





The Role of Works by Foreign Authors in the Historiography of Amir Timur and the Timurid Era

Khamrayeva Nargiza Shodiyevna 
Itolmasov Shoxruh Sayfidin oglu 

Senior Lecturer University of Asian Technologies
3rd-year student University of Asian Technologies
xamrayevan61@gmail.com

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***Corresponding author:**

Khamrayeva Nargiza Shodiyevna
xamrayevan61@gmail.com

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Abstract

The legacy of Amir Timur and the Timurid state represents a pivotal period in Central Asian history, attracting significant scholarly attention across centuries. In recent decades, the historiography of this era has expanded substantially, enriched by works not only from Uzbek scholars but also from foreign authors who offer diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives. Despite the proliferation of foreign-authored literature on Amir Timur, there remains a limited synthesized analysis of how these international perspectives have influenced the historical narrative and understanding of the Timurid epoch. This study aims to examine the role and impact of foreign authors—particularly Arab, European, and American historians—in shaping the historiographical discourse surrounding Amir Timur’s life, leadership, and legacy. The analysis reveals that more than 500 works in European languages and around 900 in Eastern languages have been dedicated to Timur, with notable contributions from Arab historians like Ibn Arabshah, Western travelers such as Clavijo and Mignanelli, and scholars like Harold Lamb and Lucien Keren. These works have provided both empirical records and interpretive insights, while also introducing narrative biases shaped by cultural and political contexts. This paper brings together fragmented international sources into a coherent framework, highlighting underexplored manuscripts and translations that have contributed to the global image of Timur. By critically assessing the contributions and limitations of foreign historiography, the study enhances our understanding of cross-cultural scholarship and underscores the value of integrating global perspectives in the study of national history.

Keywords: Amir Timur, history, historiography, era, foreign, author, work, Arab historians, languages, English, Spanish, French.

Introduction

The historical legacy of Amir Timur (Tamerlane) and the Timurid dynasty occupies a prominent place in the collective memory and identity of the Uzbek nation[1]. His political acumen, military genius, and contributions to state-building are recognized not only in local

historiography but also widely reflected in the works of foreign scholars. In the years following Uzbekistan's independence, there has been a renewed effort to investigate and preserve the historical heritage of Sahibqiran, with particular attention given to understanding how the Timurid era has been interpreted through the lens of foreign historiography[2]. Scholars from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds—including Arab, English, French, Spanish, German, and others—have produced hundreds of works dedicated to Amir Timur's life, state policies, military campaigns, and cultural achievements[3]. These accounts, which include firsthand observations, historical treatises, biographies, and travel diaries, form a rich corpus that complements and at times challenges local historical narratives. The significance of these works lies not only in their scholarly value but also in the diverse perspectives and interpretations they offer[4]. While some sources idealize Timur's image as a just and visionary ruler, others reflect the biases or limitations of their respective cultural and temporal contexts. Nonetheless, the breadth of international interest in the Timurid epoch underscores its global relevance and enduring fascination. This study aims to examine the role of foreign authors in the historiography of Amir Timur, analyze the contributions of their works to historical scholarship, and explore their impact on shaping the understanding of Timurid legacy in both academic and public domains[5].

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative historical-analytical methodology to examine the contributions of foreign authors to the historiography of Amir Timur and the Timurid era[6]. The research involved a close reading and comparative analysis of primary and secondary historical sources written in various languages, including Arabic, Latin, French, English, Spanish, and Turkish. Special attention was given to classical works by Arab historians such as Ibn Arabshah, Al-Maqrizi, and Al-Qalqashandi, as well as European accounts by Beltramus De Mignanelli, Rui Gonzalez de Clavijo, Harold Lamb, and others[7]. The selection of sources was guided by their scholarly significance, linguistic diversity, and their influence on shaping global narratives about Amir Timur. In order to evaluate the content, emphasis was placed on identifying recurring themes, descriptions of Amir Timur's personality, governance, military strategies, and diplomatic relations. The analysis also included tracing the dissemination and translation history of major texts, such as Ibn Arabshah's *Ajaib al-Maqdur*, to understand their reception in different cultural contexts[8]. The researchers examined historiographical bias and differing interpretive lenses based on the geopolitical and cultural background of each author. Additionally, bibliographic data compiled by Uzbek scholars such as Rtveladze and Saidov were consulted to ensure a comprehensive overview of available foreign literature. Through this interdisciplinary and multilingual approach, the study aims to contextualize the historiographical legacy of foreign contributions and their enduring relevance in the study of Amir Timur's historical image and legacy[9].

