

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF B. AHMEDOV'S SCHOLARLY RESEARCH IN THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF AMIR TEMUR AND THE TIMURID PERIOD

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Abstract:

This article analyzes B. Ahmedov's studies devoted to the history of Amir Temur and the Timurid period from historiographical and source-critical perspectives. The aim of the research is to present, in a systematic manner, the scholar's contribution to Timurid studies during the Soviet era (1960–1991) and the years of independence. In addition, the article examines both the strengths of Ahmedov's role in re-reading the Timurid legacy beyond ideological frameworks and restoring it to scholarly circulation, as well as several of his debatable interpretations in the field.

Keywords: B. Ahmedov, Timurid studies, Amir Temur, Timurids, Mirzo Ulugh Beg, historiography, source criticism, "Tarikh-i Arba 'Ulus", "Tuzukoti Temuriy".

INTRODUCTION

B. Ahmedov began paying attention to this very topic in the early stages of his scholarly career, namely in the 1960s. His initial works on this subject [4] analyzed the political processes that occurred in Transoxiana and Khwarazm during the fifteenth century. In examining relations with the nomadic Uzbeks, these works also analyzed information concerning the Timurids' state governance, domestic and foreign policy. In this regard, the scholar's 1961 doctoral dissertation in historical sciences [2] and the treatise based upon it entitled "From the History of the Origin of the Uzbeks" [24], as well as his 1965 monograph entitled "The State of the Nomadic Uzbeks," devote a separate chapter to analyzing relations between the nomadic Uzbeks and the Timurids as a specific issue.

Analysis of the scholar's research indicates that B. Ahmedov did not publish specialized works directly dedicated to Amir Temur until 1991. However, beginning in the 1960s, he published a number of treatises and articles concerning the personality and scholarly activities of the most prominent representative of the Timurids, Mirzo Ulughbeg (1394–1449). In particular, in a brief treatise published in 1965, he presented his initial observations regarding Mirzo Ulughbeg's activities. The scholar noted the insufficiency of information concerning how Mirzo Ulughbeg spent his youth and regarding his education, and relying upon Davlatshoh Samarqandi (1435–1495), he provided certain information about the prince's upbringing. According to Timurid tradition, as soon as princes reached the age of four, they began to be

educated for literacy. Initially, a special teacher—a storyteller (qissakhon)—was appointed to them. The storyteller cultivated the princes' memory and intellect by relating interesting tales and narratives to them. For example, in 1398, when Ulughbeg turned four years old, an intelligent and clever youth named Hamza ibn Ali Tusi was appointed as his storyteller. Hamza ibn Ali was the nephew of Amir Timur's storyteller and, having accompanied his uncle for eight years, had learned many useful stories and narratives from him. This fact is, in turn, described by Davlatshoh Samarqandi through the words of Hamza ibn Ali Tusi as follows: "In the year 800 of the Hijra (1398 CE), I was in Qarabagh with my uncle, who was the storyteller of the great Emir, the hazrat sahibqiron Amir Timur Kuragan. At that time, I was appointed to the service of Ulughbeg Kuragan. For several years, we experienced the growth and development of infancy and childhood together with the prince. I related various stories to him and became his friend" [30]. According to Davlatshoh Samarqandi, Mirzo Ulughbeg's perspicacity and memory were such that whenever he shot an arrow and hunted any animal, he would remember that date. He would record in a notebook on which day, in which palace it occurred, and which animals were hunted. By chance, that notebook was lost, and despite extensive searching, they could not find it. The servants responsible for safeguarding the notebook fell into consternation. Ulughbeg, however, asserting that he knew the notebook's entries from beginning to end, summoned his scribe and dictated the text. The new notebook had just been completed when the previously lost notebook was found. Comparison of both notebooks revealed no differences apart from four or five errors. Based on this information, B. Ahmedov emphasizes that Mirzo Ulughbeg possessed extraordinary intelligence and an exceptionally powerful memory.

However, B. Ahmedov, in accordance with the traditions of mid-twentieth-century Soviet historiography, attempted to portray Mirzo Ulughbeg not as a major statesman, but primarily as a renowned scholar of his era and patron of learning. This approach is clearly evident in the scholar's other works dedicated to Mirzo Ulughbeg published during the 1960s and 1970s [5] as well.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The scholar's first serious research contribution to Timurid studies can be identified as his substantial 62-page article [6] entitled "Ulughbek and the Political Life of Transoxiana in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century." In contrast to the articles by T.N. Qori-Niyozov, D.G. Voronovsky, S.H. Sirojiddinov, G.P. Matvievskaia, V.A. Shishkin, G.A. Pugachenkova, V.A. Bulatova, E.A. Davidovich, O.D. Chekhovich, and A. Nasirov concerning the history of science and art during the Timurid period, which were included in the collection entitled "From the History of the Ulughbek Era," B. Ahmedov alone addresses the political history of this period and attempts to elucidate the essence of the issue based on primary sources such as the "Zafarnama," "Matla' al-sa'dayn," and "Tarikh-i Rashidi." From a historiographical perspective, the scholar analyzes V.V. Bartold's 1918 monograph entitled "Ulughbek and His Time" [29]. According to B. Ahmedov, during the period under consideration, there existed no comprehensive scholarly research dedicated to the political life of Transoxiana during the

