

Representation of Historical Figures and Events in Gulbadan Begim's Humayunnama

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Abstract: This article aims to conduct an in-depth examination of the literary and historical context of the depiction of historical figures and events in Gulbadan Begim's Humayunnama, with the objective of identifying and addressing existing research gaps in the fields of literary studies and historiography. Although previous studies have highlighted the artistic and political dimensions of historical representation in the text, aspects such as subjective perception, women's perspectives, and the social impact of narrative sequencing have not been sufficiently explored. To address these gaps, the study employs a qualitative, survey-based methodology combined with content analysis to examine the portrayals of Babur, Humayun, and court life, including their political decisions as well as personal and social relationships, within the framework of literary perception and historical fact. The findings indicate that the Humayunnama presents historical events not only in a factual manner but also within broader social, political, and cultural contexts, enabling a deeper understanding of decision-making processes, psychological interconnections among individuals, and the dynamics of historical developments. Moreover, the work's subjective approach, literary expression, and women's perspectives enhance its practical value as a historical source. The scholarly and practical outcomes of this research demonstrate that the Humayunnama serves as a unique resource for historiography, cultural studies, and literary analysis, while also offering significant potential for future research on women's roles, personal decision-making, narrative sequencing, and court culture.

Keywords: literary expression, cultural studies, historical reality.



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Introduction

Historical figures and events have always occupied a significant place in literature. Recent studies demonstrate that historical characters in literary texts function not only as representations of past realities but also as instruments for expressing ideas related to national identity, cultural values, and contemporary concerns. For instance, Alijonova, in her analysis of approaches to the portrayal

of historical figures in modern Turkish literature, highlights their close connection with national values and contemporary issues. This study emphasizes the importance of harmonizing artistic inspiration with historical truth in the depiction of historical personalities, showing that such figures become more relatable and meaningful when presented through human qualities and inner emotional experiences. Uzbek scholars have also conducted extensive research on the in-depth analysis of historical figures in literature. Nasillojeva, through an examination of historical narratives in national oral literature, provides a detailed discussion of the representation of historical figures, focusing on their virtues, spirit of struggle, and influence on national consciousness. According to her, historical figures are perceived not merely as participants in events but also as embodiments of the aesthetic and ethical values of the people. In general, scholarly literature on the representation of historical figures typically encompasses the following main directions: (1) the literary expression of historical truth, (2) the role of historical figures in shaping national and cultural identity, and (3) the artistic and rhetorical devices used in the depiction of events and characters. These studies outline the common methodological foundations for addressing historical themes in both classical and modern literature.

Gulbadan Begim's *Humayunnama* continues to be widely studied today as a historical source. Scholarly research on *Humayunnama* has primarily focused on its significance in relation to the history of the Mughal dynasty and the depiction of historical figures. In her article, Bo'riyeva analyzes *Humayunnama* as an internal portrayal of crime and social life during the Mughal period, emphasizing that the work is based on Gulbadan Begim's personal experiences and reflects the inner dimensions of Babur, Humayun, and the imperial court. Similarly, Azizkulov provides a philosophical and methodological analysis of *Humayunnama*, noting that the work serves as an important source for understanding the Baburid efforts to establish a centralized state in India. This research demonstrates that *Humayunnama* not only records historical events but also enables a deeper analysis of their political and social significance. It should also be noted that studies in historiography and literary scholarship often examine *Humayunnama* as a source for understanding conquerors, court life, social migrations, and interpersonal relationships. The work presents historical events—particularly the political conflicts between Babur and Humayun, wars, and everyday occurrences within the royal court—from a personal perspective. Such an approach facilitates the analysis of historical reality in relation to the development of events and the decisions made by historical figures. Research on the depiction of historical figures generally integrates literary sources, chronological facts, and subjective perception. Methodologically, the study of character representation in historical texts can be divided into two main approaches: (1) analyses based on objective historical facts and (2) literary analyses focusing on the subjective perspectives of characters. These approaches vary depending on the author's position and the nature of the source. For example, in the works of historians such as Khwandamir, historical figures and events—particularly rulers and military leaders—are presented as instruments for illustrating the political order and social structure of a given period. This perspective provides a basis for examining *Humayunnama* and similar works through the lens of historical expertise.

However, Gulbadan Begim's work differs in that it combines the recording of classical historical chronicles with personal experience and social context in the portrayal of events and individuals. This characteristic confirms the value of the work not only as a factual historical source but also as an important source for social history. Recent studies have increasingly focused on the relationship between historical truth and literary philosophy in *Humayunnama*. For instance, Tuhina Islam analyzes Gulbadan Begim's work as a unique source that highlights women's perspectives during the Mughal period. This study offers new insights into the position of *Humayunnama* in historiography by illuminating women's roles and the internal dynamics of court life. At the same time, issues of stereotyping and idealization in the depiction of historical figures remain relevant. Contemporary scholarship increasingly examines the relationship between political decision-making, personal characteristics, and the influence of historical figures