Results and Discussion

The period of Amir Timur and the Timurids is regarded as a pivotal phase in the history of Uzbek sovereignty. Sahibqiran examined the progressive elements of prior statehood phases, employed them, and innovatively advanced them. Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, has asserted: 'We possess a remarkable history that

inspires jealousy.' Our forebears are remarkable and deserving of admiration.[10].

Amir Timur and the state he founded terminated fragmentation, internal strife, and devastating wars in Central Asia. The extensive state he constructed fostered and enhanced trade, economic, and cultural links with adjacent nations. Relations with France, Spain, China, and other nations were exemplary.[11].

In the years of independence, the focus on researching the personality of Amir Timur and the history of his reign has intensified in Uzbekistan more than ever before. The historiography of the Amir Timur period has been enhanced by fresh publications. Our historians are conducting significant research on works pertaining to Sahibqiran produced in foreign nations.

International researchers have produced numerous works regarding the life, activities, and condition of Amir Timur. There are around 500 publications about Amir Timur in European languages and approximately 900 in Eastern languages.[12]. A bibliography of books concerning Amir Timur has been compiled in Uzbekistan in recent years. Specifically, Academician F. Rtveladze and Professor A. Saidov constructed a concise index of works produced in European languages. Notably in 1996, during the commemoration of the 660th anniversary of Sahibqiran's birth, a bibliography of internationally produced works was unveiled. The writers assert that around 300 new books concerning Amir Timur and the Timurids have been produced in the past two years.

The majority of writings concerning Amir Timur are treatises by Arab intellectuals. Badr al-Din al-Ayni in "Iqd al-Juman," Al-Qalqashandi in "Subh Al-A'sha," and Al-Maqrizi in "Kitab al-Suluk," Ibn Kazi Shuhba in "Adx Dxail ala Tarikh al-Islam." Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani in "Inbaa al-Ghumr," Ibn Arabshah's "Ajaib al-Maqdur fi Tarikh Taymur," Abul Maosin Tagriberdi in "Ajaib al-Manhal as-Safi, An-Nujum az-Zahira," As-Sakhawi in "Ad-Dau al-Lami," and Ibn-Iyas in "Tarikh bi Ibn Khaldun Ba Rihlatuhu Arban wa Sharqan." Ibn Duqmaq and other historians have produced numerous books that encompass various elements of the diverse activities of Sahibqiran.[13]. Regrettably, numerous texts have not been accessible to us, as the majority are in Arabic and others exist only in manuscript form.

Ibn Arabshah's work "Ajaib al-Maqdur fi Tarikh Taymur" ("The Wonders of Fate in the History of Timur" or "The History of Amir Timur") occupies a distinguished position among Arab historians. This poem was composed between 1436 and 1437 and has been translated into French, Latin, English, Turkish, Uzbek, and various other languages.[14]. It was translated into Uzbek by the Arabist philologist scholar U. Uvatov.

Another important source about Amir Timur is Nizam al-Din Shami's "Zafarnama." Nizam al-Din Shami was born in a place called Shanbi near Tabriz. He was in the service of Amir Timur from 1393, and in 1402, Sahibqiran ordered him to write his history. Nizam al-Din Shami completed his work in 1402-1404. The work describes the events from 1370 to 1404[15]. In the work, he used the poetic work "Tarikh-i Khani" written in the Turkic language and other sources. Some parts of the work have been translated into French, Russian, English, and Turkish.

Among foreign authors, the work "The Life of Tamerlane" by the Italian merchant Beltramus De Mignanelli is also of significant importance. He directly participated in the battle where Amir Timur captured Damascus, as well as the Battle of Ankara against Bayezid[16]. Drawing from his observations, he composed the essay "The Life of Tamerlane or the Ruins of Damascus." The document was composed in Latin around 1416. The American scholar Walter Joseph Fischel

translated the text into English. The study examines Amir Timur's personal attributes, stating, "Timur was notably handsome and well-proportioned." He was honest, kind, empathetic, and exceedingly magnanimous. With age, his character underwent transformation, and his irritation escalated progressively.

