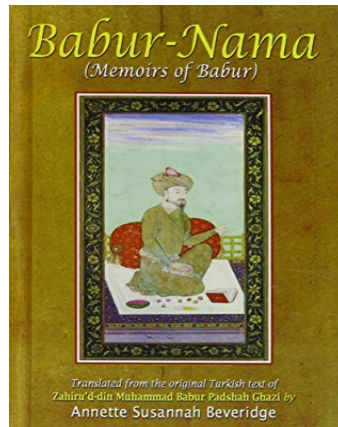


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The Bāburnāma. literally: "History of Babur" or "Letters of Babur"; alternatively known as Tuzk-e Babri) is the memoirs of Ṣāhīr-ud-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur (1483–1530), founder of the Mughal Empire and a great-great-great-grandson of Timur.

Bābur was an educated Timurid prince and his observations and comments in his memoirs reflect an interest in nature, society, politics and economics. His vivid account of events covers not just his own life, but the history and geography of the areas he lived in as well as the people with whom he came into contact. The book covers topics as diverse as astronomy, geography, statecraft, military matters, weapons and battles, plants and animals, biographies and family chronicles, courtiers and artists, poetry, music and paintings, wine parties, historical monument tours as well as contemplations on human nature.

Though Babur himself does not seem to have commissioned any illustrated versions, his grandson began as soon as he was presented with the finished Persian translation in November 1589. The first of four illustrated copies made under Akbar over the following decade or so was broken up for sale in 1913. Some 70 miniatures are dispersed among various collections, with 20 in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The three other versions, partly copied from the first, are in the National Museum, New Delhi (almost complete, dated 1597-98), British Library (143 out

of an original 183 miniatures, probably early 1590s) with a miniature over two pages in the British Museum,, and a copy, mostly lacking the text, with the largest portions in the State Museum of Eastern Cultures, Moscow (57 folios) and the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (30 miniatures). Various other collections have isolated miniatures from these versions. Later illustrated manuscripts were also made, though not on as a grand a scale.

Babur is at the centre of most scenes shown. As far is known, no contemporary images of him survive, but from whatever sources they had Akbar's artists devised a fairly consistent representation of him, "with a roundish face and droopy moustache", wearing a Central Asian style of turban and a short-sleeved coat over a robe with long sleeves.

Coming from a period after Akbar's workshop had developed their new style of Mughal painting, the illustrated Baburnamas show developments such as landscape views with recession, influenced by Western art seen at court.

Generally the scenes are less crowded than in earlier miniatures of "historical" scenes.