

**OPEN ACCESS**

SUBMITTED 29 March 2025

ACCEPTED 25 April 2025

PUBLISHED 30 May 2025

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue05 2025

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“Boburnoma” – A Classical Realistic Example of Turkic Prose

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Abstract: This article explores Boburnoma (The Memoirs of Babur), a pivotal work in Turkic literary history, examining its place as a classical example of realist prose within Turkic literature. Authored by Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, Boburnoma blends autobiographical narrative with historical account, providing insights into both personal experiences and broader political and cultural contexts. The study delves into the stylistic features of the text, highlighting its contributions to the evolution of prose writing in Turkic languages. By analyzing the structure, language, and thematic elements of the work, this article underscores the significance of Boburnoma in shaping the trajectory of realist prose in Turkic literature and its enduring influence on later literary traditions.

Keywords: Boburnoma, Turkic prose, classical realism, autobiographical literature, Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, Mughal Empire, literary analysis, historical narrative, Turkic literature, realist prose.

Introduction: Our ancestors' spiritual heritage, created over the course of centuries, is so vast and comprehensive that any scholar who attempts to fully grasp it will undoubtedly find their mind overwhelmed. No other region of the world has produced such true intellectual geniuses, religious thinkers, renowned historians, great poets, and hundreds of masters of the fine arts as the peoples of Central Asia. The internal harmony between the components of our spiritual heritage, its role and status in world culture, cannot be fully realized unless the separate studies of specialists in

various fields are brought together; only then can a cohesive picture emerge.

Each of us—the children of the Uzbek land—must have a clear and precise understanding of who we were in history and who we have become in recent times [1:180]. To love our homeland, it is essential to study in detail its glorious past, both good and bad times, the history of our ancestors, and its ancient history.

Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, with his profound and fruitful work, is one of those great figures who made a significant contribution to the treasure of world culture. The natural talent of our ancestor, his multifaceted development, the vast knowledge he embodied, his intellect, human qualities, as well as his generosity, sensitivity, and refined nature, continue to amaze us.

Among the rich and invaluable scientific and literary heritage that Babur left to his descendants, the work that brought him world fame is undoubtedly “Boburnoma”. It occupies a worthy place not only in Uzbek literature, but also in the history of world literature.

“Boburnoma” holds significant importance as one of the earliest examples of prose in Turkic literature, being both a historical and literary work. While the book serves as a rare historical source, it is also an encyclopedic work that covers a wide range of academic fields. In it, the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the period in which Babur lived is vividly expressed in artistic form; the events are narrated in an engaging, fluent, and simple language. The work is composed of Babur’s personal experiences and memories. For this reason, the original title, *Vaqoyi’noma*, or “The Chronicle of Events,” given by Babur Mirza himself, is not without reason [2:46]. This is because Babur himself is the participant and the central character of the events. The author himself wrote the following lines about this:

Bu olam aro ajab alamlar ko’rdum,

Olam elidin turfa sitamlar ko’rdum.

Har kim bu “Vaqoyi”ni o’qur, bilgaykim,

Ne ranju mehnatu na g’amlar ko’rdum.

I have seen strange worlds in this life,

I have witnessed various forms of oppression in this world.

Let anyone who reads this “Chronicle” know,

The pain, toil, and sorrow I have endured.

This work is also referred to by other names in various sources, such as “Vaqoyi’i Boburiy”, “Tuzuki Boburiy”, “Tavorixi Boburiy”, and “Boburiya”. Later, it became commonly known as “Boburnoma”.

Indeed, the Indian art historians Krishna and Ramananda Bandhopadhyay expressed their heartfelt words about the “Baburnama” in this way: “I have read the “Baburnama” in my native language with great enthusiasm. It is a very perfect and invaluable work. It contains a lot of excellent information about the history, life, and culture of our peoples... The name of the author of this work, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, is fondly mentioned in India. He is a great sultan who built a bridge of friendship between the lands of Central Asia and India in his time. This structure of friendship will serve for many centuries to come. During the time of Babur, Muslim scholars from Central Asia went to India and made a worthy contribution to the development of science and culture there” [3:13,14].

