

THE CONCEPT OF WAR IN UZBEK CLASSICAL LITERATURE: ITS MEANING  
AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION

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**Abstract.** The concept of war occupies a significant place in Uzbek classical literature, where it is not merely portrayed as a historical or military phenomenon but as a complex moral, philosophical, and aesthetic category. Classical authors interpreted war through symbolic imagery, ethical reflections, and didactic narratives, emphasizing its destructive consequences as well as its role in testing human virtues such as courage, loyalty, and justice. This article examines the semantic scope of the concept of war in Uzbek classical literature and analyzes its artistic interpretation in poetic and prose works. The study reveals that war is often depicted not as an end in itself, but as a means to convey broader ideas related to morality, power, fate, and human responsibility.

**Keywords:** Uzbek classical literature, concept of war, artistic interpretation, symbolism, ethical discourse.

Uzbek classical literature, formed at the intersection of Turkic, Persian, and Islamic intellectual traditions, reflects the social, political, and philosophical realities of its historical periods. One of the recurrent themes in this literary heritage is war, which appears in epic narratives, historical chronicles, and lyrical works. Unlike purely historical accounts, literary representations of war in classical texts often transcend factual descriptions and acquire symbolic and moral dimensions.

The concept of war in Uzbek classical literature is deeply intertwined with notions of justice, destiny, heroism, and divine will. Classical authors used war narratives to explore the nature of power, the fragility of human life, and the ethical dilemmas faced by individuals and rulers alike. Therefore, analyzing the artistic interpretation of war provides valuable insights into the worldview and cultural values embedded in Uzbek classical literary tradition.

This article is based on a qualitative literary analysis of selected works from Uzbek classical literature, including epic poetry, historical narratives, and didactic texts. The study employs a conceptual and interpretative approach, focusing on semantic analysis, imagery, symbolism, and narrative functions of war-related motifs. Comparative elements are used to highlight recurring patterns and shared thematic structures across different genres and authors.

In Uzbek classical literature, war is not limited to its literal meaning as armed conflict. It often symbolizes broader existential struggles, such as the battle between good and evil, justice and tyranny, or reason and desire. Literary texts frequently portray war as a manifestation of social disorder caused by moral decay or unjust leadership. In this sense, war becomes a consequence rather than a cause, reflecting deeper ethical and spiritual crises within society.

At the same time, war is sometimes represented as an inevitable part of historical destiny. Classical authors acknowledge its destructive power while recognizing its role in shaping political order and social transformation. This dual perception allows war to function as both a tragic reality and a narrative device through which authors convey lessons about responsibility, moderation, and the consequences of ambition.

The artistic portrayal of war in Uzbek classical literature relies heavily on figurative language, symbolism, and allegory. Battle scenes are often described using vivid metaphors drawn from nature, such as storms, fire, and darkness, emphasizing chaos and destruction. These images serve not only to dramatize events but also to evoke emotional and ethical responses from the reader.



The concept of war has long attracted the attention of scholars studying classical Eastern and Turkic literatures, where military conflict is often interpreted not merely as a historical event but as a complex cultural and philosophical phenomenon. In studies devoted to Uzbek classical literature, war is frequently examined within broader discussions of epic tradition, ethical discourse, and the socio-political realities reflected in literary texts. Researchers emphasize that classical authors rarely depict war as an isolated act of violence; instead, it is embedded within moral narratives that explore justice, power, fate, and human responsibility.

Early literary-historical studies, particularly those conducted in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, approached the theme of war primarily from a historical and ideological perspective. Scholars such as E. E. Bertels analyzed classical Turkic and Persianate texts by focusing on their historical background and the reflection of feudal conflicts, dynastic struggles, and state-building processes. Within this framework, war was often interpreted as a reflection of political realities rather than as an independent artistic concept. However, these studies laid an important foundation by identifying recurring motifs and narrative structures related to warfare in classical texts.

