

## THE LIFE AND STATECRAFT OF AMIR TEMUR IN JEAN BODIN'S INTERPRETATION

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### Abstract

In this article, the work of the French orientalist Jean Bodin, who commented on the life and statecraft of Amir Temur in the 16th century, is analyzed. In the early 16th century, the strengthening of the Habsburg dynasty in Germany posed a serious threat to both France and the Ottoman Empire. As a result, diplomatic relations emerged between the two states. French diplomats began visiting Constantinople from the 1530s onward. During these diplomatic missions, the envoys were impressed by the policy of tolerance in the Ottoman Empire. This, in turn, contributed to the emergence of the idea of “universalism” in the works of certain French orientalists, such as Jean Bodin. This was because France was experiencing intense religious conflicts.

**Keywords:** Dion, Timoleon, Aratus, Amir Temur, Sultan Bayazid, King Francis I, Jean Bodin, “The Six Books of the Republic” Ottoman Empire, Battle of Ankara.

### Introduction

If the main reasons for studying Amir Temur’s activities in France at the beginning of the fifteenth century were the Hundred Years’ War, the Western Schism, and the threat posed by the Ottoman Turks to the West, then from the sixteenth century onward this interest was also driven by the kings’ aspiration to establish absolute monarchy and by the religious divisions that emerged between Catholics and Protestants within the country. The French invasions of Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century became one of the principal factors contributing to the development of Renaissance civilization in France from the sixteenth century onward. Beginning with the reign of King Francis I (1515–1547), special attention was devoted to improving literacy and education throughout the country. Among the reasons for this policy were the religious conflicts that intensified in France in the early sixteenth century, the French king’s aspiration to establish absolute rule, and the growing influence of the Habsburg monarchy on France.

In the sixteenth century, France faced significant challenges in both its domestic and foreign policy. Internally, the country was engulfed by religious conflicts that spread across the entire kingdom, while externally the growing power of the Habsburgs increasingly alarmed the French government. The expansion of this dynasty also raised concerns within the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, the French government re-established relations with the Ottoman state regarding issues in the Middle East and North Africa.

For its part, the Ottoman Empire also found this alliance beneficial, viewing France as the most suitable partner in its struggle against the Habsburgs. As a result, from the first half of the sixteenth century, French envoys began visiting cities in Asia Minor. In addition to their



diplomatic duties, the French government assigned these missions the task of studying and bringing Eastern sources to France.

During negotiations in Constantinople, French diplomatic representatives became particularly interested in the Ottoman Empire's religious policies. The high level of tolerance practiced in the state deeply impressed French intellectual circles. Consequently, from the second half of the sixteenth century, some French authors began to emphasize the idea of "universalism" in their political writings.

## II.LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

This study analyzes the work "The Six Books of the Republic" by the French orientalist Jean Bodin. In it, Jean Bodin's views on the relationship between Amir Temur and Sultan Bayezid are examined on the basis of sources from the Timurid period.

In addition, a comparative-analytical method based on the principles of scientific rigor, objectivity, and historicity was applied in the analysis of scholarly opinions presented in the existing literature.

## III.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In some works of a political nature produced by French authors from the second half of the sixteenth century onward, the promotion of the idea of "universalism" occupied a primary place. It would not be an exaggeration to state that France's alliance with the Ottoman Empire laid the foundation for the scholarly study of Eastern history in the country. For example, Jean Bodin, one of the leading proponents of the idea of "universalism," devoted his work Six Books of the Commonwealth to such issues as the origins of laws in the past, the achievements and shortcomings of rulers, and the various forms of republican government. In Chapter V of the second book of this work, the history of Amir Timur is also discussed [1: 253-263]. In this chapter, Jean Bodin addresses the tyrannical aspects of rulers' conduct in the past. He begins by explaining the meaning of the term "tyrant," treating it as a synonym for "despot" or "oppressor," and then presents his views on the tyrannical characteristics through which rulers seize power: "...a tyrant, by his own authority, makes himself a sovereign prince, neither through election, nor hereditary right, nor fortune, nor just war, nor by any special calling from God. The elders and the laws agree that such a reign is but a period destined for death. Even the ancients ordained great rewards and honors for those who slew tyrants, considering such deeds a mark of nobility, courage, and virtue."

Through this statement, Bodin emphasizes that a tyrant acquires power illegitimately and outside the bounds of law and justice, while the struggle against tyranny was regarded by ancient societies as an honorable and virtuous act [1: 253]. In this regard, Jean Bodin drew attention to certain provisions of the Valerian Law. He emphasized that if a tyrannical magistrate killed an individual, no punishment was imposed upon him. On the contrary, if it was subsequently established that the deceased had aspired to sovereignty, the act was regarded as a manifestation of justice [2: 219]. Jean Bodin regarded Solon's reforms as preferable to the Valerian laws. According to Solon's legislation, the use of public office as a means of putting an individual to death was strictly prohibited. Even in cases where a person was suspected of seeking to seize sovereign power, it was necessary to await the verdict of a judicial proceeding before any action



could be taken [1: 253-254]. For this reason, Jean Bodin maintained that Solon's law was more just than the Valerian Law. Furthermore, in this chapter the French jurist placed particular emphasis on the question of under what circumstances a tyrannical ruler could be lawfully killed. According to his argument, even if a ruler had come to power through election, by lot, through a legitimate legal claim, or even by a special divine calling, he could nevertheless be put to death if he became excessively cruel and tyrannical [1: 254]. Bodin further noted that this position found support not only among jurists and political thinkers but also among physicians and theologians [1: 254]. The French jurist cited commanders such as Dion, Timoleon, and Aratus, who fought against tyrannical rulers in the ancient world, as examples in support of his argument. In his discussion of tyranny in the Middle Ages, Jean Bodin also referred to the relations between Amir Timur and Sultan Bayezid. He noted that the Ottoman siege of Constantinople caused the suffering of many peoples [1: 255]. Amir Timur, condemning the tyranny of Sultan Bayezid, decided to launch a military campaign against him. As a result, in the Battle of Ankara, the Ottoman ruler was defeated and taken captive. Sultan Bayezid was kept in an iron cage by Amir Timur and later died in captivity while in chains [1: 255]. Jean Bodin, reflecting on Amir Timur's treatment of the Ottoman ruler, argued that Sultan Bayezid should have been tried and punished in the same manner as a murderer or a thief [2: 221; 3: 439]. Although the French jurist accurately presented the chronology of political events in Asia Minor in the early fifteenth century, he made several inaccuracies in his account of the relations between Amir Timur and Sultan Bayezid. First, his interpretation of the causes of Amir Timur's campaign against Sultan Bayezid—namely, attributing it primarily to the issue of Constantinople—represents a fundamental error in his analysis. Second, the author expressed a negative view regarding Sultan Bayezid's death, claiming that Amir Timur killed the Ottoman sultan by confining him in an iron cage. It can also be observed that Bodin relied largely on sources produced in Byzantium, rather than consulting local Timurid-era accounts, which constitutes another limitation in the French jurist's interpretation.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

By the end of the 16th century, France's attempts to establish leadership in the Middle East led to the dispatch of scholars on official missions across the region. Members of these expeditions were tasked with collecting information on the political situation in the Middle East as well as the history of the region. During one such mission, the French cleric Jean du Bec obtained several works related to the history of Amir Temur. The growing interest in studying the histories of rulers who governed territories in the Middle East eventually led, by the late 16th century, to a desire to also investigate the activities of Amir Temur. This, in turn, resulted in the publication of the first work ment.

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