

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE EASTERN RENAISSANCE AND IDEOLOGICAL CONNECTION WITH PHILOSOPHY ABU RAYHAN BERUNI

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the methodological problems of anthropological thought that emerged in Central Asia during the Early Renaissance and explores their conceptual connection with the philosophy of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. The scientific inquiries characteristic of this period were aimed at understanding human nature, studying its physical and spiritual dimensions, and interpreting intellectual and moral values on a philosophical basis. The article examines al-Biruni's views on anthropology, his approach to the study of the human being from scientific, ethical, and religious perspectives, as well as the methodological foundations of these approaches. Furthermore, the development of anthropological thought is discussed through a comparative analysis of al-Biruni's ideas alongside those of other prominent scholars of the Early Renaissance. The findings of the study underscore the continued relevance of al-Biruni's intellectual legacy for contemporary anthropological and philosophical research.

Keywords: Early Renaissance, anthropology, methodological issues, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, philosophical thought, views on human nature, Islamic worldview, Central Asian thinkers, moral and aesthetic values, scientific and philosophical heritage.

Introduction

Every stage of societal development is defined by scientific ideas and philosophical views formed on the basis of knowledge and sciences about human beings. Throughout their life, a person interacts with nature, society, and spirituality, becoming an object of comprehensive study not only as an individual but also as a social entity. Therefore, the need to study the essence of a person, their role, and activity in society on a scientific and practical basis has always remained relevant. Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, with his multifaceted scientific heritage, is a scholar who has made a unique contribution not only to the East but also to world science.

The Early Renaissance period was a crucial stage for human philosophy and anthropology, laying the foundation for the formation of ideas about human nature, their place in society, and spiritual values. During this era, viewing the human being as a unique spiritual and material entity, as well as reflections on their cognitive abilities and social responsibilities, occupied a



central position. Within this process, methodological problems—specifically, which methods and approaches to use in studying human existence and essence—gained particular importance. Efforts to resolve these issues in the anthropology of the Early Renaissance are ideologically connected with the philosophy of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, playing a significant role in interpreting human nature, cognitive processes, and social functions.

The philosopher's views focused on studying the human being as both a material and spiritual entity, and his approaches deeply influenced anthropological research during the Early Renaissance period. This paragraph analyzes the methodological problems of Early Renaissance anthropology and their ideological connection with Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's philosophical perspectives. The objective is to compare this connection with the philosophical views of other Renaissance scholars such as Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Farghani, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina, highlighting the commonalities and differences in their approaches to studying human nature. In the philosophy of the Early Renaissance, especially regarding anthropology, the conceptions were thoroughly examined, and researchers' perspectives on the problem of soul and body significantly influenced the future destiny of humanity.

The medieval era's interest in the problem of the human being differs in its characteristics from the perspectives of the ancient period. This is because the concepts of human, soul, cosmos, and existence were interpreted differently in ancient philosophy and Islamic teachings. From this standpoint, this paragraph attempts to analyze the ideological connection between Early Renaissance anthropology and the philosophy of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. After Central Asia was incorporated into the Caliphate, not only Islam but also the Arabic language and its script were introduced. The cities of Central Asia under the Caliphate experienced cultural advancement, with the establishment of madrasas and associated libraries. Many scholars emerging from these institutions acquired profound knowledge not only in religious sciences but also in secular fields such as mathematics, geometry, chemistry, medicine, philosophy, logic, history, and other disciplines.

Distinct bookstalls appeared in large marketplaces, reflecting the growing demand for science and education in the cultural and spiritual life of the local population. Islam, which spread widely in the East and attained the status of a world religion, along with Sharia law, became the ideological foundation of the Muslim world. The 9th to 12th centuries in Central Asia are referred to as the First Renaissance period for the peoples of Mawarannahr and Khorasan. During this time, although the influence of Arabs in science persisted in Khorasan and Mawarannahr, their political domination ended, and local traditions were revived. Remarkable achievements were made across all branches of science during this era.