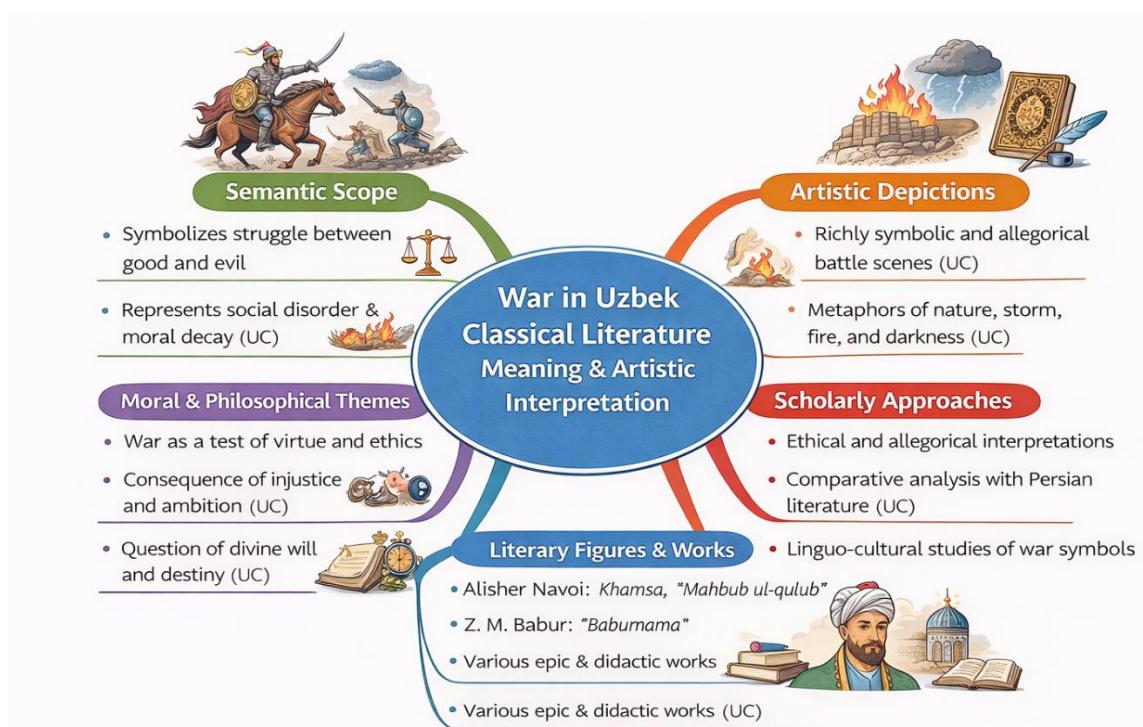
Subsequent research shifted toward a more text-centered and conceptual approach, emphasizing the symbolic and ethical dimensions of war. Literary scholars noted that in works attributed to figures such as Alisher Navoi and Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, war functions as a moral испытание, or test, revealing the virtues and flaws of both rulers and ordinary individuals. Studies in this vein highlight the didactic function of war narratives, arguing that classical authors used depictions of conflict to critique tyranny, condemn injustice, and promote ideals of wisdom, moderation, and compassion.

A number of researchers have focused on epic and heroic traditions, where war is a central narrative force. Analyses of classical epics emphasize the role of battle scenes in constructing heroic identity while simultaneously underscoring the transient nature of worldly power. Scholars argue that even when heroism is glorified, it is framed within strict moral boundaries, and excessive violence or ambition is portrayed as destructive. This duality has been identified as a distinctive feature of Uzbek classical literary thought, differentiating it from purely martial or celebratory representations of war.

In recent decades, concept-oriented and linguocultural studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of war as a literary concept. These studies examine how the semantic field of war is constructed through metaphors, imagery, and evaluative language. Researchers note that natural phenomena such as fire, storm, darkness, and blood are frequently employed to convey the chaos and moral disruption caused by war. At the same time, symbolic oppositions—such as justice versus oppression and order versus chaos—frame war as a consequence of ethical imbalance rather than as an inherent human condition.

Comparative literary studies have also enriched the discourse by situating Uzbek classical representations of war within a broader Eastern literary tradition. Scholars point out parallels with Persian and Arabic classical literature, where war similarly serves as a medium for moral reflection and philosophical inquiry. Within this comparative context, Uzbek classical literature is distinguished by its strong emphasis on ethical restraint and spiritual accountability, particularly in relation to leadership and governance.





