



## A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIETY IN THE “BABURNAMA”

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur’s “Baburnama” from the perspective of socio-philosophical and historical interpretation of the society of Movarounnahr. The study examines data on ethnic composition, tribal groups, linguistic environment, migration processes, military-administrative structure, economic activity, and ecological factors. Special attention is given to the source’s role in reflecting historical consciousness, the relationship between power and society, state formation, and civilizational comparison. The article argues that the “Baburnama” serves not only as an empirical but also as a conceptual source for reconstructing the society of Central Asia and Northern India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

**Keywords:** Babur, Baburnama, Movarounnahr, social structure, ethnic composition, historical consciousness, power, migration, state and society, civilizational comparison.

**Introduction.** In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the region of Movarounnahr underwent profound political transformations, dynastic struggles, and social shifts. The weakening of the Timurid state, the emergence of the Shaybanids on the political stage, and the changing balance of regional power significantly affected the ethnic composition, economic structure, and social relations of the region. In understanding these complex historical processes, primary written sources possess particular scholarly significance.

One such source is the “Baburnama”, authored by Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur. Although written in the form of memoirs, the work encompasses not only political events, but also the internal structure of society, ethnic communities, tribal and clan systems, military-administrative organization, forms of economic activity, migration processes, and the broader cultural environment. Most importantly, since the historical processes were recorded by a direct participant in political events, the text clearly reflects historical consciousness and the author’s personal perspective.

The study of the “Baburnama” makes it possible not only to reconstruct historical facts, but also to comprehend the relationship between society and power, as well as the economic and social foundations of state-building processes.





The work presents a comparative portrayal of the civilizations of Movarounnahr and India, consistently demonstrating the relationship between natural resources and political stability, as well as the interconnection between ethnic structure and military organization.

The aim of this study is to reveal the socio-philosophical and historical interpretation of Movarounnahr society based on the data contained in the “Baburnama”, to substantiate the empirical and conceptual significance of the work, and to determine its role in reconstructing Central Asian society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

**Results and Discussion.** The Baburnama, created by Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur (1483–1530), holds particular scholarly significance as a primary written source for the study of the history of Movarounnahr, Afghanistan, and Northern India at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries [1, b-39]. Although written in the form of memoirs, the work systematically presents important information not only about political events, but also about the population of the region, their ethnic composition, way of life, economic activities, cultural environment, social structure, and demographic movements. For this reason, the “Baburnama” emerges as a fundamental and multilayered source not only for political history, but also for the study of ethnic, social, cultural, economic, and demographic history. The distinctiveness of the work lies in the fact that historical processes are recorded not by an external observer, but by a direct participant in political events, and the internal mechanisms of social life are presented in vivid detail. This aspect makes it an important source for socio-philosophical analysis as well, since historical processes are narrated as reflected in the consciousness of the subject, and events are interpreted in close connection with social interests, power, economic resources, and cultural factors.

Babur was born on 14 February 1483 in Andijan, and after the death of his father, Umar Shaykh Mirza, on 5 June 1494, he ascended the throne of Fergana at the age of twelve. This period was marked by intensified internal struggles among the Timurids in Movarounnahr, deepening political fragmentation, and the disruption of the balance of power among regional centers of authority. As a result of conflicts with the group led by Sultan Ahmad Tanbal, Babur was forced to leave Fergana. His campaigns for the throne of Samarkand between 1497 and 1500 also ended unsuccessfully. In 1504, he left Movarounnahr, captured Kabul, and transformed it into a strong political base. In 1511, with the assistance of Shah Ismail Safavi of Iran, he briefly regained Samarkand, but in 1512 he was defeated by the Shaybanids at the Battle of Kul-i Malik. Between 1514 and 1526, he





organized several campaigns into Northern India; in 1526 he defeated the Delhi Sultanate and founded the Mughal Empire. He died on 26 December 1530 [2].

