



ARTICLE

## Spread of bounties: culinary manuals and knowledge in Mughal South Asia

Neha Vermani 

Newton International Fellow, Department of History, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom

Email: [n.vermani@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:n.vermani@sheffield.ac.uk)

### Abstract

This article identifies and examines Persian-language culinary manuals that were produced in South Asia between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. In doing so, it centres three empirical loci: the definition of food as it was conceptualised during the period under study; the impetus for the textualisation and standardisation of culinary knowledge; and core principles that undergird the cuisine of the Mughal elite. Engaging with these themes, the article privileges the intersection between the discourses on body, food, and ethical self-fashioning as the key site of analysis.

**Keywords:** Food history; early modern South Asia; Mughal cookbooks; Mughal cuisine

### Setting the spread: introduction

This article will offer an analytical account of Mughal culinary knowledge by examining Persian-language cookbooks that were produced for the elite (*umarā'*; singular: *amīr*) from the beginning of Akbar's reign in mid-sixteenth century to the end of Alamgir Aurangzeb's reign in the early eighteenth century. Here, the term 'elite' signifies male officers in the Mughal imperial service who were granted a *mansab* rank of a thousand or more *zāt* (personal rank), including the emperor.<sup>1</sup> Piecing together this culinary history requires us to define the category of food as it was articulated during the period and wade through the archive of Persian-language cookbooks, which range from a single to several manuscript copies, and includes standalone cookbooks, culinary manuals in larger anthologies as well as food recipe sections in administrative, domestic, and medical manuals. The existence of this dense archive presents a stark contrast to the simplistic contention that, when compared to early modern Europe, China, and the Middle East, the textualisation of the culinary realm was poorly developed in India.<sup>2</sup> Engaging systematically with this vast collection of material focused on the preparation of food, I will address the questions of why, for whom, and how these texts were compiled. Cookbooks of the Mughal elite are voluminous repositories of different recipes for a variety of food dishes, ranging from breads and dressed rice, lentils, meats, eggs, and vegetable preparations to desserts, pickles, and much more. Instead of detailing the Hindustani

<sup>1</sup> Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (New Delhi, 1970), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Arjun Appadurai, 'How to make a national cuisine: cookbooks in contemporary India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30.1 (1988), p. 5.

and Timurid roots and routes of these food dishes, I will analyse the contents of different types of recipes to reflect on the characteristic features and principles that undergirded the cuisine of the Mughal elite.<sup>3</sup>

This approach marks a departure from the interventions offered by Divya Narayanan on Mughal culinary culture. Drawing on European critiques of structuralism and adopting a *longue durée* approach to study a range of culinary manuals produced in South Asia from the late-fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, Narayanan articulates Mughal cuisine as an umbrella category or a term of ‘brevity’ for the ‘more accurate... cuisine represented by the corpus of Indo-Persian texts’.<sup>4</sup> According to her, Mughal cuisine did not constitute a specific cultural entity as it failed to represent the elite who belonged to diverse social, ethnic, and religious persuasions.<sup>5</sup> However, there exists a vast scholarship on how symbols and rituals, including those centred on the exchange of food, as well as *akhlāqī* values bound Mughal elites from diverse backgrounds into a corporate identity of imperial servants and transformed court society into an affective community.<sup>6</sup> I contend that Mughal elite cuisine was a culinary expression of this imperial identity and was entrenched in the demands of self-refinement it placed on the emperors and other members of the nobility. To draw out this argument, I engage with the intersecting discourses of *akhlāq* (ethics) and *yūnānī tibb* (Greco-Arabic medicine/science of the body) that informed the intellectual landscape of the Mughal elite. The significance of the former, particularly Nasir ul-Din Tusi’s thirteenth-century text, *Akhlāq-i Nāsirī*, as a didactic tool that shaped Mughal political philosophy and notions of gender and sexuality has been extensively highlighted in existing works.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the overlap between *akhlāq* and *yūnānī* has been explored in the contexts of Mughal political culture as well as Deccani courtly practices.<sup>8</sup> Building on this rich scholarship, the article pivots the discussion to *akhlāqī-yūnānī* expositions on food and its role as a conduit for fashioning a civilised self and a healthy body. The article will examine why this knowledge encouraged the Mughal elite to be educated patrons or connoisseurs who were invested in the consumption and, concomitantly, the preparation of food dishes that adhered to certain principles and exhibited specific gustatory, olfactory, haptic, and ocular characteristics. I will demonstrate how these concerns informed the food recipes that were executed in the kitchen-workshops (*kārkhāna-i*

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion on the evolution of cuisine as a category of analysis, see Jeffrey M. Pilcher, ‘Cultural histories of food’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, (ed.) Jeffrey M. Pilcher (Oxford, 2012), pp. 1–24. I discuss the Hindustani and Timurid provenance of Mughal elite cuisine in my doctoral thesis: see Neha Vermani, ‘From the Court to the Kitchens: Food Practices of the Mughal Elites’, (unpublished PhD dissertation, Royal Holloway University of London, 2019), pp. 228–236.

<sup>4</sup> Divya Narayanan, ‘What was Mughal cuisine? Defining and analyzing a culinary culture’, *Interdisziplinäre Zeitschrift Südasiensforschung* 1 (2016), pp. 3–4. Also see Divya Narayanan, ‘Cultures of Food and Gastronomy in Mughal and post-Mughal India’, (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Heidelberg, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Narayanan, ‘What was Mughal cuisine?’, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> J. F. Richards, ‘The formulation of imperial authority under Akbar and Jahangir’, in *The Mughal State: 1526–1750*, (eds) Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Delhi, 1998), pp. 126–167; Gavin R. G. Hambly, ‘The emperor’s clothes: robing and “robes of honour” in Mughal India’, in *Robes of Honour: Khil’at in Pre-colonial and Colonial India*, (ed.) Stewart Gordon (New Delhi, 2003), pp. 31–49; Ali Anooshahr, ‘Letter-writing and emotional communities in early Mughal India: a note on the Badāyī’ al-Inshā’, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 44 (2021), pp. 1–15.

<sup>7</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India, 1200–1800* (Chicago, 2004); Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (California, 2015); Rosalind O’Hanlon, ‘Kingdom, household, and body. History, gender, and imperial service under Akbar’, *Modern Asian Studies* 41.5 (2007), pp. 889–923.

<sup>8</sup> Seema Alavi, *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Medical Tradition, 1600–1900* (Hampshire, 2008), pp. 27–28, 33; Emma J. Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates: Living Well in the Persian Cosmopolis* (Cambridge, 2019).

*matbakh*) and consumed on the *khwāns* (cloth spreads) of the Mughal elite on a daily basis. In doing so, the article serves up a comprehensive spread of the discursive, material-ephemeral, and sensory aspects of gastronomic experiences that animated the lives of the Mughal elite.

### First course: food and connoisseurship

Discourse on food is a key feature of the ancient Greco-Arabic *yūnānī tibb*, which was practised across the Islamic world by the thirteenth century and continues to be a living tradition in many parts of the globe, including South Asia.<sup>9</sup> *Yūnānī* conceptualises the human body in terms of four humours, each identified with a natural element, a pair of qualities, and a specific temperament or *mizāj*, as shown in Table 1. The presence of these humours in equitable proportions is perceived to indicate a balanced and healthy temperamental state, with attributes of intellectual vigour and equilibrium between the emotions of anger-calmness, courage-timidity, pride-humility, and violence-sobriety. An excess of any humour in the body is believed to cause a diseased state of temperamental imbalance, resulting in dullness of mind, anger, greed, and lethargy. Rooted in the goals of the preservation and restoration of health, which could be achieved through the consumption of appropriate aliments (*aghziyat*; singular: *ghizā'*), *yūnānī* is primarily exemplified by the works of Galenus (Galen), Al-Rāzī (Rhazes), and Ibn Sīnā's (Avicenna) enormously influential *Al-Qānūn fī'l-tibb* (The Canon of Medicine).<sup>10</sup>

For the benefit of elite non-specialist readers, Mughal physicians compiled and translated this *yūnānī* scholarship from Arabic to Persian with frequent recourse to Hindustani vocabulary. Some of these texts conveyed the basics of *tibb* in a manner that was easy to memorise and simple to understand. For instance, *Fawā'id al-insān*, a versified *materia-medica* written in 1590 by Akbar's court physician Ain al-Mulk Shirāzī, follows the *muwashshah* or *taushih* (single acrostic) technique, whereby adding the first letter of each distich gives the name of the aliment being described.<sup>11</sup> This work, in Shirāzī's words, 'captures the specificities, qualities, essence and benefits of what is usually and habitually consumed by the noble, illustrious and erudite people in Iran, Turan, and Hindustan'. Highlighting the pedagogical nature of the text, he noted:

As each aliment is best known among the people by two names, one in Arabic and the other in Persian, it was necessary that names in these languages appear in the explanation. In case the name of an aliment in one of the two languages is unknown to someone, they can benefit from the name in the other language. Except, for example, the words *pān* and *kelā*, both of which are Hindustani words. In Arabic, *pān* is called *tanbūl* or *tambūl*, and *kelā* is called *mūz* or *talh*, and in Persian they have gained currency by their Arabic and Hindustani names.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Yūnānī* has a long history of interaction with Ayurvedic medicine. See Alavi, *Loss and Healing*, pp. 20–27; Fabrizio Speziale, 'The circulation of Ayurvedic knowledge in Indo-Persian medical literature', *HAL open science* (2009), pp. 1–6, and Fabrizio Speziale, 'A fourteenth century revision of the Avicennian and Ayurvedic humoral pathology: the hybrid model by Šihāb al-Dīn Nāgawrī', *Oriens* 42 (2014), pp. 514–532.

