

REFLECTIONS ON THE BIRTHPLACE OF AMIR TEMUR

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Abstract:

Amir Temur, one of the most famous military leaders in the world, fully demonstrated his extraordinary military leadership skills granted by God, becoming an unparalleled great army commander, a statesman, and a patron of science and culture – recognized as the founder of the Second Renaissance. During his time, he successfully defeated all his rivals and became the ruler of Movarounnahr. He is remembered in history as the founder of the empire known as the Timurids dynasty. His vast empire stretched from India and China to the Black Sea, covering regions from the Aral Sea to the Persian Gulf, including parts of Small Asia, Syria, Egypt, the lower the Volga, the Don, the area around Lake Balkhash, the Elsuvi River, and Northern India, establishing a great state.

Keywords: Renaissance, empire, manuscript, historian, place of birth,, author, court, dynasty, village army, independence.

Introduction

This excerpt is a detailed discussion of historical perspectives on Amir Temur “Historical figures such as Amir Temur, commanders, and rulers are brought to life by the demands of history, the requirements of their time, and, if necessary, by the needs of society, creating an opportunity to demonstrate their virtues... Anyone who believes that Amir Temur appeared by chance on the ancient land of Turkistan is mistaken. The reason is that nothing occurs suddenly.” [1.3]

Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Uzbekistan

Today, the people in my country, under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, have united around the main idea titled “From National Revival to National Advancement” and are working towards building the foundation of the Third Renaissance. In this context, it is highly relevant to thoroughly study the personality and policies of Amir Temur, the founder of the second period of Awakening in the history of our homeland, as the cornerstone of the Third Renaissance.

Amir Temur, known as one of the four most famous generals of the world, was a great military leader who fully demonstrated his capabilities and unmatched skills. After achieving victory in several battles, he became the ruler of Movarounnahr and established the Timurid Empire. He created a vast empire that spanned from India and China to the Black Sea, and from the Aral Sea to the Persian Gulf. Additionally, he subordinated regions such as Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, the lower Volga, the Don River, the Balkhash Lake, the Elsuvi River, and northern India.

Just like the rulers of the past, Temurbek did not inherit the throne as an ancestral property. Rather, through the grace of the Creator and his own diligent efforts, determination, and energy, he became the founder of a centralized state. Under his leadership, he managed to unite such a



vast territory (historians note that Amir Timur's empire united 27 states of that time, and by today's standards, this number has approached 40). In those years, the ancient and ever-vibrant city of Samarkand became almost the capital of the world. This great empire remains one of the most significant empires in human history.

It is noteworthy that such an extensive territory was governed by one man, who will became law for people of various religions and beliefs. Moreover, it is worth acknowledging that this union was not based on force or oppression (military actions organized to ensure the unity of the country are exceptions). Instead, the unified state was built on the compassion of the ruler, who offered protection to the nations under his reign, leading to prosperity and the desire for peaceful, affluent living.

The various views on Amir Timur, also known as Tamerlane, have been circulating for nearly 700 years in history. In essence, there are few individuals who have been judged from so many different perspectives as much as Amir Timur in the history of the world.

The expression of diverse opinions is natural, as the nature of progress (the movement that ensures life) demands it. In other words, development is the result of a struggle between opposing poles – it is inevitable that a single issue will not be viewed in the same way by everyone. In relation to our fellow countryman, Amir Timur, many factors that are intrinsic to human nature are embodied.

First of all, the reason for the conflict of opinions is the environment in which his activities took place, a space full of contradictions. At that time, the homeland was under the grip of oppression: the nearly one-and-a-half-century Mongol invasion had disrupted the usual course of everything, and long-established values were struggling within the pressure of new frameworks, with the nation losing its identity.

The second factor is directly related to the objectives of Amir Timur. In his "Temur tuzuklari" (Temur's Code) it is noted: "The first principle that rose from the East of my heart was to promote the Islamic faith and the Sharia of Muhammad (peace be upon him) everywhere and at all times." This means that his actions, dedicated to promoting Islam, would not be received the same way everywhere; they would naturally face resistance.

A third reason lies in the vastness of the regions over which our great ancestor rode his horse and ruled with his pen. The territories were not only vast in terms of distance but also diverse in terms of history, culture, population, customs – in short, the entire existence of these lands was too diverse to fit into a single mold. It would have been impossible to hold everyone in a single worldview or a uniform way of thinking in such an expansive domain.

The purpose of writing this article is to analyze the various pieces of information about the birthplace and personal qualities of Amir Timur, as provided by different sources. We aim to examine these details in our analysis, drawing on the accounts of two historians who were contemporaries of Amir Timur.

