

SOME HISTORICAL WORKS WRITTEN DURING THE ERA OF AMIR TIMUR AND THE TIMURIDS

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Abstract. This article examines selected historical works composed during the reign of Amir Timur and the Timurid dynasty and evaluates their significance as primary sources for the study of the political, intellectual, and cultural history of Central Asia. Particular attention is devoted to major chronicles and historical narratives, including Ruznama-yi Ghazavat-i Hindustan, the two versions of Zafarnama authored by Nizam al-Din Shami and Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, Muntakhab al-Tawarikh, Zayl-i Zafarnama, Majma al-Tawarikh al-Sultaniyya, Muizz al-Ansab, Mujmal-i Fasihi, Tarikh-i Arba Ulus, Matla al-Sadayn wa Majma al-Bahrayn, Ajaib al-Maqdur fi Akhbar Timur, Tarikhnama, and the travel account of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo. The article highlights the role of Timurid rulers as patrons of scholarship and demonstrates how their support contributed to the flourishing of historiography, literature, astronomy, and religious sciences. It further analyzes historical evidence concerning Amir Timur's appreciation of learning, his relationships with scholars and Sufi masters, and the intellectual environment that fostered the production of numerous historical works. The study concludes that Timurid historiographical literature constitutes an indispensable source for understanding the political developments, cultural achievements, and spiritual life of Central Asia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Keywords: Amir Timur, Timurids, Timurid historiography, Central Asia, Transoxiana, historical sources, Persian chronicles, Nizam al-Din Shami, Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, Hafiz Abru, Muin al-Din Natanzi, Ulugh Beg, Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi, Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, Islamic history, intellectual history, manuscript heritage.

Historical works vividly reconstruct the panorama of this period before our eyes. Among them, the treatise Ruznama-yi Ghazavat-i Hindustan (Diary of the Indian Campaign) by the jurist Ghiyath al-Din Ali ibn Jamal al-Islam al-Yazdi was written between 1399 and 1403 at the personal instruction of Amir Timur and provides a detailed account of the military campaigns conducted in India during 1398–1399.

Two works entitled Zafarnama (Book of Victory), composed during this period, occupy a distinctive place in the study of Timurid history due to their richness in valuable historical evidence.

The first was authored by Nizam al-Din Shami and written between 1402 and 1404 at the command of Amir Timur. This work narrates the events from Timur's rise to power through his seven-year campaigns (1399–1404) in Western Iran, Iraq, Syria, Anatolia, and Turkestan.



The second Zafarnama, written by Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, describes the events that took place during the reign of Khalil Sultan. One of the major advantages of this work is its extensive introduction, which contains a concise history of the Jochid and Chaghatay uluses, as well as the Ilkhanid state prior to Amir Timur. This introduction is also known by the titles *Tarikh-i Jahangiri* and *Muqaddima-yi Zafarnama*. The introduction was translated into Uzbek and published with scholarly annotations by the distinguished source studies scholar Omonullo Buriev¹.

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Another important work produced during Amir Timur's era is *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* (also known as *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh-i Mu'ini*), written by Mu'in al-Din Natanzi in 816 AH (1413 CE). The work contains information on universal history, the history of the Chaghatay Ulus, Amir Timur's struggle to liberate Transoxiana from Mongol domination, and the history of various Middle Eastern countries.

The court historian of Shah Rukh Mirza, Hafiz-i Abru (Shihab al-Din Abdullah ibn Lutf Allah ibn Abd al-Rashid Khawafi), authored several historical works. Among them, he composed a supplement to Shami's Zafarnama, entitled *Zayl-i Zafarnama-yi Shami* (Supplement to Shami's Zafarnama), in which the events up to the death of Amir Timur on 18 February 1405 are described.

Hafiz-i Abru's major historical contribution is the four-volume *Majma' al-Tawarikh al-Sultaniyya*, written between 826–830 AH (1423–1427 CE). Its fourth volume covers the history of the reigns of Amir Timur and Shah Rukh Mirza up to 1427².