<sup>10</sup> The basics of *yūnānī tibb* mentioned here are noted in major works on Islamic medicine. See Syed Zillur Rahman, 'Unani medicine in India', in *Medicine and Life Sciences in India*, (ed.) B. V. Subbarayappa (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 306–310; Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Cairo, 2007), pp. 41–44. Also see Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Qānūn fī'l-tibb. Book 1*, (ed.) Hakim Abdul Hameed (New Delhi, 1982), p. 194.

<sup>11</sup> Fida'i 'Ain al-Mulk Shirāzī, *Fawā'id al-insān* (Cambridge, University Library), MS. Or.683, f.2a.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 1b–2a.

**Table 1.** Humours and their temperamental properties.

Humours	Elements	Qualities		Temperament/ properties
Yellow bile	Fire	Hot	Dry	Choleric or bilious ( <i>sufrāʾī</i> )
Humoral blood	Air	Hot	Moist	Sanguine ( <i>dami</i> )
Black bile	Earth	Cold	Dry	Melancholic ( <i>saudāʾī</i> )
Phlegm	Water	Cold	Moist	Phlegmatic ( <i>balghamī</i> )

Each aliment recorded in the *Fawāʾid* was associated with a pair of humoral qualities and the congruent temperamental property, as noted in Table 1. For instance, spinach is attributed cold-moist or phlegmatic properties, ginger and cloves are ascribed hot-dry or bilious characteristics, lemon is noted to be cold-dry or melancholic, and a banana is regarded as hot-moist or sanguine.<sup>13</sup> These and other such single or simple (*mufrad*) aliments, ranging from vegetal, animal, and mineral produce, could be combined in different quantities to yield compound (*murakkab*) aliments with distinct humoral properties. Depending on their composition, on being consumed, these aliments were believed to act in four ways. They functioned as poisons (*samm*) by causing irreparable damage to the body; as medicines (*adwiya*, singular: *dawā*) and medicinal food (*ghizāʾ-i dawāʾi* and *dawā-i ghizāʾ*) by curing the temperamental imbalance of a diseased body; and as food (*ghizāʾ-i mutlaq*, *atʾima*; singular: *taʾām*, and *maʾkūlāt*, singular: *maʾkūl*) by not producing any harm or undesirable changes in the body. Medicine and medical food were designed as imbalanced humoral compounds that worked according to the principle of contraries; that is, cold-moist aliments were administered to fix disruption caused by a predominance of hot-dry humour and so on. Their consumption was prescribed in specific quantities for a stipulated period of time with an overdose harbouring the risk of aggravating the illness by reversing the healing benefits. Food, on the contrary, was envisaged as a humorally equitable compound aliment that, upon digestion, neither cured nor caused disease. Meant for everyday consumption, it was designed to prevent the onslaught of diseases by providing nutrition to the body and maintaining its temperamental health.<sup>14</sup>

This definition of food is reinforced in *ʾIlājāt -i Dārā Shukūhī* (*ʾIlājāt* henceforth), a seventeenth-century multi-volume medical encyclopedia authored by Shah Jahan's court physician Nur al-Din Shirazi for the patron Prince Dara Shikoh. *ʾIlājāt* is a treasure-trove that contains condensed information on all the topics covered by the *yūnānī tibb*, and most of these discussions are followed by capsules of ayurvedic knowledge as professed by the physicians of Hindustan (*atibbā i-Hind*).<sup>15</sup> This text conceptualises *atʾima* as a compound aliment that is cooked in the *matbakh* and consumed to satiate hunger and maintain health.<sup>16</sup> Mentioning its equivalent Hindustani terms—*bhojan* with the sub-category *pakwān* for fried food and sweetmeats—*ʾIlājāt* teaches readers how to pronounce these and other related words by breaking them down phonetically in the Persian

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 8a, 36b, 55b, 61a, 90a.

<sup>14</sup> Shirazi, *Fawāʾid al-Insān*, ff. 3b–5b. Also see Ibn Sina, *Al-Qānūn. Book 1*, pp. 161–164; Rahman, 'Unani medicine in India', p. 314; Narayanan, 'Cultures of food', pp. 141–142.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed discussion of the text, see Fabrizio Speziale, 'The encounter of medical traditions in Nūr al-Dīn Širāzī's *ʾIlājāt-i Dārā Šikohī*', *eJournal of Indian Medicine* 3 (2010), pp. 53–67.

<sup>16</sup> Nur al-Din al-Shirazi, *ʾIlājāt-i Dārā Shikūhī*, vol. 2 (London, Royal Asiatic Society), MS. Codrington/Reade no. 196, f. 106b.

language.<sup>17</sup> This didactic strain is further seen in the inclusion of colour diagrams in the section on aliments to allow readers to identify the plants and animals being described.

The learner-friendly renditions offered by *Fawā'id*, *'Ilājāt*, and other Mughal *yūnānī* texts about aliments, temperament, and bodily humours aligned with the demands of ethical fashioning put forth by the bio-ethical *akhlāqī* discourse.<sup>18</sup> Enshrining the science of soul or self (*'ilm-i nafs*), *akhlāq* laid out a programme for elite men to become civilised or complete beings (*insānī yi tāmm-i mutlaq*).<sup>19</sup> It presented a homologous scheme of empire-household-man wherein the health or success of the former two realms was contingent on a man's ability to embody the virtue of equilibrium (*'itidāl*).<sup>20</sup> This overlap between the *akhlāqī* and *yūnānī* ideal of balance derived from the understanding that the non-corporeal self uses the physical body as a tool for manifesting its unhinged drives of anger, greed, and desire.<sup>21</sup> Explicitly reinforcing the connection between ethical and temperamental self-fashioning, Tusi stated that the science of the soul comprised limited knowledge unless it was supported by the science of the human body.<sup>22</sup> He exhorted disciplining the unruly urges of the self and distilling them into a state of temperamental balance. This required men to exercise rationality (*'aql*) and cultivate wisdom (*hikmat*) by acquiring practical intelligence (*'aql-i 'amali*) about the factors that conditioned the body's humoral disposition.<sup>23</sup> *Akhlāq* also foregrounded the need to display this civilised self through virtuous outward behaviour or *ādāb*.<sup>24</sup> Concomitantly, it mandated awareness about and the practice of consuming food that would adorn the self and provide the body with temperamental health. These concerns were believed to enable a mindful quest for pleasure which, unlike irrational decadence, was guided by intellect and rooted in the concern for maintaining a balanced self. By pleasing and not diseasing the body, ethical pleasure was believed to facilitate a man's ability to perform imperial, domestic as well as spiritual duties.<sup>25</sup> This *akhlāq-ādāb* syntax encouraged men to be educated patrons or connoisseurs of food. Alternatively, food connoisseurship was conceived of as an intellectual and action-oriented project of ethical self-refinement and pleasure.

Elaborating on the pleasure to be derived from food, *'Ilājāt* drew attention to the aspect of taste. It equated men (*mardum*) who did not actively and intentionally seek refined taste (*zā'iqa*) in their food with irrational animals (*haiwān*) that eat to address hunger pangs but

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 149b, ff.153b–156b.

<sup>18</sup> Other examples of *yūnānī* texts that sought to educate the Mughal elite include *Risāla-i ma'kūl wa mashrūb* (Treatise on Food and Beverages) and *Hifz-i sihhat* (Preservation of Health). These short poems, of 46 and 42 verses, respectively, were rendered in a simple rhyming meter by their author Muhammad Yusufi Haravi, a physician-courtier active during the reigns of Babur and Humayun. During Akbar's reign, court physician Hakim Gilani wrote a commentary on Ibn Sina's *Qānūn*. Nur al-Din Shirazi produced a dedicated *Materia-medica* titled *Alfāz-ul adwīya*. This text was completed in 1628–1629 and *'Ilājāt* was composed between 1642–1647. During Alamgir's reign, physician Muhammad Akbar Shah Arzani wrote *Tibb-i Akbarī* and *Mizān-i Tibb* (Scale of Medicine). The former work imitates *'Ilājāt* in its style and content. See Muhammad Yusufi Haravi, *Risāla-i ma'kūl wa mashrūb* (Hyderabad, Salarjung Museum and Library), MS. Maj 30/4174, and *Hifz-i sihhat* (London, Wellcome Library), MS. WMS. Per. 199 (D); Anooshahr, 'Letter-writing', pp. 6–8; Walter Hakala, 'On equal terms: the equivocal origins of an early Mughal Indo-Persian vocabulary', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25 (2015), pp. 209–213; O. P. Jaggi, *Medicine in Medieval India* (Delhi, 1977), p. 154; Alavi, *Loss and Healing*, pp. 38–40.