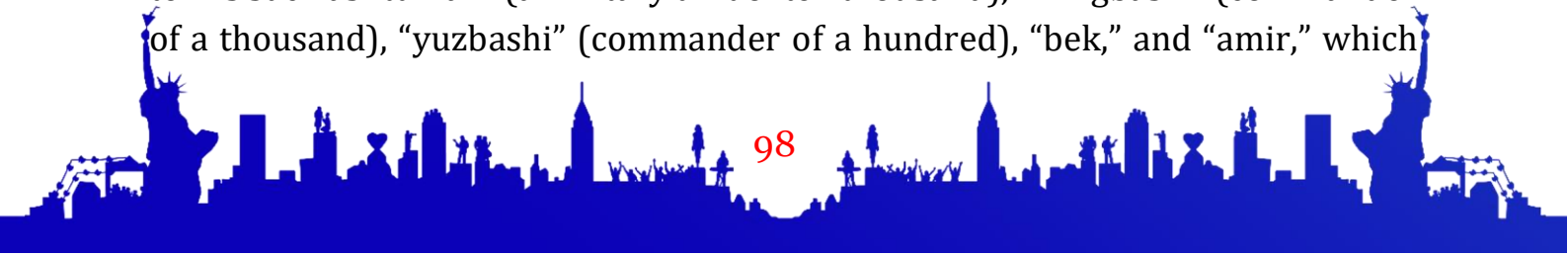
The events between 1494 and 1530 are recorded with annual precision, and the explicit mention of places such as Andijan, Samarkand, Hisar, Kabul, Delhi, and Agra ensures historical and geographical accuracy [2]. These facts make it possible to reconstruct the chronology of events, determine the routes of military campaigns, and trace the shifts of political centers. Population migrations, tribal alliances, and changes in the balance of territorial power are described in detail. From a socio-philosophical perspective, these processes are not random historical occurrences, but rather the result of a complex interaction between power, economic interests, and social structure.

In the “Baburnama”, the cities and provinces of Movarounnahr are depicted not merely as political centers, but as spaces of social and ethnic systems. Regarding Samarkand, the statement: “The people of Samarkand are Turks (Uzbeks)... their language corresponds to the literary language” highlights the significance of language as a factor of social identification [3]. The note that the inhabitants of Isfara and Margilan “speak Persian” indicates the existence of multilingualism in the region [4]. This, in turn, sheds light on the historical roots of cultural pluralism.

It is recorded that the Chakrak tribe around Andijan consisted of 5–6 thousand households, lived in mountainous areas, and was engaged in pastoralism [5]. These data reveal the socio-economic structure of society and the population’s adaptation to natural and geographical conditions. The inhabitants of Dahkat and Ura-Tepa are described in terms of rural life, animal husbandry, and linguistic characteristics [6]. These observations demonstrate the direct connection between society and ecological factors.

The work mentions numerous ethnonyms such as Duldoy, Barin, Charos, Qavchin, Toqchi, Arg’un, Uighur, Kipchak, Barlas, Dughlat, Manghit, Karluk, and Uzbek. These references make it possible to reconstruct the ethnic composition of the region. Representatives of the Duldoy tribe—Hafizbek, Janibek, Qasim Duldoy—are shown to have actively participated in political life. Members of the Arg’un tribe—Zunnun Arg’un, Shah Shuja’ Arg’un—played significant roles in political processes [7]. These facts demonstrate the interconnection between tribal structures and political authority.

The military-administrative structure is also described through specific terms such as “tuman” (a military unit of ten thousand), “mingbashi” (commander of a thousand), “yuzbashi” (commander of a hundred), “bek,” and “amir,” which





allow for the reconstruction of the hierarchy of governance. These terms reflect the multi-tiered structure of the actual administrative system [8]. It can be inferred that political authority was organized both vertically (from the center to the regions) and horizontally (among tribes and military units).