Despite the growing body of research, the literature reveals a relative lack of studies that systematically analyze war as a unified conceptual category across different genres of Uzbek classical literature. Many existing works focus on individual authors or texts, leaving room for more integrative analyses that consider war as a multidimensional concept encompassing semantic, artistic, and philosophical layers. This gap underscores the relevance of further research aimed at synthesizing literary, cultural, and ethical perspectives on the concept of war in Uzbek classical literature.

Heroic characters are depicted as moral agents whose actions during war reflect their inner qualities. Courage, loyalty, and self-sacrifice are praised, while cruelty, arrogance, and greed are condemned. In many works, the true value of a hero lies not in physical strength alone but in wisdom, restraint, and adherence to moral principles. Thus, war becomes a context in which human character is tested and revealed.

Didactic elements are particularly prominent in classical narratives. Authors often use war episodes to warn rulers against injustice and excessive ambition. The suffering of civilians, the devastation of lands, and the impermanence of victory are highlighted to underscore the futility of violence and the transient nature of worldly power.

Beyond its narrative function, war in Uzbek classical literature operates as a moral and philosophical concept. It raises questions about the legitimacy of power, the ethics of leadership, and the responsibility of individuals within a collective struggle. Many texts emphasize that unjust wars lead to moral decline and social ruin, while conflicts rooted in justice and defense are portrayed with greater ethical complexity.

The spiritual dimension of war is also evident, as authors often interpret historical conflicts through a metaphysical lens. Victory and defeat are associated with divine justice, fate, or moral righteousness rather than mere military strength. This perspective reinforces the idea that war is ultimately governed by ethical and spiritual laws beyond human control.

**Table 1. Uzbek classical literature**

| Author / Scholar | Work(s) | Research Focus | Interpretation of War | Scholarly Contribution |
|------------------|---------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
|------------------|---------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|



|                                  |   |  |   |  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Alisher Navoi</b>             | <i>Khamsa, Mahbub ul-qulub</i>                    | Ethical and didactic poetics             | War as a moral test and consequence of injustice    | Establishes war as an ethical and philosophical category |
| <b>Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur</b> | <i>Baburnama</i>                                  | Historical narrative and self-reflection | War as historical necessity and personal experience | Combines factual history with moral evaluation           |
| <b>E. E. Bertels</b>             | <i>History of Uzbek Literature</i>                | Literary-historical analysis             | War as reflection of socio-political realities      | Provides foundational historical-literary framework      |
| <b>N. Karimov</b>                | <i>Uzbek Classical Literature and Its Poetics</i> | Poetic structure and worldview           | War as an artistic and ideological construct        | Highlights aesthetic and conceptual dimensions           |
| <b>A. Rasulov</b>                | Studies on classical poetry                       | Artistic thinking and imagery            | War as symbolic representation of chaos and power   | Explores metaphorical language and imagery               |
| <b>J. S. Meisami</b>             | Persian historiography studies                    | Narrative traditions                     | War as moralized historical discourse               | Connects Uzbek literature to Persian literary models     |
| <b>F. D. Lewis</b>               | Studies on classical Eastern literature           | Comparative literary analysis            | War as spiritual and ethical struggle               | Emphasizes philosophical interpretation                  |
| <b>I. M. Lapidus</b>             | <i>A History of Islamic Societies</i>             | Socio-cultural history                   | War as part of political and religious order        | Contextualizes literary depictions historically          |
| <b>S. Ahmed</b>                  | Medieval Islamic thought studies                  | Ethics and power                         | War as ethical dilemma and legitimacy issue         | Links war narratives to moral philosophy                 |
| <b>S. Reichmuth</b>              | Studies on premodern Muslim literature            | Literary representations of conflict     | War as narrative tool for moral instruction         | Identifies didactic function of war imagery              |

The concept of war in Uzbek classical literature is multifaceted, encompassing historical reality, moral reflection, and artistic symbolism. Classical authors present war not merely as a sequence of battles but as a profound human experience with ethical, philosophical, and social implications. Through rich imagery and allegorical narratives, war is used to critique injustice, explore human virtues, and convey timeless lessons about power and responsibility.

The artistic interpretation of war in Uzbek classical literature demonstrates a deep awareness of its destructive nature while simultaneously recognizing its role in shaping moral consciousness and historical memory. This literary legacy offers valuable perspectives for contemporary readers, emphasizing the enduring relevance of ethical reflection in times of conflict.



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