<sup>19</sup> This was an elite-male centric discourse that excluded women and non-elites from the bounds of self-refinement. For a feminist critique of *akhlāqī* discourse, see Zahra Ayubi, *Gendered Morality: Classical Islamic Ethics of the Self, Family, and Society* (New York, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Akhlāq-i Nāsirī*, (eds) Mujtaba Minuvi and 'Ali Riza Haidari (Iran, 1976), pp. 70–71, 109.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 152–153.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58, 108–110, 152–153.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 75–76, 95–98.

lack the mental ability to curate a civilised existence.<sup>26</sup> This exposition helps contextualise Emperor Jahangir's self-portrayal as the *sāhib-i zā'iqa 'ālī* (grandmaster of taste), who could gauge even the slightest of variances between flavours. In fact, Mughal autobiographical and biographical accounts consistently highlight the theme of mindful gastronomic engagement through detailed descriptions about the patrons' preferences for the flavours as well as smells of different fruits, fish, meats, and other dishes.<sup>27</sup> Much like taste, the olfactory dimension of food also had a bearing on the search for ethical pleasure. The seventeenth-century *Mirzānāma*, a comportment manual detailing the codes of Mughal gentlemanliness, urges elites to employ *akhlāqī* sensibilities in their lifestyle choices, including being selective about the smells that were infused into and allowed to envelop their food.<sup>28</sup> Flavours and smells, as will be detailed in the third course of the article, were perceived as yielding powers that had an impact on the consumer's temperamental state. Consequently, Mughal elites were required to make informed decisions as they navigated these sensory realms. This notion, emerging from the relationship between intelligence and pleasure, is succinctly captured by the Persian word *dimāgh* that was primarily used to signify the brain but was also used in a secondary sense for the palate as well as the nose.<sup>29</sup> The motif of gustatory, olfactory, and mental sagacity mirroring one another plays out aplenty in the Mughal sources. For instance, Alamgir Aurangzeb's *wazīr* (prime minister) Jafar Khan was described as a refined man with a sublime intellect and the capacity to discern flavours and smells of food.<sup>30</sup> Baqir Najm Sani, Mirza Abu Said, Asaf Khan, and Itiqad Khan Mirza Shahpur, elite men renowned for their service to the empire during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, were commended for their bright intellect, ability to appreciate flavours, and penchant for sourcing exquisite-smelling ingredients for their kitchens.<sup>31</sup>

If the gastronomic route to civility entailed consuming food that ensured a temperamental balance and ethical pleasure, it also necessitated the preparation of dishes that would serve that goal. This involved exhibiting wisdom by organising functional kitchen workshops that employed professionals trained in the science of the body and aliments.<sup>32</sup> To implement the complicated science of designing food recipes, which required knowledge about the inherent qualities of ingredients, flavours, and smells, physicians were appointed as the superintendents of the Mughal elites' kitchen workshops. These kitchen superintendents were bestowed with the title of *Ni'mat* (blessing/delicacy/pleasure) *Khān*, or *Khāsa* (special)—an apt appellation for the officer who bore the responsibility of supervising the process of food preparation.<sup>33</sup> This would have mandated remembering quantities and combinations of ingredients specific to each recipe, an assignment that could only be accomplished by writing down recipes—either directly or by dictating them to a scribe. Consequently, the production and compilation of cookbooks can be attributed to the demands of the kitchen superintendent's job to efficiently administer the task of

<sup>26</sup> Nur al-Din al-Shirazi, *Ilājāt-i Dārā Shikūhī*, vol. 1 (London, Royal Asiatic Society), MS. Codrington/Reade no. 195, ff. 94a–b.

<sup>27</sup> See Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir, *Jahāngirnāma: Tūzuk-i Jahāngirī*, (ed.) Muhammad Hashim (Iran, 1980), pp. 67, 119, 215, 220, 239, 422, 428, 434; Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince, and Emperor*, (trans.) W. H. Thackston (Washington DC, 1996), pp. 337–347.

<sup>28</sup> Anon., *Mirzānāma* (London, British Library), M.S. Add. 16,819, ff. 91b, 92b–93a.

<sup>29</sup> Francis J. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London, 1892), p. 534.

<sup>30</sup> Nawab Samsam ud Daula Shah Nawaz *Khān, Ma'āsir -al Umarā*, vol. 1, (ed.) Maulvi Abdur Rahim (Calcutta, 1888), pp. 534–535.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 412.

<sup>32</sup> Tusi, *Akhlāq-i Nāsirī*, pp. 205–206.

<sup>33</sup> Neha Vermani, 'From the cauldrons of history: labour services at Mughal dining and kitchen spaces', *South Asian History and Culture* 13 (2022), p. 452.

cooking. That food preparation was guided by written recipes can also be gleaned from the structural organisation of *Ā'in-i Akbari*. Encapsulating details about the administration of an imperial household, it places the chapter on food recipes right after the chapter on the management of the imperial kitchen.<sup>34</sup>

As a type of *kārkhāna* record, cookbooks were repositories of standardised food recipes that could be executed consistently by the cooks who worked under the command of the kitchen-superintendent. The scientific expertise and skilled labour of these professionals resulted in dishes that were not only consumed on the elite *khwāns* but also garnered wide appreciation for the patron's kitchen establishment. For instance, the taste of the *karhī* (yoghurt and chickpea stew) prepared in the kitchen workshop of *Mīrān sadr* Jahan al-Husaini of Pihani, who served during the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir, was noted to be unrivalled in the whole of Hindustan.<sup>35</sup> The household kitchen of Mahabat Khan, a Jahangiri and Shah Jahani elite, was associated with delicacies such as *pulāv*, *khichrī*, and *khushka* prepared with a fragrant rice variety called *Kamod*.<sup>36</sup> Baqir Najm Sani's kitchen establishment was credited with the invention of a specific type of bread (*nān*) called the *Bāqir Khānī*.<sup>37</sup> Recipes for *qabūli pulāv*, *khichrī Mahabat Khānī*, and *nān Bāqir Khānī* as well as *yakhnī pulāv Shāh Jahānī*, *khichrī Bahādur Khānī*, *khichrī Dāud Khānī*, and *khandvī Shāh Jahānī*, attributed to the kitchens of these different elite patrons, appear frequently in the Mughal culinary manuals that we will now examine.<sup>38</sup>

## Second course: culinary manuals

Two whole and one fragmented Persian-language Mughal cookbooks—*Nuskha-i Shāh Jahānī* (Recipes of Shah Jahan, henceforth *Nuskha*), *Risāla-i anwā'-i ta'ām* (Treatise on Variety of Cooked Food, henceforth *Risāla*), and *Khwān-i ni'mat*, respectively—can be traced in the archives across the world. Before engaging with their specific details, I will point out their common features. To begin with, they provide the names and exact measurements of ingredients and explain the procedures for preparing different variations of each dish, including the time required to accomplish each cooking step, the utensils to be used, and the number of portions it would yield. This information is conveyed in simple, instructional language, reinforcing the role of these culinary manuals as practical and pedagogical tools for training the cooks in the elite kitchens. Each subsequent cookbook records new recipes while also reproducing recipes from the preceding manual. These transmissions highlight the circulation of culinary knowledge within the elite network and the existence of a coherent set of principles that undergirded the cuisine of the Mughal elite. Commenting on a similar trend of the borrowing of recipes in Safavid culinary manuals, Bert Fragner observes that the writing of cookbooks was, to a certain extent, structurally related to the well-known and highly respected science recognised in Islamic culture as *'ilm al-hadīth*.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Abū'l Fazl 'Allāmī, *The Ā'in-i Akbari*, vol. 1, (trans) H. Blochmann and D. C. Phillott (Calcutta, 1927), pp. 52–58.

<sup>35</sup> Shaykh Farid Bhakkari, *Dhakhirat al-Khawānīn*, vol. 2, (ed.) Syed Moinul Haq (Karachi, 1970), p. 222. *Mīr sadr* was the office of the chief of religious matters, charities, and endowments.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169–170.

<sup>37</sup> Syed Hasan Askari, 'Mirza Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Thani', in *Arshi Presentation Volume Presented to M. Imtīyaz 'Ali Khan 'Arshi*, (eds) Malik Ram and M. D. Ahmad (New Delhi, 1965), p. 115.

<sup>38</sup> Anon., *Nuskha-e Shāh Jahānī*, (ed.) Syed Muhammed Fazlulla (Madras, 1956), pp. 2–3, 41–42, 45–46, 102, 148; Anon., *Risāla-i anwā'-i ta'ām* (London, Special Collection SOAS Library), MS. 46463, ff. 3–4, 56–57, 60–61, 133–134, 157–158; Anon., *Khwān-i alwān-i ni'mat* (London, British Library), MS. Add.17959, ff. 74a–b, 87a, 106a–107b; Anon., *Khwān-i ni'mat* (Hyderabad, Salarjung Museum and Library), MS. Tab.1/1427, ff. 62, 79, 104; Anon., *Khwān-i ni'mat* (London, British Library), MS. IO Islamic 2326, ff. 102b–103b, 133a–b.