The genealogical work *Mu'izz al-Ansab fi Shajarat al-Ansab* (The Honorable Genealogy of Noble Lineages), which presents the lineage of Amir Timur and his descendants, was written in Persian by an anonymous author³.

¹ Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi. *Muqaddima*. Vol. 1. Translated from Persian, with introduction and scholarly commentary by Omonullo Buriev. Index of personal names, place names, ethnic names, and technical terms compiled by Azizjon Sharipov. Tashkent: Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Fan" Publishing House, 2020. 352 pp.

² Buriev, O. "Geographical Information in Works Related to the History of the Timurid State (Central Asia)." *Sharqshunoslik / Oriental Studies*, 2015, No. 2–3, p. 53.

³ Buriev, O. *Ibid.*, p. 54.



The work *Mujmal-i Fasihi* (Fasihi's Concise History), authored by Fasih Ahmad Khawafi and completed in 1441, first presents universal history and then briefly records significant events of the Timurid era in chronological order.

Among the historical sources produced during this period is *Tarikh-i Arba' Ulus* (History of the Four Uluses), written by the Timurid prince Ulugh Beg. The work contains information on the history of Turkic rulers, as well as the history of Chinggis Khan and his descendants. *Tarikh-i Arba' Ulus* is an important source for the study of Central Asian history, particularly the experiences of Amir Timur and the Timurid dynasty.

Other important historical sources illuminating the Timurid period include *Matla' al-Sa'dayn wa Majma' al-Bahrayn* (The Rise of the Two Auspicious Stars and the Confluence of the Two Seas) by Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi; *Aja'ib al-Maqdur fi Akhbar al-Taymur* (The Wonders of Destiny in the History of Timur) by Ibn Arabshah; the Diary of the Spanish ambassador Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo; and *Tuzuk-i Timuri* (The Institutes of Timur).

For the study of the political history of Transoxiana and Khurasan between 1404 and 1409, *Tarikhnama* by Khwaja Taj al-Din Salmani is of great importance. This work is also known as *Zayl-i Zafarnama* (Supplement to the Zafarnama).

As noted above, various sources indicate that Amir Timur and his descendants showed great respect toward scholars, supported academic activities, and patronized learning. Such patronage contributed to the proliferation of historical writings and the advancement of scholarship. For example, Mu'in al-Din Natanzi records the following statement in *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*:

"Amir Sahib-Qiran maintained close relations with scholars, sages, and men of learning. Through listening to historical works, he acquired profound knowledge of the genealogies and biographies of nations, the realms and achievements of Turkic, Arab, and Persian rulers, as well as other branches of this discipline. He also possessed considerable knowledge of medicine and astronomy. Most of his time was spent in the company of sayyids, scholars, and Sufi masters"⁴.

Amir Timur not only practiced the teachings of Sufism himself but also encouraged his ministers to follow them. As an example, we may cite a passage preserved in Amir Timur's *Counsels*, compiled by Academician B. Ahmedov: "I followed the advice of the perfect spiritual guide, Shaykh Baha al-Din Naqshband: 'Eat little, sleep little, and speak little.' The same counsel I gave to the pillars of the state and all my officials: 'Eat little and you will live in prosperity without experiencing famine; sleep little and you will attain perfection; speak little and you will become wise'"⁵.

This demonstrates that princes, ministers, and governors were attentive to learning, enlightenment, and the activities of Sufi shaykhs. As a result, science and scholarship flourished during the Timurid era, producing outstanding scholars in literature, history, and

⁴ Mu'in al-Din Natanzi. *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*.

⁵ Ahmedov, B. *Amir Timur's Counsels*. Tashkent: Uzbekistan Publishing House, 2007, p. 25.



astronomy. In parallel with these developments, Sufism also progressed, and numerous works were written to explain Sufi teachings, the activities of Sufi masters, and the history of various *ṭarīqas* (Sufi orders).

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