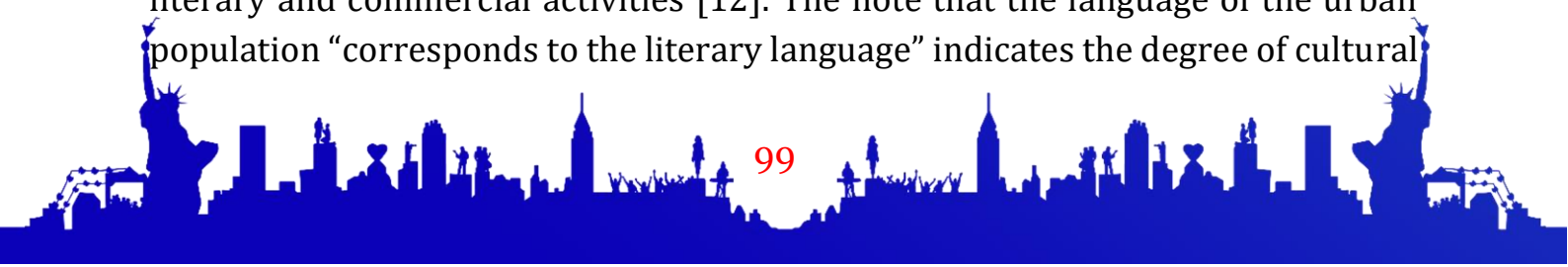
Economic and ecological observations are also presented systematically in the work. In the description of India, the abundance of water resources, the hot climate, the possibility of cultivating crops throughout the year, and the production of rice, sugarcane, and citrus fruits are noted [9]. It is emphasized that in some provinces two harvests per year could be obtained. This indicates a high level of agrarian production. The fertility of the lands around Delhi and Agra, as well as the high population density, are linked to political control. A broad tax base and the existence of a substantial treasury ensured the financial stability of the state.

In contrast, in the depiction of Movarounnahr, it is recorded that in certain regions irrigation networks were damaged, agriculture was disrupted due to wars, and prices sharply increased during periods of siege. This economic weakness directly affected political stability [10]. Thus, the relationship between natural resources and political authority is clearly demonstrated. The comparative analysis between India and Movarounnahr shows that the new empire emerged precisely in a region with greater economic potential.

The multi-ethnic composition of the Kabul province is also specifically mentioned in the work: Turks, Aymaks, desert Arabs, Sarts, Tajiks, Afghans, Hazaras, and other groups resided there, and more than ten languages were spoken [10]. This situation reflects processes of migration and cultural exchange. It can be understood that society was formed as an open system.

When analyzing the “Baburnama” as a source of social history, particular attention should be given to the information it provides about social structure. Alongside rulers, amirs, beks, and military commanders, the work also mentions ordinary people—farmers, pastoralists, craftsmen, and representatives of nomadic tribes [11]. This allows for an understanding not only of the political elite of society, but also of its broader social strata. In particular, through the depiction of rural populations, mountain communities, and nomadic clans, a realistic picture of socio-economic stratification is revealed.

Babur presents a comparative depiction of urban and rural life. Centers such as Samarkand and Andijan stand out for the development of their scholarly-literary and commercial activities [12]. The note that the language of the urban population “corresponds to the literary language” indicates the degree of cultural





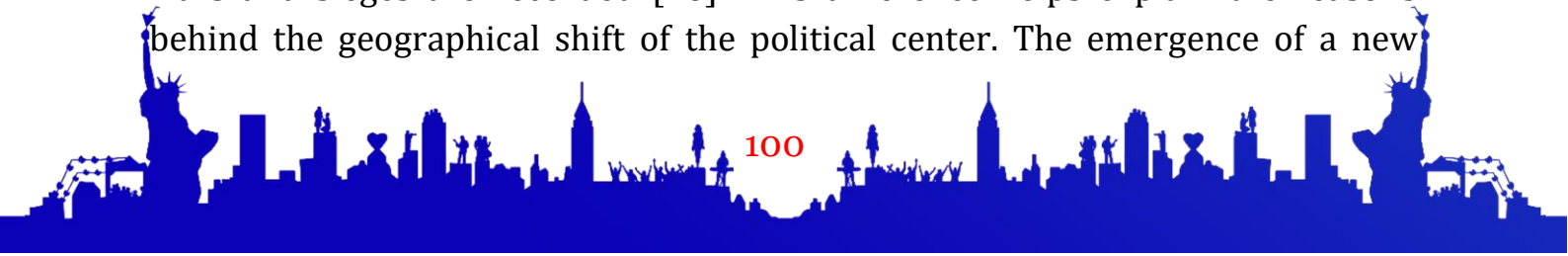
centralization. In rural areas, by contrast, economic activity was more closely tied to natural conditions, with pastoralism and agriculture predominating [12]. This distinction demonstrates the interdependence between urban civilization and the agrarian periphery. Political authority relied precisely on the balance of economic and military resources between these two spheres.