<sup>39</sup> Bert Fragner, 'Social reality and culinary fiction: the perspective of cookbooks from Iran and Central Asia', in *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, (eds) Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper (London, 1994), p. 63.

The earliest extant Mughal cookbook is associated with Shah Jahan's imperial kitchen and it exists in the form of three identical manuscript copies bearing different titles—*Nuskha*, *Dastūr-i pukhtan-i at'ima kih dar sarkār-i Bādshāh Shāh Jahān* (Manner of Cooking Food in/at the Household of Shah Jahan), and *Nān wa namak* (Bread and Salt).<sup>40</sup> Lacking information regarding the compiler's name and the date of composition, an important feature of this cookbook is the use of the *Shāh Jahānī* weights for measuring ingredients. Introduced during Shah Jahan's reign, this new system marked an increase in the weights of the units of measurements (*man*, *āsār/ser*, *dām*, *tola*, *misqāl*, *dramcha*, *māsha*, and *rattī/surkh*) from the previously instituted *Akbarī* system. However, the *man-i 'Ālamgīrī*, introduced by Alamgir, remained the same as *man-i Shāh Jahānī* in terms of absolute weight.<sup>41</sup> This explains why subsequent cookbooks do not necessarily affix appellations to the measurements that accompany the list of ingredients. *Risāla*, attributed to the household establishment of Nawab Islam Khan Bahadur, is an example of the same. The single existing manuscript of *Risāla* neither mentions the original date of composition nor does it elaborate on the identity of its patron.<sup>42</sup> However, subjecting the internal textual evidence to external corroboration offers a resolution. Reproducing recipes from *Nuskha* and adding newer ones to the repertoire, *Risāla* contains a distinct *biryānī* recipe that calls for the mixture of rice, vetch or seeds of broad beans, sorrel flowers (*gulān ashkhuwān*), and meat to be cooked with a variety of spices. Praising the unparalleled taste of this preparation, the anonymous compiler of *Risāla* credits Nawab Islam Khan's kitchen establishment for its invention.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, in a letter, Alamgir compares the flavour of *khichrī-biryānī* (fried mixture of rice and any kind of legumes) cooked in his son Prince Azam's kitchen with the delectable taste of the famous *biryānī* prepared at Islam Khan's household.<sup>44</sup> Bringing these aligning pieces of evidence together, I identify Nawab Islam Khan Bahadur as Mir Ziya ul-Din Husain Badakhshi, who was an eminent member (*wālā shāhī*) and revenue minister (*dīwān*) of Prince Aurangzeb's household establishment during Shah Jahan's reign. He earned the titles of *Himmat Khān* and *Islām Khān* for helping Aurangzeb secure victories during the war of succession against Dara Shikoh. The inscription of the mosque constructed by him in Kashmir referred to him as Nawāb Islām Khān Bahādur (brave, a synonym of *himmat*). From 1661 to 1663, he was the governor of Kashmir, a region where sorrel grows and is used abundantly in cooking. In 1663, he hosted Alamgir in Kashmir and, probably as an act of hospitality, served the *biryānī* speciality that the emperor used as a point of reference in the letter to Prince Azam.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, *Risāla* must have been compiled between 1658 to 1664, that is, the period

<sup>40</sup> Anon., *Nuskha-e Shāh Jahānī* (Chennai, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library), Ms. Farsi Makhtūtāt, p. 526; Anon., *Dastūr-i pukhtan-i at'ima kih dar sarkār-i Bādshāh Shāh Jahān* (Hyderabad, Salarjung Museum and Library), MS. Tab.4/1430; Anon., *Nān-wa namak* (London, British Library), MS. IO Islamic 3171. The Chennai and London copies were compared and rendered into an edited volume: Syed Muhammed Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha-e Shāh Jahānī* (Madras, 1956).

<sup>41</sup> 1 *man Akbarī* = 40 *ser*, 1 *ser* = 30 *dām*; 1 *dām* = 1 *tola* 8 *māsha* 7 *surkh*; 1 *tola* = 12 *māsha*; 1 *misqāl* = 1 3/7 *dramcha* or 4 *māsha*, 3 1/2 *rattī*; 1 *māsha* = 8 *rattī/surkh*. One *rattī* was the weight of a grain of Gunja seed (*Abrus Precatorius*). During Shah Jahan's reign the scale of 1 *mān* = 40 *ser* remained constant but it was based on the weight of 1 *ser* = 40 *dām*, which resulted in a proportionate increase in the weights of all the other units of measurement as well. See Fazl, *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, vol. 1, pp. 16, 37; Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707* (Aligarh, 1963), pp. 367-370.

<sup>42</sup> The original manuscript, prepared for Nawab Islam Khan's household, was copied in the late eighteenth century by scribe Basant Ram Rai for Mir Nasir Ali Khan of Mughal Punjab. The present transcript is a reproduction of this copy by the scribe Abdul Bari for Colonel D. C. Phillot who served in the Punjab infantry during the nineteenth century. Anon., *Risāla-i anwā'-i ta'ām*, MS. 46463, ff. 1, 160.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 158-159.

<sup>44</sup> 'Alamgir Aurangzeb, *Ruq'āt-i 'Ālamgīrī* (Lahore, 1878), p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> *Khān, Ma'āsir*, vol. 1, pp. 217-220.



between the war of succession and Aurangzeb's accession to the throne and the year of Islam Khan's death.

Unlike *Risāla*, multiple copies of *Khwān-i ni'mat* (Spread of Delicacy/Bounty/Pleasure/Blessing)—with *Khwān-i alwān-i ni'mat* (Spread of Variety of Delicacies/Bounties/Pleasures/Blessings) and *Alwān-i ni'mat* as alternative titles—are present in archives across India and Europe and can be attributed to Alamgir's imperial kitchen.<sup>46</sup> These include the *Khwān-i ni'mat* transcribed by Muhammad Beg in 1793–1794 and the nineteenth-century transcription made for Charles Wilkins, the founding member of the Asiatic Society. The first line of Beg's copy reads: '*Nuskha-hā-i jamī' at'ima ki Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī tālif namūda musammī ba Khwān-i ni'mat karda*' (Collection of food recipes that *Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī* compiled under the title *Khwān-i ni'mat*).<sup>47</sup> While Wilkins' copy of *Khwān* does not carry an in-text attribution, the corresponding catalogue entry describes it as a selective reproduction of *Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī's* cookbook.<sup>48</sup> *Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī* was Mirza Muhammad, a physician by training who wrote poetry under the pen name '*Ālī*'. Upon being appointed the superintendent of 'Alamgir's imperial kitchen in 1692, he was granted the title of *Ni'mat Khān*.<sup>49</sup> In fact, during his time at the office, he corresponded with Mughal officers stationed in Deccan, explaining to them the correct technique for making coffee.<sup>50</sup> This reinforces the point made previously in the article about kitchen superintendents' involvement in designing and compiling of the recipes. Perusal of the Wilkins copy of *Khwān* establishes further links with Alamgir's reign for it contains recipes for *khichrī Muhtasham Khānī* and *Ja'far Khānī* (a mixture of rice and legumes cooked in the kitchen workshops of Muhtasham Khan and Jafar Khan).<sup>51</sup> Jafar Khan, as mentioned earlier, was the *wazīr* of the empire during Alamgir's reign and a seasoned epicurean. Muhtasham Khan was also an eminent member of Alamgir's courtly elite and he served as the *faujdar* (military commander) of Langarkot, Shaharanpur, and Mewat and as the *qila'dār* (commandant of the fort) of Naldurg.<sup>52</sup>

The methodology of identifying patron-specific recipes leads us to three other manuscripts from Alamgir's reign. These include two identical copies of *Khulāṣa-i ma'kulāt wa mashrūbāt* (The Essence of Foods and Beverages), transcribed in 1765 and 1829, and a copy of *Khwān-i ni'mat* that was transcribed in 1785. The anonymous author of *Khulāṣa-i ma'kulāt wa mashrūbāt*, a self-proclaimed food enthusiast, describes his work as a *bayāz*,

<sup>46</sup> There also exist other *Khwān-i ni'mat* and *Alwān-i ni'mat* texts which were compiled from the late eighteenth to nineteenth century. These were produced in the regional kingdoms that rose to prominence post the disintegration of the Mughal empire. While reproducing recipes from Mughal cookbooks discussed in this article, these texts also contain newer recipes, including those that incorporated red chillies—a transatlantic crop introduced by the Portuguese in Deccan during the sixteenth century. However, red chillies did not enter the North Indian culinary realm until the mid-eighteenth century. I discuss these texts and the reception of red chillies in my doctoral thesis: see Vermani, 'From the Court to the Kitchens', pp. 205–208. Also see Walter Hakala, 'On equal terms: the equivocal origins of an early Mughal Indo-Persian vocabulary', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 25 (2015), p. 221; Narayanan, 'Cultures of food', pp. 122–132.