One of them is Ibn Arabshah (1392–1450), whose manuscript *Ajoyib ul-maqdur fi tarixi Taymur* offers a historical account. According to Ibn Arabshah, Amir Timur's full name was Temur ibn Taragay ibn Abagay, and he was born in the village of Khojailgar. Khojailgar was part of Kesh, a city in the region of Movarounnahr, located 13 farsakh (approximately 80 kilometers) from Samarkand. Ibn Arabshah also mentions that Amir Timur had around 40 peers, including Abbos, Jahonshoh, Qumori Inoq, Sulaymonshoh, Idiku Temur, Joki Barlos, and Sayfuddin Barlos. The



renowned sheikh Shamsuddin al-Foxuri of Kesh is said to have been Timur's mentor. The historian notes that from his youth, Timur was intelligent, compassionate, brave, determined, strong, and capable. Ibn Arabshah further describes Timur's victory over Husayn in the month of Sha'ban in 771 AH (February 28–March 29, 1370), after which he gained independent control and ruled until his death in 807 AH (February 1405) [5.64-74].

At this point, I would like to briefly touch upon the author. Ibn Arabshah's full name was Shihabuddin Ahmad ibn Abdulloh ibn Ibrohim, and he was born in Damascus in 1389 AD. After Amir Timur conquered Syria (Sham) in 1401, he brought many scholars, intellectuals, architects, and artisans from there to Movarounnahr. At the age of twelve, Ibn Arabshah was also brought to Samarkand with his family. He grew up there, studied in madrasas, gained a good education, learned Persian and Turkish, and eventually became a writer and a scholar.

This indicates that the Damascene prisoner did not live under oppression during the rule of Timur but was instead able to benefit from the favorable conditions created under the sovereignty of the Sahibqiron Amir Temur.

Ibn Arabshah is the author of several remarkable works. His *Mir'ot ul-adab fi-l bayon v-al-maoniy* ("The Mirror of Literature in Expression and Meaning"), *Jilvat al-amdah al-jamoliya fi-xullatay al-aruz v-al-arabiya* ("The Sublime Beauty of Praise Adorned with the Arabic Language and Prosody"), and *Foqihat al-xulafo va muhofiqat az-zurafo* ("The Delights of the Caliphs and the Charm of the Refined") are considered masterpieces of deep meaning, delicate style, and playful prose, and are considered gems of both Arabic and world literary treasures. One of his most famous works, which brought him worldwide recognition, is *Ajoyib al-maqdur fi tarixi Taymur* ("The Wonders of Destiny in the History of Timur"). In this work, Ibn Arabshah provides a detailed account of the reign, campaigns, and personal qualities of Amir Timur, based on events he personally observed and information he heard from others.

In his work, Ibn Arabshah approaches Amir Timur and his activities impartially. Although Timur was captured by his army and brought to a foreign land, Ibn Arabshah acknowledges Timur's military and constructive capabilities. He describes Amir Timur as a determined, resolute man who, no matter how harsh, always cherished truth, acted justly, was deep in thought, measured, entrepreneurial, courageous, compassionate, noble, and magnificent. In his portrayal, there is no excessive praise or exaggeration. "The emblem of Timur's seal is 'rosti rusti' – meaning 'if you are truthful, you will find salvation,'" the historian writes. Timur was a precise marksman, thoughtful, extremely wise, exceptionally fortunate, his grandeur befitting his stature, speaking with firm resolve, and even in times of adversity, he remained a righteous person. His gentleness was tempered with wrath, and his harshness blended with goodness.

Ibn Arabshah, like any other human being, presents the two contrasting aspects of Amir Timur's character impartially and justly. He highlights Timur's efforts to develop his homeland, his great patronage of science, culture, and his respect for scholars and virtuous people, while also noting that his compassion was intertwined with his awe-inspiring stature.

Ibn Arabshah is one of the authors who adopted a critical stance toward Amir Timur, and this is reflected in his work as well. For instance, he exaggerates the circumstances of Timur's childhood, the reasons for his military campaigns, and especially the number of war casualties. While many of Ibn Arabshah's negative claims are not corroborated by other contemporary authors, his work is valuable as one of the ancient manuscripts written by a historian who lived



during the time of Amir Timur.

Despite Ibn Arabshah's somewhat critical view, he still gave a fair evaluation of Timur's character. For example, he writes: "Even at seventy, Timur's thoughts are still firm, strong, and powerful in every way... He does not like mockery or falseness, and when faced with an unfortunate incident, he does not succumb to despair; he always remains vigilant and brave. Before him, everyone becomes obedient and shows respect. He favors brave and courageous people. He was an expert in immediately grasping the essence of any issue. He could distinguish between the truth-teller and the liar, and between sincere advisors and false counselors" [10.20-14].

