverages to treats, these elements provide significant insight into the food culture of the period.

3. **Gastrodiplomacy**: The way banquets and drinking events were shaped by the political and bureaucratic climate of the time sheds light on the role of gastronomy as a means of communication. This offers a historical perspective on the concept of gastrodiplomacy.

In conclusion, a thorough examination of the gastronomic elements in the *Baburname* reveals that food should not only be considered a historical document but also an essential source for understanding the social and political structures of the period. Such analyses provide a deeper understanding of gastronomic history and cultural studies, highlighting the pivotal role of food culture in inter-societal interactions.

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