The issue of ethnic composition in the work appears not merely as a nominal listing of tribes, but as an active element of the political process. Tribes were often mobilized as military units and, in certain cases, acted as subjects of political alliance or opposition. This situation makes it possible to interpret ethnic unity not only as cultural identification, but also as a form of political and military organization. For example, the Barlas, Kipchak, or Arg'un tribes are mentioned not merely as genealogical entities, but as concrete military-political forces [13]. This indicates that, in the society of that period, the ethnic factor constituted an integral component of the structure of power.

Processes of migration are also deeply reflected in the "Baburnama". The relocation of part of the population of Movarounnahr to Kabul as a result of Shaybanid pressure demonstrates the demographic consequences of political transformations [14]. This migration led to the formation of a multi-ethnic social environment in new territories. The presence of various languages in the Kabul province and the coexistence of different communities reveal the multi-layered and integrated structure of society. From a socio-philosophical perspective, this process illustrates mechanisms of cultural exchange and social adaptation.

The issue of military-administrative structure also provides important information about the political organization of society. The precise use of terms such as "tuman," "mingbashi," "yuzbashi," "bek," and "amir" makes it possible to reconstruct the hierarchical structure of governance [15]. This hierarchy indicates the vertical organization of the state apparatus, with military power serving as the primary foundation of political authority. At the same time, the fact that military units were often formed on a tribal basis further strengthened the interconnection between political authority and ethnic structure.

Economic observations in the work are also closely interconnected with political processes. The agrarian potential of India, the abundance of water resources, and the possibility of obtaining harvests throughout the year are evaluated as the economic foundation of the empire. In contrast, in Movarounnahr, economic decline, food shortages, and rising prices resulting from wars and sieges are recorded [16]. This difference helps explain the reasons behind the geographical shift of the political center. The emergence of a new





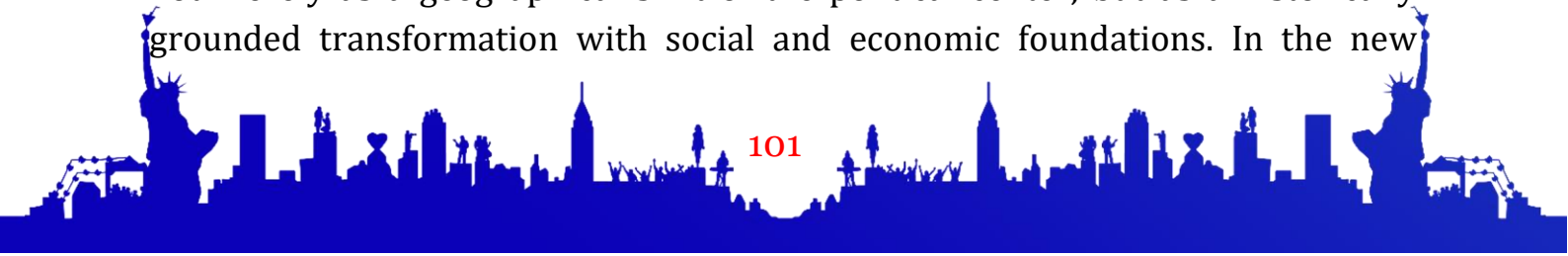
empire in a region characterized by economic stability appears as a historical закономерияt.