We would also like to touch upon the information provided by another historian, Muiniddin Natanzi, the author of *Muntakhab ut-tawarikh-i Muiniy*, regarding the birthplace of Amir Timur. In his work *Muntakhab ut-tawarikh-i Muiniy*, the author mentions the village of Niyozzi as the birthplace of Amir Timur [2.262]. When Natanzi's work had not been thoroughly studied, scholarly literature considered only Ibn Arabshah as the contemporary historian who identified Khoja Ilgor as Timur's birthplace. Other historians merely limited themselves to stating that he was born near Kesh (Shahrisabz). We want to highlight this point.

At this point, we believe it is necessary to mention the life of the author of *Muntakhab ut-tawarikh-i Muiniy*, Muiniddin Natanzi. There is little information preserved about Natanzi's life. Based on his name, he was from Natanz, a city in the Isfahan province, which is located 134 km northeast of Isfahan. Natanz is home to many historical landmarks that have been preserved to this day.

After completing *Muntakhab ut-tawarikh-i Muiniy*, Natanzi presented the work to Shohrukh Mirza, the ruler of the Timurid state at the time, after his return from a military campaign to the West, on October 7, 1414. Natanzi refers to Shohrukh with the following titles: "Muin ud-dunya wa-d-din (Support of the World and Religion) Abulfath, Shohrukh Bahadur."

Natanzi also mentions that when Shohrukh went on a campaign to Azerbaijan and Persia, he entrusted the region of Khurasan to Amir Muso ibn Shadikhoja Bahadur Nasafi. According to the historian, during the time of the late Sahibqiron, this Amir was also engaged in important tasks [2.163]. When Amir Temur Shohrukh was returning from his journey, he met with Natanzi and, along with other gifts, mentioned that previous historical books written since the creation of the world had not covered the history of the Timurid dynasty. He instructed Natanzi to write a new book that would include the history of the Timurid period. Natanzi wrote this book and titled it *Muntakhab ut-tawarikh-i Muiniy* [2.139].

Amir Muso was one of the informants of Muiniddin Natanzi, and the historian likely obtained most of his information, including the report about Amir Timur's birthplace in the village of Niyozzi, from him. There is little information available about Amir Muso. However, the activities of an Amir Muso mentioned in the works of Nizami al-Shami in the *Zafarnama* and Abdurrazaq Samarkandi in *Matlai sa'dayn va majma'i bahrayn* align to some extent with the information provided by Muiniddin Natanzi about Muso ibn Shodikhoja Nasafi.

Two individuals named Amir Muso are mentioned in the works about the life of Amir Timur. The first is an influential figure in the early political activities of Timur, who was one of the prominent leaders of Mawarannahr and was the uncle of Saroymulkhonim, whom Timur married after the death of Amir Husayn. Although Amir Muso occasionally allied with Timur, he was



frequently in opposition to him. This continued even after Timur ascended to the throne. In *Zafarnama*, Nizami al-Shami mentions that Amir Muso was one of the conspirators against Timur when he returned from his 1372 campaign in Mongolia.

In *Zafarnama*, Nizami al-Shami also refers to Amir Muso as participating in the battles for the capture of the mountainous region of Katur during Timur's 1398 campaign in India. However, this Amir Muso, who gained fame for opposing Timur, is not the same one as the earlier Amir Muso, but rather, in our opinion, it is likely to be the later Amir Muso ibn Shodikhoja Nasafi, whom Natanzi encountered. The name Amir Muso is also mentioned in Timur's campaign against the Turkish Sultan Bayezid I, where he was assigned to fight on the left flank (maysara) commanded by Shohrukh during the Battle of Ankara.

In *Matlai sa'dayn va majma'i bahrayn*, Amir Muso is listed among the prominent generals appointed by Shohrukh in 1410 to oversee the reconstruction of the city of Merv [4.171].

Above, we have mentioned the two historians who provided information about Sahibqiron Amir Timur. Along with their information, we have also briefly discussed their backgrounds. Ibn Arabshah was only 16 years old when Amir Timur passed away. On the other hand, Muiniddin Natanzi was already one of the leading scholars of his time. According to Davlatshoh Samarqandi in his *Tazkirat ush-shu'aro*, "Muiniddin Natanzi spent some time in the courts of Mirza Iskandar ibn Mirza Umar Shaykh in Shiraz and Isfahan. He was among the famous scholars of Iraq-i Ajam and Persia during Sultan Iskandar's reign, and he wrote about Iskandar's position and history."