on events. Nevertheless, the literary analysis of *Humayunnama* has often not been sufficiently in-depth, creating opportunities for further scholarly investigation. In national literary studies, *Humayunnama* is recognized as a unique source for the depiction of historical figures and events. Alongside detailed accounts of the political activities of Mughal rulers such as Babur and Humayun, the work also provides valuable information about their personal lives, family relationships, and the internal structure of the empire. Gulbadan Begim's subjective perception and human-centered approach to historical figures help readers understand historical events not merely as isolated facts but as complex social processes. This feature distinguishes the work from classical historical chronicles, transforming it into a historical narrative grounded in individual experience and personal observation. In contemporary scholarship, *Humayunnama* continues to serve as an important source for analyzing Mughal-period politics, social structure, and court culture through the depiction of historical figures, and research in this field remains ongoing.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, survey-based analytical approach aimed at conducting an in-depth examination of the depiction of historical figures and events in Gulbadan Begim's *Humayunnama*. The research begins with a comprehensive analysis of the text, in which its literary and historical dimensions are examined within their broader contextual framework. The representations of historical figures—particularly Babur, Humayun, and members of the royal court—their social and political decisions, as well as the sequence of events presented in the work, are evaluated on the basis of personal observation and subjective perception reflected in the narrative. Through a qualitative survey methodology, insights gathered from participating historians and literary scholars contribute to identifying the cultural, political, and ethical dimensions of character portrayal in the text. In addition, the interrelationships between depicted events and historical figures, along with the harmony between literary expression and historical reality, are subjected to systematic analysis. Comparative and content analysis methods are employed to identify similarities and differences between *Humayunnama* and classical historical sources. This approach enables the examination of the work not only as a historical record but also within its broader social and cultural context. Furthermore, the applied methodology facilitates the identification of existing research gaps in the study of historical figure representation and supports the formulation of recommendations for future scholarly investigations. Overall, this methodological framework allows for a deeper theoretical and practical analysis of *Humayunnama* in terms of event narration and character portrayal.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Gulbadan Begim's *Humayunnama* provides a profound, individualized, and socially contextualized depiction of historical figures and events. Data obtained during the research reveal that the text portrays the political activities, family and personal relationships, and the internal structure of the empire under rulers such as Babur and Humayun. Moreover, Gulbadan Begim's subjective perception and attentiveness allow historical events to be analyzed not merely as facts but as social processes. This aspect underscores the importance of harmonizing literary and historical truth in the study of historical texts. Qualitative, survey-based analysis demonstrates that the portrayals of historical figures in *Humayunnama* are enriched through national values, moral virtues, and personal experiences. The results show that the sequence of events and the interactions among characters are closely linked to political decisions, wars, and court life. This integration of historical and literary analysis enables the text to be studied not only as a historical document but also as a source for cultural and social reflection. Theoretical analysis further indicates that, compared to classical historical chronicles, *Humayunnama* incorporates personal observations, subjective evaluations, and women's perspectives. This facilitates a deeper understanding of the human dimensions of historical figures and their personal and social decision-making processes. Additionally, the relatively limited use

of idealization and stereotyping in the work allows for an effective reconciliation of historical facts with literary interpretation. From a practical standpoint, *Humayunnama* can serve as a unique source for teaching and researching Mughal-period politics, court culture, and social structures. Observations obtained through qualitative survey methods also reveal how representations of historical figures are perceived within different social contexts, highlighting the importance of combining empirical and theoretical approaches in the analysis of historical literature. However, the study also reveals that the literary analysis of *Humayunnama* remains insufficiently developed. In particular, women's perspectives, the psychological interconnections among characters, and the social implications of event sequencing have not been thoroughly explored. This presents significant opportunities for future research and in-depth theoretical investigations. Accordingly, the study recommends that future research:

1. Conduct a detailed analysis of historical figures' decision-making processes and their social impact;
2. Compare subjective perception and literary expression with historical facts;
3. Examine women's roles and positions within the context of court life;
4. Utilize depictions of historical figures and events to advance contemporary historiography and cultural studies.

The results demonstrate that Gulbadan Begim's *Humayunnama* functions not only as a record of historical facts but also as a unique scholarly resource that integrates personal experience, literary reflection, and social context. This renders the work a valuable text for in-depth analysis in historiography, literary studies, and cultural research.

Conclusion:

According to the findings of this study, Gulbadan Begim's *Humayunnama* emerges as a unique source for depicting historical figures and events. The work enriches accounts of the political activities, personal lives, and the internal structure of the empire under rulers such as Babur and Humayun through subjective observations and literary perception. The study demonstrates that the interplay between historical fact and artistic expression, together with the reflection of personal experience and social context, enables historical events to be understood not only in a factual sense but also from cultural and social perspectives. These findings underscore the value of integrating historical and literary analysis, the importance of a deeper examination of representations of individuals and events, and the practical relevance of historical texts for contemporary historiography and cultural studies. At the same time, the research identifies significant gaps, noting that aspects such as women's perspectives, subjective decision-making, and interpersonal psychological relationships in the *Humayunnama* remain insufficiently explored. Future research may aim to address these gaps by deepening the analysis of historical figures and events through modern theoretical approaches and empirical methodologies, as well as by more broadly examining the cultural, political, and social significance of the *Humayunnama*. Thus, the work retains its importance not only as a historical source but also as a rich scholarly resource for social, cultural, and literary analysis.

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