<sup>47</sup> Muhammad Beg, *Khwān-i ni'mat* (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek), MS. Orient 8<sup>o</sup> 98, f. 1b.

<sup>48</sup> Anon., *Khwān-i ni'mat*, MS. IO Islamic 2326. Narayanan dismisses these attributions as speculations based on the confusing similarity between the name of the text and the person. See Narayanan, 'Cultures of food', p. 85. However, there is no reason to assume that the text was named after *Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī*. Owing to the multiple meanings associated with *ni'mat*—blessing, delicacy, pleasure, and bounty—it was a common practice across the Islamicate ecumene to use the term in various food-related contexts.

<sup>49</sup> Vermani, 'From the cauldrons of history', p. 453.

<sup>50</sup> Nimat Khan Ali, *Ruq'āt-i Ni'mat Khan* (Hyderabad, Salarjung Museum and Library), MS. Maj. 30/ 4132, f. 140.

<sup>51</sup> Anon., *Khwān-i ni'mat*, MS. IO Islamic 2326, ff.133b–134a.

<sup>52</sup> Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan, *Ma'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī*, (ed.) Maulavi Agha Ahmad 'Ali (Calcutta, 1871), pp. 141, 153, 181, 470.

or anthology, of food recipes and consumption etiquette.<sup>53</sup> Excluding the introduction, the text is divided into two main sections. The first section is dedicated to etiquette and draws on the prophetic tradition, a theme that is beyond the purview of this article.<sup>54</sup> The second section, for which an index of recipes is provided at the beginning of the text, is a cookbook titled *Khwān-i alwān-i ni'mat*.<sup>55</sup> The scribe has shortened this title to *Alwān-i ni'mat* in the copy made in 1829 and it appears at the end of the text.<sup>56</sup> In the preface to the second section, the author specifies that he borrowed this culinary knowledge—from the order of recipes to the amount of water and heat required to prepare them—from a master of the craft of cooking.<sup>57</sup> However, the identity of the said master is not revealed. The *Khwān-i alwān-i ni'mat* cookbooks reproduced in the *Khulāṣa-i ma'kulāt wa mashrūbāt* manuscripts are the same as the *Khwān-i ni'mat* cookbook that was transcribed in 1785.<sup>58</sup> While these manuals are not attributed to a patron or compiler, their significance lies in the internal evidence they present. Along with reproducing recipes from *Nuskha* and *Risāla*, they include newer patron-specific recipes such as *nān Asad Khānī*, *khushka* (a boiled rice preparation), *khichrī Muhtasham Khānī*, *khichrī* and *gulgula* (sweet doughnut), *Mukhtar Khānī*, *pulāv* (a steamed rice preparation), *Rashid Khani*, *bara* (fried savoury doughnut), *Jalal Khānī*, *āchār* (pickle), and *Saif Khānī*.<sup>59</sup> The names evoked in these recipes correspond to the elites who were a part of the imperial service during Alamgir's reign. Asad Khan held the office of the *wazīr*, led campaigns in deccan, and earned the title of *Amīr al-Umarā'*.<sup>60</sup> Between 1680–1686, Saif Khan served as the *sūbadār* (provincial head) of Kashmir, Bihar, and Allahabad.<sup>61</sup> Rashid Khan, a member of the eminent Roshanani family, served as the *sūbadār* of Orissa up to the nineteenth year of Alamgir's reign and thereafter held the office of *dīwān i-khālisa* (officer in-charge of the lands reserved as sources of revenue for the state).<sup>62</sup> He is also noted to have spent a lavish sum of 40 rupees per day to procure ingredients for his kitchen.<sup>63</sup> Mukhtar Khan served in various capacities during Alamgir's reign, from being stationed at Malwa and Bijapur to holding the *sūbadārī* of Ahmadabad and Agra and holding the office of *mīr ātish* (head of artillery).<sup>64</sup> Jalal Khan was appointed as the *faujdar* (military commander) of Malwa during the fourth year of Alamgir's reign.<sup>65</sup>

The preceding discussion can be distilled into a few key observations. The scattered and fragmented nature of the *Khwān* manuscripts that can be traced to Alamgir's reign

<sup>53</sup> Anon., *Khwān-i alwān-i ni'mat*, MS. Add.17959, f. 12a–b; Anon., *Alwān-i ni'mat* (New Delhi, National Museum), MS. 96.479, f. 1b. For discussion of the practice of compiling anthologies, see Kathryn Babayan, *The City as Anthology: Eroticism and Urbanity in Early Modern Isfahan* (California, 2021).

<sup>54</sup> Anon., *Alwān*, MS. 96.479, ff. 1b–5a; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add.17959, ff. 12b–20b.

<sup>55</sup> Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add.17959, ff. 2a–9b.

<sup>56</sup> Anon., *Alwān*, MS. 96.479, f. 76a.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 1b; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add.17959, f. 12b. Narayanan does not distinguish between these sections and treats the text as a unified original composition by the author. Narayanan, 'Cultures of food', p. 83.

<sup>58</sup> Anon., *Khwān-i ni'mat*, MS. Tab.1/1427. Another cookbook of an uncertain provenance and time period runs across the marginalia of this manuscript.

<sup>59</sup> Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add.17959, ff. 23a–b, 101a, 104b, 107a–b, 137b, 120b; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Tab.1/1427, ff. 2, 97, 101–102, 104–105, 182; Anon., *Alwān*, MS. 96.479, ff. 6a, f.44b, 45b, f.68a–b.

<sup>60</sup> Khan, *Ma'āsir*, vol. 1, pp. 310–321.

<sup>61</sup> Surendra Nath Sinha, *Subah of Allahabad under the Great Mughals* (New Delhi, 1974), p. 176.

<sup>62</sup> Fatima Zehra Bilgrami, 'The "Roshani" family in the Mughal nobility', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 60 (1999), p. 299.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>64</sup> Khan, *Ma'āsir*, pp. 174, 219–220, 272–273, 365, 369–370.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 509–510.

suggests the existence of a unified manual, which is probably lost.<sup>66</sup> *Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī* as Alamgir's kitchen superintendent, seems to have played a role in the compilation of this cookbook. Either the entire manual was put together under his aegis or it was a collaborative effort. Leaning towards the latter, he could be credited with compiling a section of it and contributing to the work of his predecessors, both of whom held the same office during Alamgir's reign as well as those who produced the earlier culinary manuals. The text might have evolved further under the supervision of those who held the office after him. In fact, this collaborative compilation process also explains the lack of authorial claim(s) in *Nushka* and *Risāla*. The exceptional association of some copies of the *Khwān* with *Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī* and not the other superintendents of Alamgir's kitchen could, however, derive from the stature he achieved during his imperial career. These achievements included receiving a robe of honour from Alamgir for presenting a chronogram on the conquest of Hyderabad, the title of *Muqarrab* (intimate friend) *Khān*, and, subsequently, the superintendency of the imperial *jawāhar khāna* (jewellery workshop) as well as the custody of imperial seal.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the abovementioned culinary manuals, food recipes also appear in *Ā'in*, *Bayāz-i khūshbū'ī*, a household management manual composed during Shah Jahan's reign, and *Ilājāt*.<sup>68</sup> These texts, aimed at facilitating aristocratic civility, were authored to arm the elite with knowledge about a variety of subjects, including, but not limited to, the maintenance of horse stables, garden planning, concocting medicinal pills and syrups, perfume, candle- and paper-making, theories of colour and flavours, and cooking. Owing to their broad-stroked nature, they record sample recipes for a select number of food dishes. They furnish the list of ingredients and measurements required to prepare a dish but provide paltry instructions about how to transform them into an actual dish. While culinary manuals also stemmed from the same concern for ethical refinement, they were compiled as specialised and practice-based manuals to guide the cooks in the actual execution of food dishes. They record in detail multiple recipe variations for a wide range of dishes and truly capture the depth and breadth of Mughal elite cuisine.

### Third course: features of the Mughal elite cuisine

This section will analyse how the attributes integral to the concerns of self-refinement—embodiment of temperamental balance, cultivation of mental vigour, and the experience of ethical sensory pleasure—informed recipes for food dishes recorded in *Nushka*, *Risāla*, and *Khwān*. For this discussion to be intelligible, it is important to take a stock of the dishes recorded in these texts. These included: dressed meat and vegetable dishes (*qalya*, *dū-piyāza*, and *burānī*); leavened, unleavened, grilled, fried, savoury, and sweet breads (*nān*, *kumāch*, *chāpātī*, and *pūrī*); broths, stews, and pottages (*āsh*, *shūrba*, *yakhni*,

<sup>66</sup> There exist three other manuscript copies with the title *Khwān-i ni'mat* at the National Museum in New Delhi, British Library in London, and Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. The National Museum and British Library copies, transcribed in 1801, are neither directly nor indirectly attributed to *Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī* but their recipes do not use red chillies either. These copies do not contain any patron-attributed recipes. The Berlin copy, transcribed in 1839, does not bear any form of attribution to *Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī* nor recipes featuring red chillies. It seems like an incomplete copy that does not follow any proper organisation scheme. However, it does record the recipe for *nān Asad Khānī*. These copies, much like that of Wilkins', could be condensed versions of the larger text. See Anon., *Khwān-i ni'mat* (New Delhi, National Museum), MS. 80.113; Anon., *Khwān-i ni'mat* (London, British Library), MS. Add. 16871; Anon., *Khwān-i ni'mat* (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek), MS. Petermann II, 514.