This development was directly connected to the rule of the Tahirids, Samanids, and Karakhanids dynasties in Central Asia. During the 9th to 12th centuries, the emergence and growth of centralized states in Central Asia created favorable conditions for the advancement of science, architecture, trade, crafts, and agriculture in cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Urgench. The intellectual heritage of the scholars who lived and worked in Central Asia during



this period significantly influenced the development of science not only in the East but also in the West in the following centuries.

Overall, from the 9th to 12th centuries, the region produced some of the world's leading scholars who contributed to the progress of exact, natural, and humanitarian sciences. This resulted in the emergence of a phenomenon known as the Renaissance period. Furthermore, the foundation of Islam played a critical role in the social and philosophical development of Central Asia, opening a new era of spiritual renewal for the peoples of the world. The enlightenment ideals of Islam served to guide humanity toward noble goals.

In Islam, social virtues such as generosity, patience, honesty, loyalty, and sincerity are highly valued. Additionally, there are teachings aimed at improving interpersonal relationships, which are regarded as the highest form of human qualities achievable only by those with pure hearts. These virtues bring peace and stability to society, which is why fostering friendly relations among people is considered an essential demand of Islam.

In the Hadiths, it is emphasized that knowledge is a crucial factor in a person's development into a beneficial individual for both themselves and society, whereas ignorance leads society into darkness. The Islamic call to knowledge and enlightenment laid the foundation for the formation of a specialized Islamic scientific tradition in the 9th century. Beyond the philosophy, mathematics, logic, physics, and other sciences inherited from ancient Greek and classical scholarship, Islamic sciences such as Kalam (theology), Hadith studies, and Fiqh (jurisprudence) also emerged. Islam in the East developed not only as a religion but also as a comprehensive universal culture and spiritual worldview.

As a result, this fostered the renewal of global culture in fields such as science, philosophy, art, ethics, and politics. The 9th to 12th centuries are regarded as one of the richest periods in social, political, scientific, and cultural events for the peoples of Central Asia, including those in the territory of modern-day Uzbekistan. During this era, prominent Islamic scholars such as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam at-Tirmidhi, Al-Ghazali, and Nizam al-Mulk gained worldwide recognition for their contributions to Islamic sciences. In the realm of secular sciences, figures like Al-Farabi, Abu Rayhan Beruni, and Ibn Sina made significant advances.

Furthermore, in the sphere of Sufism and spiritual orders, scholars such as Ahmad Yasawi, Ahmad Yugnaki, Yusuf Khas Hajib, Najmuddin Kubra, and Bahauddin Naqshbandi contributed profoundly. Their ideas about the role of science and spirituality in social progress added substantial value to the global development of scientific and philosophical thought.

Among others, Abu Rayhan Beruni is recognized as a renowned encyclopedic scholar who made a significant contribution to world science and culture. Beruni's youth and formative years, as well as the development of his worldview, coincided with the final years of the Samanid dynasty's rule in Central Asia. It is known that as a result of the long struggle of the peoples of Central Asia against the Arab Caliphate, the Samanid state emerged in the 9th century in Transoxiana and Khorasan. This period was extremely complex and contradictory. On the one hand, feudal oppression intensified, and fierce struggles, wars, and conflicts over power between the fragmented feudal states in the region sharply escalated. Consequently, the



Samanid state faced decline. One of the main reasons for the weakening of the Samanid state was the growth of class contradictions and the sharp conflict between laborers and artisans on one side, and large landowners on the other. For example, in 961, the population of Bukhara rose in revolt against the ruling class. This process intensified the relentless struggle between various social strata, their philosophical ideas, currents, and beliefs. Such struggles manifested as visible conflicts between classes and groups in society.

In the 9th and 10th centuries, due to social shifts and the development of empirically based scientific knowledge, progressive philosophical doctrines emerged. These teachings also included materialistic views toward natural phenomena. The main representatives of such a worldview were great scholars such as Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, Abu Rayhan Beruni, and Abu Ali Ibn Sina. The scientific interests and worldview of Abu Rayhan Beruni were shaped significantly by the culture of the East, Greek science and philosophy, as well as the struggles of the peoples of our region for freedom and independence. Although Beruni achieved remarkable success in the field of science, he considered the knowledge he had acquired very limited compared to true knowledge, and even perceived himself as a person who knew nothing. Beruni is recognized as a person who dedicated his personal life to science and, more broadly, to life and society. He cared deeply about the freedom, liberty, and happiness of peoples, made great contributions to uniting representatives of various nations and religions, and to ensuring harmony of common ideas and interests among social groups and classes.