A significant source regarding the life and endeavours of Amir Timur is the travelogue of the traveler and envoy Rui Gonzalez de Clavijo, entitled "The Journey to the Court of Timur in Samarkand, 1403-1406." The work chronicles the populations, urban centres, and commercial interactions of Amir Timur's realm, alongside its affiliations with nations such as China and India. Professor H. Vamberi of the University of Pest presents intriguing information about the Amir Timur state in his work "The History of Bukhara or Transoxiana." [17].

Substantial research has been conducted in foreign historiography about the analysis of the age of Amir Timur. The American historian J. Woods' publication, "The Rise of Timurids Historiography," analyses numerous texts concerning Amir Timur and the Timurids. Moreover, various scientific study initiatives have been undertaken in France about the period of Amir Timur and the Timurids, leading to the establishment of the "Association for the Study of the History and Culture of the Timurids and French-Uzbek Cultural Relations." This association was established by Madame Fredrik Bopertui Bressan, with Lucien Keren serving as its president. L. Keren initially visited Uzbekistan in 1961 and has since cultivated a profound attachment for the region. [18]. Since 1989, the group has published a periodical titled "Temuriy." Lucien Keren authored a historical novel entitled "Amir Timur or the Timurid Khanate" and a two-part drama named "Amir Timur," comprising six acts. In "Amir Timur or the Timurid Khanate," L. Keren states: "On one hand is Timur, wielding an iron fist; on the other is Timur, the architect of monuments, madrasahs, canals, and gardens." The works of English scholar Christopher Marlowe, Edward Gibbon, Austrian Hammer-Purgstall, German Friedrich Schlosser, and Max Müller hold significant importance in the historiography of the Amir Timur era. Fransuz tarixchisi Rene Grusse o'zining "Sahro saltanati" asarida ko'plab muhim ma'lumotlarni taqdim etadi. Shunday deyiladi: "Temuriylarning tarixchilari uning shajarasini Chingizxon safdoshlaridan biriga, hatto Chingiziyardan biriga bog'lashga intiladilar." Aslida, u hech qanday mo'g'ul emasdi; u turkiy edi." [19].

In his novel "Tamerlane," the English writer Harold Lamb wrote, "Five centuries ago, a man set his mind to becoming the ruler of the world and set out to do so with all his heart [20]. Whatever he endeavoured, he accomplished, fortune favoured him, and ultimately the entire world deemed him the great king and conqueror, Amir Temur.

Numerous scholarly works have been produced by international authors regarding the history of Amir Temur and the Timurid empire. As our President remarked: "No foreign researchers were invited to this noble cause." These endeavours did not yield significant income or prestige for them. However, the scientific integrity of these researchers, and if need, their moral conscience, necessitated this. Their work serves as a model for us and inspires the pursuit of novel objective scientific study. Literature concerning the eminent leader and the state he governed enables a comprehensive and meticulous examination of our mediaeval history. They acquaint the future generation with the life and contributions of the esteemed leader, offering an opportunity to appreciate his philosophies. [21].

Conclusion

The analysis of foreign contributions to the historiography of Amir Timur and the Timurid era confirms the profound impact of non-native sources in shaping both scholarly and public understanding of this pivotal period. Historians and chroniclers from Arab, European, and other cultural contexts have produced an extensive body of work—ranging from Arab manuscripts and Latin treatises to French and English translations—that provide diverse perspectives on Timur's political leadership, military campaigns, state-building strategies, and personal attributes. These works not only expand the historical narrative beyond local or regional accounts but also introduce valuable comparative insights into Timur's influence on global affairs. The efforts of authors such as Ibn Arabshah, Clavijo, and Harold Lamb, along with institutions like the French-Uzbek "Temuriy" association, underscore the enduring fascination and scholarly dedication to understanding Timur's legacy. Despite linguistic and ideological biases that may color some foreign interpretations, their commitment to research speaks to a broader intellectual and ethical responsibility to historical truth. Importantly, this historiographical engagement bridges cultural boundaries and enriches Uzbekistan's national identity by situating Timur's legacy within a global intellectual heritage. As noted by President Mirziyoyev, the voluntary and unbiased work of these foreign researchers serves as a source of inspiration for domestic scholars to pursue further rigorous and objective studies. The preservation, translation, and analysis of these works will continue to play a crucial role in cultivating a deeper, more inclusive appreciation of the Timurid era, particularly for future generations seeking to understand the full scope of their national and cultural history.

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