In addition, there are no sources that provide specific information about Sahibqiron Amir Timur, other than Ibn Arabshah. However, there is considerable information about the person who provided data to Muiniddin Natanziy (Amir Muso). Based on the provided information, it is evident that this individual was a significant figure during the era of Sahibqiron and held important political and military responsibilities. He was an influential leader who managed a part of the army and was tasked with executing vital state duties, which suggests that he was one of the close individuals from the royal dynasty who could provide detailed information about Sahibqiron.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that Muiniddin Natanziy presented his work to Sahibqiron's son, Shohrukh Mirza, after completing it. Shohrukh Mirza was certainly attentive to any information regarding Sahibqiron Amir Timur.

Here, we also need to consider the opinion of Japanese scholar Shiro Andjo, who proposed that Khoja Ilgor and Niyoziy are two different names for the same village. However, Uzbek scholars have proven, with evidence, that both villages have existed since ancient times. Moreover, the information provided by Muiniddin Natanziy about the political activities of Mirza Iskandar, as described in *Zubdat ut-tavorixi Boysung'uriy* by Khofizi Abruni and *Matlai sa'dayn va majmai bahrayn* by Abdurrazaq Samarkandi, might be more reliable and detailed.

The ruler of the Porsian province at that time, Iskandar ibn Mirza Umar Shaykh (1384-1415), who was born in 1384, was the grandson of Amir Temur. His father, Umar Shaykh Mirza, was the second son of Amir Temur, and Iskandar was born in the same year as Amir Temur's eldest son, Jahongir Mirza. Umar Shaykh Mirza showed his military abilities early on, participating in many of Amir Temur's campaigns and proving his valor as the governor of Fergana, protecting it from Mongol invasions. He died in 1394 during a military operation in Kurdistan, when he



was struck by an arrow while overseeing the siege of the Khurmatu fortress. His body was initially buried in Shiraz, then transferred to Shahrisabz, where a special building was constructed for his tomb. His grave is now part of the complex known as Dor us-Siodat.

These details show that Muiniddin Natanziy provided reliable information not only about Sahibqiron but also about other members of the royal family, analyzing and presenting significant historical facts about them.

Analysis of the sources shows that in the early stages of his political career, Amir Temur did not aim for supreme power. He spent his efforts attempting to restore the Amir Qazagon dynasty in Mawarannahr. Most of the victories over the Mongols were associated with Temurbek's name. However, after Amir Husayn, the grandson of Amir Qazagon, and other leaders, as well as the population of Mawarannahr, failed to meet the expectations, internal conflicts arose. During this period, the ideas of independence and unity spread widely and took root in various social classes. This is confirmed by the words in the *Muntaxab ut-tavorixi Muiniy*, where the elite of Turkistan addressed Amir Temur: "Because of you, the Mughal army is causing destruction in the land of Islam. The disorder in Mawarannahr is due to the disagreements between two emirs. Whatever happens, the punishment for this will come in this world and the hereafter. It is necessary to resolve this enmity and strive for peace for the benefit of Muslims."

When discussing the period of Amir Temur's reign, the historian's style becomes elevated. Over a century and a half of decline in Turona, significant changes began to unfold. Notably, Amir Temur had been planning large construction projects long before taking the throne, and once he ascended, he initiated these grand plans on a large scale: "In a short time, Samarkand blossomed so much that it was said to be as beautiful as the highest heaven and the paradise on the earth."

In *Muntaxab ut-tavorixi Muiniy*, there is also information about Amir Temur's personal qualities and his interest in various sciences: "He was deeply attentive to the people of wisdom and the scholars of knowledge. He would show great respect and honor to them. By listening to historical books, he acquired profound knowledge about the lineage of tribes, the places and deeds of Turkish, Arab, and Persian kings, as well as the various branches of this science... Moreover, scientific discussions were frequent in his gatherings. He understood delicate matters well, and often his opinions were sound and correct. He would frequently offer quick responses to famous matters in medicine and astrology... He spent most of his time conversing with scholars and religious leaders."

It is not surprising that such an enlightened ruler would pay great attention to the development of knowledge and science in his country: "He showed such respect and reverence for imams, Islamic scholars, judges, and great sheikhs that knowledge and science flourished immensely, with the allowance for students' allowances being set even higher than necessary. As a result, thousands of people with various kinds of knowledge, numerous talented individuals, appeared in the time of his glorious court, shining like the rays of light from his generosity."

The information in *Muntaxab ut-tavorixi Muiniy* further confirms that, during the era of Amir Temur, a strong foundation was laid for the unprecedented advancement of science in Mawarannahr, which later flourished during the time of Ulugh Beg.



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