The earliest of Beruni's works that have reached us was written at the beginning of the 11th century. However, despite this period being the most flourishing era in the history of the peoples of Central Asia, the people did not live in peace. This, naturally, did not allow Beruni to express his thoughts independently and freely. Because, after the fall of the Samanid dynasty in Central Asia and the Turkic Karakhanid dynasty, the campaigns of Mahmud of Ghazni began in Transoxiana. At the same time, significant social-political and cultural changes were taking place in Iran and Central Asia. During the reign of Mahmud Ghaznavi (990–1030), his empire flourished and he founded a centralized state that conquered all of Iran and Central Asia. However, religious fanaticism and military campaigns under the banner of jihad to seize neighboring states hindered the political-economic development of Mahmud Ghaznavi's state and the flourishing of scientific and creative life. Gradually, the country began to decline and fragment. This situation was exploited by the leaders of the nomadic Oghuz tribes, Toghrulbek and Chaghribek, who founded the Seljuk Empire. In 1040, Mahmud's successor Mas'ud was defeated by the Oghuz at the battle near Sarakhs and Merv. Only eastern lands remained under Ghaznavid control, while Khorasan passed under Seljuk rule.

Starting from the Samanid period, Persian gradually replaced Arabic as the language of everyday use, and this language became dominant in Iran, Khorasan, and many other states. Many literary works, including rubaiyat (quatrains), and scientific treatises were written in Persian and Dari. Thus, by Beruni's time, Arabic and Persian had become the languages of art, culture, and literature. During this era, it became customary to write qasidas, ghazals, and rubaiyat in poetry. Poets gathered at the court composed qasidas praising the ruler's deeds and



inspiring noble causes. Additionally, Sufi poetry began to develop during this period. Sufi sheikhs skillfully expressed the interests, struggles, and needs of ordinary people in their poetry and ideas, harmonizing folk wisdom with Sufi doctrines.

Beruni shaped his scientific and theoretical heritage by relying on the works and teachings of great scholars who lived before him, deeply analyzing, commenting on, and further developing them on a scientific basis. He studied the ideas of scholars such as Zoroaster, Plato, Aristotle, and Al-Farabi, reaching the level of an encyclopedic scholar. As noted above, the spiritual legacy of ancient scholars had a significant impact on the formation of Beruni's worldview, elevating him to the status of a great thinker and scholar.

It is known that among Central Asian scholars, Al-Farabi read the works of ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, and Porphyry, developed their teachings, and even wrote commentaries explaining difficult parts of Aristotle's works like "Metaphysics," "Ethics," "Rhetoric," and "Sophistics." The commentaries written by Abu Nasr Al-Farabi played an important role in shaping the worldview of scholars in the Middle and Near East.

Conclusions

The anthropological views of the Early Renaissance period, particularly the legacy of Abu Rayhan Beruni, represent a high example of scientific and philosophical thought in Central Asia. He combined empirical observation, religious-philosophical reflection, and historical experience in studying human nature. In his works, Beruni thoroughly analyzed the physical and spiritual essence of humans, laying the foundation for anthropology to develop as an independent scientific discipline. In defining the methodological foundations of science, he relied on universal reasoning and sought to unite Islamic beliefs with the traditions of Greek philosophy.

This research shows that the methodological problems arising in anthropological thought during the Early Renaissance period were not only theoretical but were also intrinsically linked with practical, philosophical, and cultural processes. In particular, the interrelationship between humans and society, knowledge and ethics, body and soul are deeply analyzed in Beruni's philosophy.

Today, these approaches confirm once again the necessity to enrich the current methodological foundations of anthropology, strengthen humanistic principles, and take into account historical and cultural heritage in scientific research.

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