



AMIR TIMUR'S CONSOLIDATION OF POLITICAL POWER IN THE REGION AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO-CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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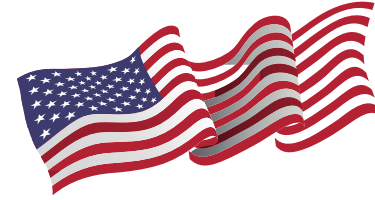
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Abstract. *This article examines the historical conditions under which Amir Timur (Tamerlane) consolidated political power in Movarounnahr (Transoxiana) in the second half of the fourteenth century, and the impact of this process on the region's socio-cultural development. Against the background of the fragmentation of the Chagatai ulus and the campaigns of the Mogul khans, it traces Timur's rise, his struggle with Amir Husayn, his attainment of independent rule, and his patronage of cities, trade, and crafts.*

Keywords: *Amir Timur, Movarounnahr, Chagatai ulus, Mogulistan, Tughluq Timur, Amir Husayn, consolidation of power, trade, crafts, socio-cultural development.*

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the fourteenth century, although the lands conquered by Genghis Khan (1155–1227) remained under his heirs, these territories had broken up into small fragments in which internal strife over the throne and power had intensified. In particular, Genghis Khan's second son, Chagatai, held the eastern lands stretching from Movarounnahr to Eastern (Chinese) Turkestan. By 1348 the feudal state of Mogulistan had taken shape in the lands of Eastern Turkestan, and Tughluq Timur (1348–1363), a descendant of Chagatai, was raised up as its khan. From the outset, with the aim of expanding his domains, Tughluq Timur launched several military campaigns against Movarounnahr and succeeded in invading it twice, in 1360 and 1361 (Voxidov & Qodirov, 2013:359). Seeking to reunite the disintegrating Chagatai ulus, Tughluq Timur entrusted the governance of Kesh and Qashqadarya to Amir Timur. It was in such a period – when internal wars flared up and social, economic, and political crisis deepened – that the great sahibqiran and skillful commander Amir Timur, who had won renown in the struggle against the Mongol invaders, entered the stage of history. This process coincided with the Mogul khan Tughluq Timur's drive to seize Movarounnahr on the one hand, and, on the other, with the intervention in



Chagatai affairs of the Jochid ulus and its khans – divided into the Golden Horde and the White Horde – whose disintegration was becoming evident.

MAIN PART

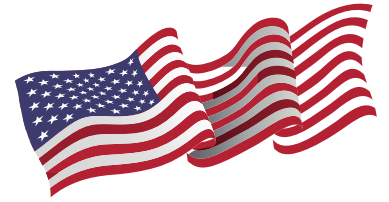
The noble men of the country preferred to live in villages and the open country rather than in the city (Clavijo, 2010:149). Amir Timur's youth was spent mainly in the city of Kesh (Khwandamir, 1989:103), where his uncle Hoji Barlos was the governor. From an early age Timur was a man of military skill, gathering around himself young warriors from the Barlas clan. In his work *Two Great Commanders: Genghis Khan and Amir Timur*, M. Ivanin notes that from the age of twelve Timur began to take part in military campaigns alongside his father, mastering the art and craft of war to perfection. Ibn Arabshah, who chronicled Amir Timur's career, describes him thus: "Timur was a man of unmatched character and profound judgment; the depths of the sea of his intellect could not be sounded, and no path to the meaning of his words could be found, whether over smooth or rugged ground." Over the course of his activity from 1370 to 1405, the astute world-conqueror subdued Iran, Iraq, and Turkestan; brought Syria, India, and Rus' into submission; defeated the Ottomans; triumphed at Damascus, Baghdad, and Delhi; and crushed the Mongols, Mamluks, and Janissaries, the most skilled warriors of his age.

After the Mogul khan Tughluq Timur died in 1363, his heir Ilyas Khoja took the throne and, following in his father's footsteps, undertook several campaigns to seize Movarounnahr. In the spring of 1365 Ilyas Khoja led an army against Turkestan. In the "Battle of the Mire"¹, which took place in the territory between Tashkent and Chinoz, the army of Amir Timur was defeated as a result of the irresolution of Amir Husayn, the poor fighting condition of the amirs under his command, and their treachery.

The people rose up against the Mongols who had seized Samarkand, and the Sarbadars, who took the city's defense into their own hands, drove the Mongols out of the country entirely. On learning of this, Amir Husayn had the leaders of the Sarbadars executed. As a result, in 1366 Amir Husayn took power in Movarounnahr; but before long the relationship between Amir Husayn and Amir Timur sharpened and turned into open conflict. Between 1366 and 1370 several clashes occurred between them. As Amir Timur was advancing toward Balkh against Amir Husayn and had reached the vicinity of Termez, Sayyid Baraka², one of the sharifs of Mecca, gave his support to Amir Timur's

¹ This event took place at the beginning of Ramadan in the year 766 AH, the Year of the Snake (22 May 1365). For details, see: Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, Zafarnoma (A. Ahmad & H. Bobobekov, Eds.). Tashkent: Sharq, 1997, p. 39.

² This sayyid – Amir Timur's spiritual master (pir) – died in 1404 and is buried in Samarkand, inside the mausoleum of



cause and presented him with the symbols of supreme authority – a great drum (tabl) and a banner (yalov). The city of Balkh surrendered to Amir Timur, and Amir Husayn was executed. Thereafter Timur began to rule the country independently, and this rule lasted thirty-five years.

It should be noted that during the reign of Amir Timur new cities arose and trade and crafts developed widely. Through Timur's efforts, cities such as Bukhara, Shahrissabz, and Tashkent developed as centers of trade and craftsmanship. The broad development of crafts in this period was of great importance in increasing the number of craft quarters and trading rows in the cities. The sahibqiran paid close attention to the development of trade routes and to their safety: trade routes monitored under his personal supervision ensured the security of the trade caravans.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by overcoming the political fragmentation of the Chagatai ulus and the pressure of the Mogul khans, Amir Timur consolidated centralized power in Movarounnahr and established a stable state that endured for thirty-five years. This political consolidation created the conditions for the rise of cities, the security of trade routes, and the flourishing of crafts, and thereby laid the groundwork for the socio-cultural and economic upsurge of the region that would culminate in the Timurid Renaissance.

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Amir Timur. For more detailed information, see: Bartold, V. V., Sochineniya, Vol. 2, Pt. 2, pp. 448–450; Masson, M. E., Mavzolei Gur-Emir [The Gur-Emir Mausoleum], p. 19.