<sup>67</sup> For details about Nimat Khan Ali's career, see Siraj al-Din Ali Khan Arzu, *Majma' al-nafayis: bakhsh-i mu'a-siran*, (ed.) Mir Hashim Muhaddis (Tehran, 2006), pp. 189–194.

<sup>68</sup> Fazl, *Ā'in-i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 55–59; Anon., *Bayāz-i khūshbū'ī* (London, British Library), MS. IO Islamic 828, ff. 93a–103b; Shirazi, *Ilājāt*, ff. 106b–263a.

*harīsa*, and *lapsi*); rice preparations (*zīr-biryān*, *pulāv*, *qabūli*, *khushka*, *kḥichrī*, and *pūhā*, i.e. flattened rice); grilled meat (*kabāb*) dishes; sweet and savoury egg preparations like *khāgīna*, *kūkū*, and *shashranga*; stuffed dishes like *gīpā*, *musamman*, and *samūsa*; mash (*bharta*); dough-based pasta or noodle-like dressed dishes of *būghrā* and *rishta*; *bara* (fried lentil balls); *khandvī* (chickpea flour cake rolls); *dāl* (lentils and pulses); sweetmeats and desserts like *gulgula*, *mālidā*, *shakar-pāra*, *panbhata*, *laddū*, *khajūr*, *shīrīnī*, *halwā*, *fālūda*, *baklāva*, and *firnī*; preservatives (*murabbā*); pickles (*āchār*); and starch jellies (*harīra*). The techniques of frying/sautéing (*biryān*), braising (*mutanjan*), cooking in steam over a low heat (*dam*), and roasting in a clay oven (*tandūr*) or over open coals were employed, either individually or in combination, to a range of ingredients (see Appendix 1) to prepare these food dishes. Mughal cookbooks also recorded methods for making *panīr* and *dalama* (types of cheese), *māst* (coagulated milk), *jughrāt* (yoghurt), *rāita* (yoghurt dressed with spices, herbs or vegetables), coloured clarified butter and food colours, and shelling peppercorn and coriander seeds.

While it is possible to calculate the proportions in which different spices, herbs, seasonings, meats, and plant produce were used to prepare each of the above listed dishes, this exercise would run into pages. Instead, I will delineate the key features of the recipes and examine their contribution to the ideal of self-refinement. The first of these includes the prominence of sweet-sour and mildly sweet flavour profiles in a number of dishes that were made with meats, vegetables, eggs, flour, rice, spices, and salt. These flavour profiles were achieved through the incorporation of lemon and sugar syrup (*chāshnī*), lemon and saccharine fruits, sugar and unripe and or tart fruits, sweet apricots, raisins and ripened fruits, and, in some cases, only sugar. A few examples of such recipes are *āsh chāshnīdār*, *qalya gūsh*t (meat) *chāshnīdār* or *qalya chāshnīdār*, *qalya shakarqand* (a type of sweet tuber) *chāshnīdār*, *shakar-līmū* (sugar-lemon) *qalya Shīrāzī*, *qalya māhī* (fish) *chāshnīdār*, *qalya māhī* (fish) *wa kelā* (banana), *qalya kharbūza khām* (unripe melon), *qalya anba* (mango), *qalya za'farānī* (saffron) *khāss* and *chāshnīdār*, *qalya nargisī*, *qalya kelā khāsa*, *qalya chāshnīdār az kadū zardak* (yellow pumpkin), *dū piyāza kelā lu'āb-dār*, *dū piyāza kharbūza* (melon) *chāshnīdār*, *anba pulāv*, *anānās* (pineapple) *pulāv*, *kelā pulāv*, *līmū pulāv*, *līmū pulāv chāshnīdār*, *shīr* (milk) *pulāv*, *shīr wa shakar pulāv*, *pulāv lu'āb-dār*, *shashranga chāshnīdār sib* (apple) *namakīn*, and *khāgīna chāshnīdār*.<sup>69</sup> Of these, *anānās pulāv*, for instance, was prepared using 60 *dām* of pineapple, 10 *dām* of lemon, 1 *dām* of salt with 30 *dām* each of rice and meat, and varying quantities of herbs and spices.<sup>70</sup> This recipe drew its tartness from lemons and sweetness from pineapples. The latter was a transatlantic crop first introduced by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, and by the end of century pineapples were widely grown across Hindustan. Mughal sources described them as possessing the flavour and aroma of the sweet-tasting and -smelling mango.<sup>71</sup>

The reasons for the acceptance of this new fruit and inclusion of sweet-sour as well as mildly sweet flavours in vegetable and meat preparations can be extrapolated from the manner in which these flavours were believed to act on the body. *Yūnānī tibb* posits the scheme of eight single flavours, each possessing either moderate or varying degrees of hot and cold qualities that impacted on the humoral composition of the body (Table 2).<sup>72</sup> These single flavours could be mixed in varying proportions and subjected

<sup>69</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 12, 19–22, 25, 69–70, 95, 97; Anon., *Risāla*, ff. 10, 14–15, 19, 24–25, 28, 31–33, 84–86, 93–94; Anon., *Khawān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 33b–34b, 35b, 38a–b, 39a, 40a–b, 44a–b, 59b, 95b–96a, 98b–99b, 101b–102a.

<sup>70</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 69–70; Anon., *Risāla*, ff. 85–86; Anon., *Khawān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 98b–99a.

<sup>71</sup> Fazl, *Ā'in-i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 76; Jahangir, *Jahāngīrnāma*, p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Shirazi, *Ilājāt*, vol. 2, f.11b–12b. Also see Ibn Sina, *Al-Qānūn fī'l-tibb*. Book 2, (ed.) Hakim Abdul Hameed (New Delhi, 1982), pp. 12–13.

**Table 2.** Flavours, their qualities, and their actions.

Flavours	Qualitative property (based on a comparative scale and moderate consumption)	Action on the tongue
Pungent ( <i>Tiz</i> )	Hottest	Strong irritation and inflammation
Bitter ( <i>Talkh</i> )	Hot	Irritation and coarseness
Salty ( <i>Namakin</i> )	Least hot	Mild irritation, inflammation, or coarseness
Acrid ( <i>Zamukht</i> )	Coldest	Strong irritation and inflammation
Astringent ( <i>Qabzi</i> )	Cold	Irritation and coarseness
Sour ( <i>Turush</i> )	Least cold	Mild irritation, inflammation, or coarseness
Sweet ( <i>Shirin</i> )	Temperate	Lubricating
Greasy ( <i>Charbi</i> )	Temperate	Lubricating

to different temperatures to yield compound flavour profiles, as in the case of the example noted above.<sup>73</sup>

While excessive consumption of any of these flavours was proscribed, extra caution was to be exercised in the case of pungent, bitter, acrid, and astringent tasting aliments. Their inherent severe heat and cooling properties were believed to cause temperamental disorders by disrupting the body's humoral balance. Salty and sour flavours, on account of being least hot and cold, were posited as inclining towards a temperate quality. Of these, sour was believed to be a pleasing (*latif*) and moderately cold and dry flavour that cleansed the stomach of excessive humoral build-up as well as encouraging equitable humoral formation by augmenting the liver's capacity to produce digestive juices.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, digestive (*munazzij*) powers of monitoring humoral formation were associated with a sweet flavour. It was described as a temperate (*i'tidāl*) flavour that induced balanced warmth and moisture in the body and nourished it. It was also attributed the power to provide pleasure (*lazzat*) to the tongue (*zabān*). This nerve-dense external organ was considered to house the faculty of taste (*quwāt-i zā'iqa*) and was believed to experience qualitative change as a result of the sensations produced by the heating and cooling properties of different flavours. A sweet flavour, owing to its above described properties, did not cause a harmful reaction on the tongue. Rather, it pleased the faculty of taste by lubricating the tongue which in turn aided proper mastication as well as the smooth ingestion of food.<sup>75</sup> Emperor Aurangzeb could have been drawing on this understanding when he decided to bequeath the title of *rasanā-vilās* (pleasing to the tongue) on an unknown breed of mangoes—the fruit most celebrated in the Mughal sources for its exquisite sweetness.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Abul-Fazl, *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, vol. 1, (ed.) H. Blochmann (Calcutta, 1872), p. 72.

<sup>74</sup> Shirazi, *'Iljāt*, f. 12a–b.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 11b–12a. Also see Ibn Sina, *Al-Qānūn*. Book 1, p. 93; Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology: An English Translation of Kitāb Al-Najāt*. Book II, Chapter VI, with *Historico-Philosophical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition* (Westport, 1981), p. 27.

<sup>76</sup> Alamgir Aurangzeb, *Ruq'āt-i 'Alamgiri* (Lahore, 1878), p. 24.