Thus, the “Baburnama” represents not merely a sequence of events, but a complex historical text reflecting the internal mechanisms of society. Ethnic composition, social stratification, economic base, military organization, and political authority are depicted as interconnected elements. This allows the work to be studied not as a simple memoir, but as a social model of Central Asian and Indian society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

A deeper analysis of the “Baburnama” demonstrates that the work reflects not only the recording of events, but also the process of the formation of historical consciousness. Babur narrates events not as a mere chronicler, but as an individual aware of his place within the historical process. In his text, history appears as a phenomenon reflected in the consciousness of the subject. This aspect allows the work to be examined from the perspective of historical memory and the phenomenon of personality. Alongside his successes, Babur openly records his defeats and critically evaluates some of his own decisions [17]. This indicates that he understood historical processes not as divine fate, but as the result of human choice and political calculation. Such a manifestation of historical consciousness is rare in medieval Eastern political thought and transforms the “Baburnama” into a unique source in which personal experience and historical generalization are harmoniously combined.

The issue of authority in the work is also presented not merely as political dominance, but in connection with moral responsibility. As a ruler, Babur considers justice, order, and the preservation of social stability as the primary tasks of governance. He criticizes the tyranny or incorrect policies of certain officials and at times explains his own firm decisions. This demonstrates the necessity of grounding authority not only in force, but also in moral responsibility. In this way, the interconnection between power and ethics becomes evident in the “Baburnama.” The idea that a ruler must be both strong and just is repeatedly discernible in the text.

The process of imperial formation is also interpreted alongside social transformation. Political instability, dynastic conflicts, and economic weakness in Movarounnahr compelled Babur to seek new territories. In India, however, a strong agrarian base, abundant water resources, and high population density created material conditions for centralized governance [18]. This process appears not merely as a geographical shift of the political center, but as a historically grounded transformation with social and economic foundations. In the new





territory, Babur did not limit himself to military victory; he adapted the administrative system, took local traditions into account, and carried out political integration. This demonstrates that the process of empire-building was not solely conquest, but also a stage of social adaptation and transformation.

Babur's views on the state and society are clearly visible in the text. He conceives the state as a synthesis of military power, economic resources, and social unity. The layered structure of the military-administrative system—expressed through titles such as tuman, mingbashi, yuzbashi, bek, and amir—demonstrates the systematic character of the governance mechanism [19]. However, this system functioned not only as a vertical hierarchy, but also as a structure closely interconnected with tribal and ethnic units. Thus, the state apparatus did not represent a mechanical system detached from society, but rather a political form emerging from the social structure itself. This makes the “Baburnama” an important source for analyzing the interrelationship between state and society.

The comparative depiction of the civilizations of Movarounnahr and India also constitutes a significant layer of the work. Babur portrays Movarounnahr as a center of scholarship and literature, a locus of historical tradition and dynastic heritage. India, by contrast, appears as a region endowed with natural wealth, fertile land, and economic potential [20]. This comparison is not merely a geographical description, but a criterion for assessing political and social opportunities. While political fragmentation and resource scarcity in Movarounnahr made the stabilization of authority difficult, the strong economic base of India enabled the construction of a centralized empire [21]. Thus, the civilizational characteristics of two historical spaces are analyzed comparatively, and the material and social foundations of political transformation are revealed.

In general, the “Baburnama” goes beyond the narration of events. Issues such as historical consciousness, the moral responsibility of authority, the relationship between state and society, ethnic structure, economic foundations, and civilizational comparison are reflected within a unified logical system. Therefore, the work serves not only as a source of empirical historical data, but also as a solid foundation for theoretical and philosophical analysis. From the perspective of understanding history through personal experience, linking authority with moral responsibility, and portraying society as a complex social system, the “Baburnama” emerges as a product of elevated intellectual thought for its time.

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