The English historian and translator W. Erskine, who is considered a classic example of realist Turkic prose, says about the work: “Among the literary works created by Babur, his memoir (“Baburnama”) is considered one of the best. Its first part tells in detail the worries and joys of Babur’s childhood and youth [4:180]. The next part is a collection of stories, sometimes written, sometimes containing details of everyday events, and in some places the details of events are fully covered, while in others they consist of written memories.” In particular, in this work, Babur Mirza initially provides information about the rulers of the Mawarannahr region, starting with his father, Umar Shaykh Mirza. It is worth noting that Babur developed a unique method for describing the lives and activities of the rulers. First, he introduces the rulers by mentioning their names and systematically presents information about them under the following headings: “Valodat va nasabi” (“Birth and lineage”), “Shakl va shamoyili” (“Appearance and demeanor”), “Axloq va atvori” (“Character and behavior”), “Masof va urushlari” (“Campaigns and wars”), “Viloyati” (“Territories”), “Avlodi” (“Descendants”), “Xavotun va sarori” (“Wives and children”), “Umarosi” (“Royal duties”) [5:226].

In assessing the true nature of the character of a ruler, Babur pays attention to his dealings with his subordinates, the peace of the country he ruled, his high humane relations with his subjects, soldiers, and beks, his making moral purity a motto of life, and many other aspects. These criteria amaze one with their honesty, objective description of both positive and negative aspects of the person being evaluated, even if he is his fierce opponent [6:226].

There are a lot of manuscript copies of “Boburnoma” in Uzbek, and even more in Persian. The first rare manuscripts of this work are kept in the Salarjang Museum in India, the National Library of Scotland, and the British Museum [2:34]. Despite the fact that they have been studied many times, it is

considered a natural phenomenon in Babur studies that the work of creating the most reliable text of "Boburnoma" attributed to the author's pen has been carried out previously and will continue to be carried out based on newly discovered rare manuscripts. Because despite the fact that the text of this unique work has been reprinted repeatedly, new discoveries about the life and work of Babur, which are stored in the world's manuscript funds and library funds, create the need for its re-publication, and the problems of creating a new and more authentic text of "Boburnoma" remain a constant..

It should be noted that the "Baburnoma" is not chronologically complete, there are a number of breaks in the description of events by year in the work. According to the French translator of the "Baburnoma" Pavé de Courteille, such breaks in the years exist both in the original and in the Persian translation, and these are also reflected in the English translation.

It would not be wrong to say that the reason why "Baburnama" has been translated into so many languages, republished, and gained worldwide fame is the extremely broad scope of its description, the fact that it is an encyclopedic work rich in reliable information about the history, geography, ethnography, flora and fauna of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and India in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the peoples of these countries, their way of life, language, customs, and other aspects, as well as the unparalleled scope of knowledge and interests of the author of the work, the honest and truthful description of events, and the simplicity, fluency, and conciseness of its language and style.

The abundance, accuracy and completeness of information, the truthful presentation of historical events, chronological consistency, simplicity and fluency of expression further enhance the advantages and appeal of "Boburnoma" as a historical source. In this respect, it surpasses the books of many Eastern historians.

As we know, in most books by Eastern historians, historical evidence is intertwined with legends and traditions, the events being written are described based on the author's attitude towards kings and rulers, and the principle of deliberately praising and exalting some and belittling and knocking others down is also dominant [2:51]. In "Boburnoma", however, we do not see such one-sided views; on the contrary, due to the objective and consistent description of socio-political events in it, the virtues and shortcomings of the ruling classes of that time are clearly reflected. All this gives reason to say that "Boburnoma" is an incomparable historical work rich in concrete historical

evidence.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, independence has given us ample opportunities to deeply study our ancient and unique history and to understand our identity. Today, we are fortunate to acquaint the general public, our entire people, with the hitherto hidden aspects of the activities and invaluable heritage of our great ancestors, such as Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, who made an incomparable contribution to the development of world science and culture. In the author's work "Boburnoma", the image of a scholar and a wise man who admires the beauty of man and nature, appreciates the best moral qualities, accurately reflects the historical events that have taken place, condemns oppression and hypocrisy, objectively observes the activities of historical figures, and evaluates the work of scientists and poets from the point of view of the advanced traditions of the time is reflected in the reader's mind.

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