Injecting a sweet-sour or mildly sweet flavour profile into savoury preparations that were made using a range of ingredients whose individual inherent flavours could have varied from pungent to astringent, highlights a calculated decision to provide a mellow and balanced taste profile to food dishes. Moreover, the presence of such flavour profiles across a spectrum of dishes must have also ensured that the meal on the table possessed an overall moderate taste. For instance, the peppery-heat of *qalya* could be balanced by eating it with a variety of sweet-savoury breads or sweet-sour *pulāv*.<sup>77</sup> This is just an example of the many ways in which elaborate yet balanced meals could have been curated for the elite spreads. In essence, the presence of these savoury-sweet-sour recipes speaks to the Mughal elites' project of crafting refined selves by embodying temperamental refinement and pursuing ethical pleasure.

The concern for curating a delightful gastronomic experience, which preserved and did not disturb bodily health, is also signified by a range of recipes that focused on how the food felt in the mouth. As in the case of taste, the faculty of touch (*quwāt-i lāmisa*) was also located on the tongue and to safeguard it against irritation and corrosion, recipes in the Mughal cookbooks were mindful about the textural composition of dishes.<sup>78</sup> For instance, the recipes for *nān-i jawāhar* (millet) *narm*, *qalya bādīnjān* (brinjal) *narm*, *būrānī palak* (spinach) *narm*, *khichri narm*, and *halwā narm* attest to the soft and smooth texture of these preparations.<sup>79</sup> Recipes for *nān warqī*, *nān tangī*, and *samūsa warqī* rendered leaf-thin baked breads and fried pastries capable of dissolving effortlessly in the mouth.<sup>80</sup> The viscous consistency of *chāshnīdār* and *lu'āb-dār āsh*, *qalya*, and *dū piyāza* preparations made with a range of meats and vegetables would have lubricated the tongue, making it easier for the masticated food to travel from the mouth to the oesophagus.<sup>81</sup> Alluding to the moistening properties of such dishes, *Mirzānāma* advises civilised gentlemen to avoid choking on dry preparations, such as *pulāv* and *kabāb*, by eating them with a spoonful of *qalya*.<sup>82</sup> A consideration for preventing lesions on the tongue and choking is also evident in the techniques recorded in the cookbooks to dissolve (*qudāz*) fish scales and bones.<sup>83</sup>

With regard to fish as well as water fowl like duck and goose, a lot of care was taken in cleaning and preparing the flesh before commencing the actual cooking process. These steps were performed to remove fetor associated with these aquatic animals. For instance, the recipe for a goose kebab specifically instructs the use of pepper, cardamom, cloves, ginger, coriander, fennel, sandal powder, and *gul-i Multānī* (a type of flower, presumably from Multan) to mask the strong stench of this as well as other marine meats.<sup>84</sup> Fish-based recipes invariably involved washing and marinating the flesh at least two to three times. The ingredients used included fennel, aniseed and cumin waters, lemon, ginger, yoghurt, gram flour, turmeric, and sesame oil.<sup>85</sup> These laborious procedures derived impetus from the understanding that food with a bad smell (*bad-bū*) impeded the balanced production of humours by hindering the process of digestion, weakened the heart's ability to circulate humours in the body, and prevented the brain from performing at its optimal

<sup>77</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 4, 5; Anon., *Risāla*, ff. 5, 7–8; Anon., *Khawān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 22a–23a, 27a, 29a–b, 30a, 31b.

<sup>78</sup> Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 27, 76.

<sup>79</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 4–5, 114; Anon., *Risāla*, f. 6; Anon., *Khawān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 51a–b, 72a, 118b.

<sup>80</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 5–6, 97–98; Anon., *Risāla*, ff. 2–3, 6, 122–23; Anon., *Khawān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff., 23b–24a, 26a–b, 29a, 129b.

<sup>81</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 54–56; Anon., *Risāla*, f. 29; Anon., *Khawān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 35b, 36b–37a, 38a–b, 39a, 42a–b, 44a–b, 99b–100a, 116a–b.

<sup>82</sup> Anon., *Mirzānāma*, f. 92a.

<sup>83</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, p. 24.

<sup>84</sup> Anon., *Risāla*, f. 112.

<sup>85</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 9, 21–22; Anon., *Risāla*, f. 29; Anon., *Khawān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 43b–45b, 57a.

capacity. Food with a pleasant smell (*khushbū*), on the other hand, contributed to the idealised state of ethical perfection. It was perceived to fortify the stomach and invigorate the heart and the brain. The faculty of smell (*quwāt-i shāmma*) was designated to the brain and fragrant substances were recognised as *adwiya-i mufarrih* (literally exhilarating and refreshing drugs) and were classified as cephalic drugs in *yūnānī* pharmacopoeias. Some of the fruits, spices, and herbs categorised as such, and which appeared frequently in the Mughal recipes, were lemon, citron and orange, melon, pomegranate, mango, pineapple, saffron, musk, cardamon, black pepper, cinnamon, cloves, mace, fennel, cumin, aniseed, ginger, coriander, and rose. Among these, spices were considered inherently hot in nature.<sup>86</sup> They had to be used in considered quantities to channel their powers in favour of self-refinement and avert the perils of temperamental imbalance. Mughal cookbooks reserved the smallest units of measurement—*māsha* and *surkh*—for spices. For instance, the recipe for preparing *zard pulāv* used one *āsār* of rice, half an *āsār* of sugar, one-fourth of an *āsār* each of raisins, almonds, pistachio nuts, and rose, two *māsha* of saffron, and two *surkh* of musk.<sup>87</sup> The recipe for *dū piyāza nargisī* utilised only two *māsha* each of cinnamon and saffron and one *māsha* each of clove, cardamom, and black pepper for one *āsār* of meat, five eggs, and one-fourth *āsār* each of spinach and onion.<sup>88</sup>

The key element of the *nargisī* recipes for *dū piyāza*, *qalya*, and *pulāv* was to recreate a narcissus (*nargis*) flower on the top of the food by placing sliced boiled eggs or preparing the eggs in such a manner that the yolk and white did not mix.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, the cooked eggs looked like narcissi with a yellow centre surrounded by white petals. This attention to visual detail was not an isolated case. Colours were introduced into food dishes, as evidenced by recipes for *pulāv muza'far* that involved cooking rice with almonds, raisins, and saffron, and garnishing it with butter fried dried fruits to give the prepared food dish a glistening jewelled illusion.<sup>90</sup> *Zard pulāv* was a saffron-based yellow rice preparation, *sabz pulāv* was made green by boiling rice with spinach, and cinnabar (*shangarf*) was used for orange-coloured *nārangī pulāv* and *qalya*.<sup>91</sup> The adjective *būqalamūn*, signifying a kaleidoscope of hues that emerge when an iridescent surface is subjected to light, was used in a *pulāv* recipe featuring betel nut, cinnabar, and saffron to stain the rice grains black, red, and orange-yellow, respectively.<sup>92</sup> The sections on making food colours and coloured clarified butter instruct the readers to use spinach, red *sāg* (leafy vegetable), pomegranate peels, cinnabar, and saffron to produce green (*sabz*), red (*surkh*), violet (*binafsha*), and yellow (*zard*) or orange (*nārangī*) colours, respectively.<sup>93</sup> The logic for incorporating all of these embellishments, catering to the faculty of sight (*quwāt-i bāsira*), was located in the knowledge that looking at colours and beautiful forms was an exhilarating exercise for the mind, as it alleviated the emotions of grief and sorrow and functioned as a channel for fuelling the imaginative and cognitive faculties—the domain of intellect.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Neha Vermani, 'The perfumed palate: olfactory practices of food consumption at the Mughal court', *Global Food History* 9 (First view, 2023).

<sup>87</sup> Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 90b–91a. For details and the values of these measurements, see footnote 41.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 33a–b.

<sup>89</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 14, 27–28, 40; Anon., *Risāla*, ff. 18–19, 54–55, 97–98; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 32b–33b, 88a–88b.

<sup>90</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 42–43; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 91b–92a.

<sup>91</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 47–48, 73; Anon., *Risāla*, ff. 32–33, 55–56, 97–98; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 83b–84a, 90b–91b.

<sup>92</sup> Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 102b–103a; Hūšang A'lam, 'Būqalamūn', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (1989), <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/buqalamun> (accessed 6 July 2023).

<sup>93</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 137–139; Anon., *Risāla*, ff. 104–105; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 159a–159b.

<sup>94</sup> Gulru Necipoglu, 'The scrutinizing gaze in the aesthetics of Islamic visual culture: sight, insight, and desire', *Muqarnas* 32 (2015), pp. 32, 33.

These multi-sensory elite gastronomic creations, geared towards the goals of temperamental perfection and mental vigour, did not exist in a watertight bubble. Culinary links between the courtly world and wider society are made visible by the appropriation of recipes from public spaces into Mughal cookbooks and by the food sold in market stalls. The cookbooks compiled for the kitchens of the Mughal elite record recipes for vegetarian and meat-based *khichrī*s that were prepared at Sufi shrines in honour of saints like Shaikh Farid al-Din Shakar Ganj of the Chishti order and Shaikh Abdul Qadiri of the Qadiri order.<sup>95</sup> In fact, *khichrī* and Sufism shared a close association during the Mughal period. In 1643, Shah Jahan provided meat procured from his hunting expedition for the *khichrī* prepared at the Chishti shrine in Ajmer.<sup>96</sup> Akbar and Jahangir preferred vegetarian *khichrī* on *sūfiyānā* on meat abstention days (selective vegetarianism was an important aspect of Sufi and Hindu soul purification rituals).<sup>97</sup> Moving from the spiritual to the unruly world of bazars, the elite culinary manuals take note of recipes for *qīma kabāb tarah bāzār*, i.e. minced meat *kabāb* as prepared in the market stalls.<sup>98</sup> Similarities can also be noted in the food dishes recorded in the elite culinary manuals and those sold in the markets. For instance, food stalls in the markets of Lahore and Delhi offered multi-hued *pulāvs* and leaf-thin breads made with flour and clarified butter.<sup>99</sup> These inclusions and parallels between the elite and popular cuisines, however, did not blur the difference between the two. The vendors operating in public places could not have competed with elite cuisine in terms of the quality of ingredients, number of recipe variations, and the finesse achieved by a large team of specialised cooks labouring under the supervision of the physician kitchen superintendent. Furthermore, the demands of ethical self-fashioning translated into an obsession with hygiene for the Mughal aristocracy. The importance of sanitation is constantly underscored in the elite culinary texts as they instruct vigorous cleaning of ingredients before cooking with them. The cooks employed in the kitchen were required to cover their mouths with a cloth sash while preparing food.<sup>100</sup> Compared to these standards, the food prepared at market stalls was considered unwholesome and unfit for elite consumers.<sup>101</sup> Catering to the desire to taste popular culinary concoctions while avoiding the contingent risk of contamination resulted in the inclusion of market and public-kitchen recipes in the elite culinary manuals, kitchens, and meals—the ingredients of aristocratic self-refinement.

### Final course: conclusion

This article has considered the questions of what the Mughal elite expected from their food and how this shaped the cuisine that graced their *khwāns*. In doing so, I have drawn attention to and taken seriously the oft-forgotten or even unrecognised science and art patronised by the Mughal elite: cooking and food, and their contribution to the making of a civilised court society. Unlike the scope of tactile and direct engagement involved in the study of tangible Mughal material artefacts, the ephemeral history of food preparation and cuisine can only be grasped by turning to the codes of practice

<sup>95</sup> Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17595, f. 105a–105b.

<sup>96</sup> Inayat Khan, *Mulakhhkas-i-Shahjahan-nameh*, (ed.) Jamil ur Rehman, (New Delhi, 2009), p. 377.

<sup>97</sup> Jahangir, *Jahāngirnāma*, p. 239.

<sup>98</sup> Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, p. 88; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17959, f. 54a.

<sup>99</sup> Fray Sebastian Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629–1643. A Translation of the 'Itinerario de Las Misiones Orientales'*, vol. 2, (ed. and trans.) Col. C. Eckford Luard and Father H. Horton (London, 1927), p. 187. Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, (trans.) Irving Brock, (rev.) Archibald Constable (Westminster, 1891), p. 250.

<sup>100</sup> Vermani, 'From the cauldrons of history', p. 456.

<sup>101</sup> Anon., *Mirzānāma*, f. 92b.



that were recorded as recipes in the culinary manuals. These manuals, some extant only in a fragmented form, are marred by complexities arising from texts bearing similar or the same titles and missing details about the identities of their patrons and dates of composition. I have assembled this scattered archive in a coherent manner by comparing manuscript copies, mapping internal evidences, and subjecting them to external corroboration. By focusing on a close reading of this corpus, the article makes several important interventions that I will broadly outline here. The existence of the same recipes across these cookbooks highlights the practice of the recycling of culinary information within the elite network. Simultaneously, the addition of new recipes in each subsequent cookbook signifies consistent engagement with this form of knowledge production. The latter, specifically the patron-specific variants associated with the kitchen establishments of Mughal elites, also prove helpful in identifying the provenance and period of the compilation of different cookbooks. A thorough analysis of different types of recipes contained in these texts also reveals a systematic pattern of food dishes with balanced flavour profiles, fragrant smells, a non-corrosive feel in the mouth, and delightful visual appeal. These features elevated food from merely being a hunger satiating commodity to a nutritious as well as sensorially pleasing agent that preserved bodily health. Doing so, it bequeathed the ideal state of temperamental equilibrium to its consumers. Designing such recipes required knowledge about the humoral properties of various ingredients and the ability to compound them in a manner that benefitted the partaker. The task of curating these perfect recipes, along with ensuring their proper execution, was accomplished by physicians, who brought the expertise of *yūnānī tibb* to their job as the superintendents of elite kitchen establishments. The Mughal elite, by making these appointments, ensured that medical science was not cloistered in libraries, apothecaries, and hospitals, only to be executed on specific occasions to treat disorders. Rather it was practised daily in the elite kitchens to fashion healthy bodies that hosted temperamentally balanced selves. The endeavour for explicitly making scientific knowledge about the human body and cooking a part of regular life was bolstered by commissioning treatises that distilled key principles of *yūnānī* and advanced basic knowledge of food preparation, among other household skills, for the perusal of the elite. These intellectual and action-oriented approaches were adopted by the Mughal elite to facilitate the embodiment of temperamental balance and experience of sensory pleasures, which nourished and did not harm the body, aligned with the *akhlāqī* requirements for cultivating a civilised, rational, and ethical self. This pursuit of self-refinement was considered necessary for the successful dispensation of imperial and domestic duties as well as the attainment of spiritual awakening. Here, work and pleasure did not represent opposing ends of a fruitful and frivolous spectrum. The Mughal men of sword and pen were also discerning gourmands who sought culinary finesse. A far cry from the proverbial Orientalist clichés of decadence, the Mughal elite were educated patrons or connoisseurs of food, invested in pursuing an ethical life adorned with *ni'mat*.

## Appendix I

The staples of the pantry listed in the cookbooks compiled for the kitchens of the Mughal elites included meats such as offal of chickens, geese, partridges, goats, sheep, and fish such as carp and sturgeon. Eggs of chickens and pigeons along with dairy products—cow's milk, clarified butter, yoghurt, and animal fat—also feature regularly. Dried fruits such as almonds, pistachios, raisins, dried apricots, dates, and fresh fruit like lemons, mangoes, star-fruit, bananas, melons, pomegranates, pineapples, apples, grapes, apricots, plums, and peaches were used. Spices, seasonings, and herbs, namely, cinnamon, cardamom, cumin seeds, cloves, black pepper, mace, nutmeg, fennel and aniseed, saffron, musk, fresh and dried ginger, coriander, dill, salt, turmeric, lump sugar, white sugar, candied sugar, and honey imparted flavours as well as colour to the dishes. Cinnabar, a mineral product, also features regularly as a colouring agent. Vegetables used included onions, yellow carrots, eggplant, spinach and other

types of leafy greens, bitter and ridged gourds, pumpkins, beetroot, turnips, the purple blossoms of the baubinia variegata of *Fabaceae* family (*kalī/gul/ghuncha kachnār*), and yams and sweet tubers such as *zamīnqand*, *arvī*, *shakarqand*, *ratālū*, *suran*, *kachālū* and *pindālū*. In fact, it was this last category of yams and tubers that must have constituted ‘the excellently dressed potatoes’ consumed by Edward Terry, chaplain to Thomas Roe, the English ambassador at Jahangir’s court, at a dinner hosted by the Mughal noble Asaf Khan in 1615. While white and sweet potatoes were introduced in South Asia during the late eighteenth century, the generic term ‘potato’ was used to signify sweet potatoes as well as tubers and yams in seventeenth-century England. Therefore, the dressed potatoes mentioned by Terry must have been preparations like pickles of *kachālū* and *zamīnqand*, and viscous preparations such as *qalya* and *dū piyāzā* of *shakarqand*, *arvī*, *zamīnqand*, and *ratālū* that appear frequently in Mughal culinary manuals.<sup>102</sup>

**Conflicts of interest.** The author reports none.

<sup>102</sup> Edward Terry, *A Voyage to East-India...Empire of the Great Mogul* (London, 1777), p. 197; Fazlulla (ed.), *Nuskha*, pp. 30–31, 131–132; Anon., *Risāla*, ff. 17–18, 43, 44, 100–101; Anon., *Khwān*, MS. Add. 17959, ff. 38a, 39a–b, 158a; Vermani, ‘From the Court to the Kitchens’, pp. 209–213. Narayanan suggests the Roe consumed sweet potato: Narayanan, ‘Cultures of food’, p. 119. However, sweet potatoes were not cultivated in South Asia during this period. See George Watt, *A Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*, vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1890), p. 118.

**Cite this article:** Vermani N (2023). Spread of bounties: culinary manuals and knowledge in Mughal South Asia. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33, 1175–1192. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186323000354>