reigns of Ulughbeg and Shahrukh. The scholar acknowledges V.V. Bartold's aforementioned work as research meeting this requirement and notes that it is based on primary works such as Nizamuddin Shami's "Zafarnama," Mu'in al-Din Natanzi's "Iskandarnama," Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi's "Matla' al-sa'dayn," and Khwandamir's "Habib al-siyar" [29: 36]. While acknowledging that this research made an extremely significant contribution to scholarly inquiry and served as a valuable guide for studying the political history of Transoxiana, Iran, and Afghanistan in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it is noted that Ulughbeg's struggle for Kashgar, the Timurids' relations with the nomadic Uzbeks, social life in Transoxiana during Ulughbeg's reign, as well as his youth (the period before his appointment as ruler of Transoxiana) were inadequately illuminated; the reasons why the struggle between Shahrukh and Khalil Sultan over Timur's legacy extended until 1409 were not elucidated; and furthermore, certain events and phenomena were not accorded political assessment. In his article, B. Ahmedov systematized on a source-based foundation information concerning the internal and external political events that transpired in Transoxiana from Ulughbeg's birth until his death, state governance and territorial division, tax policy, and socio-cultural life. Although it addressed the aforementioned issues that had not received attention in the works of V.V. Bartold and A.Yu. Yakubovsky in the field, B. Ahmedov in most instances supports the conclusions of Russian orientalists in his analyses. In particular, the scholar characterizes Ulughbeg as an unsuccessful military commander. He emphasizes that Ulughbeg cannot be placed on the same level as Shahrukh and his brother Baysunghur as a statesman, nor could he equal even Khalil Sultan or Iskandar in military affairs, and that comparing him to Amir Timur in this regard would be illogical. B. Ahmedov characterizes him as a scholar on the throne who left an indelible mark on the advancement of science in the fields of astronomy and mathematics, and in this regard precisely reiterates V.V. Bartold's acknowledgment [6: 106]. Another contribution to Timurid studies created by the scholar during the Soviet era was the translation into Russian of the work entitled "Tarikh-i arba' ulus" ("History of the Four Uluses") prepared under the leadership of Mirzo Ulughbeg. The complete Uzbek translation of the work was published in Tashkent in 1994 under B. Ahmedov's editorship, with his introduction and annotations [31].

According to B. Ahmedov, this work, completed in 1425, was personally participated in and supervised by Mirzo Ulughbeg during its composition. The work subsequently gained renown under other names as well, including "Ulus-i arba'a-yi Chingizi" ("The Four Uluses of the Chinggisids") and "Tarikh-i arba'a ulus" ("History of the Four Uluses"). G. Miles, who first studied the work and published its abridged English translation, called it "Shajarat al-atrak" ("Genealogy of the Turks"). However, B. Ahmedov states that there is insufficient basis for this, noting that the portion of the book concerning Japheth and his descendants, the Tatar-Mongol and Turkic peoples, and their rulers was written based on "Shajarat al-atrak." To substantiate his opinion, the scholar cites the following passage from the work: "As written in authoritative histories, his (Suinkhon's) lineage is known to all and traces back to Jochi Khan. However, because nothing is mentioned about him in the book 'Shajarat al-atrak,' nothing was written about him in this book ('Tarikh-i arba'a ulus'), which is a selection from that book either.

Nevertheless, according to what is remembered, he was a great sovereign whose generosity was beyond measure." Based on these notations, the scholar concludes that "Shajarat al-atrak" and "Tarikh-i arba'a ulus" are two different works.

Simultaneously, the scholar also acknowledges that "Tarikh-i arba'a ulus" is to a certain extent based on "Shajarat al-atrak." The source states: "In this compilation entitled 'History of the Four Uluses of Chinggis Khan,' the names of sovereigns descended from Turk Khan ibn Japheth ibn Noah, peace be upon him, are mentioned. The names of the khaqans of Turkistan lands cited in this treatise are taken from the compilation concerning the khaqans of the four uluses written by Sultan al-Sa'id Ulughbeg Mirza." Relying on this information, he categorically emphasizes that the work was originally entitled "Ulus-i arba'a-yi Chingizi" and that it belongs to the pen of Mirzo Ulughbeg.

In his historiographical analysis, the scholar draws attention to the fact that V.V. Bartold also utilized this work in his time. However, he criticizes the renowned Russian orientalist for attempting to diminish its scholarly and historical value rather than including the work among rare sources. The reason is that, in fact, in several of his treatises when referring to this source, V.V. Bartold notes that Ulughbeg wrote "Tarikh-i arba ulus," which, according to its title, should contain a complete history of the Mongol empire, but the work has not survived to our time. According to V.V. Bartold, certain portions of the work have reached us only through Khwandamir's "Habib al-siyar." In his opinion, although in these fragments the author recounted the history of the Mongol state up to his era, the author limited himself to recording only the names of certain khans, which does not permit forming a complete conception of ruling dynasties. For this reason, Bartold emphasizes that there is no need for excessive concern that this work has not been preserved in its entirety.

In another passage, V.V. Bartold writes concerning the work: "This historical book, considered to belong to the pen of Ulughbeg, may perhaps arouse interest as literary material and material for critical study of history, but even if a copy of it should be found, there is insufficient basis to say that it would enrich existing information concerning the history of the Mongol empire and the states formed after its disintegration."

B. Ahmedov explains the reason for such an attitude toward "Tarikh-i arba'a ulus" by the absence of a complete manuscript of the work preserved in world libraries and the fact that historical manuscripts dating to the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries had not yet been studied satisfactorily. The scholar notes that it is necessary to elucidate the essence of the work by comparatively analyzing it with other sources from the same period, and refers to Khwandamir's works "Khulasat al-akhbar" and "Habib al-siyar," concluding that the author made extensive use of "Tarikh-i arba'a ulus" in composing them. In particular, the source scholar notes that the first volume of "Habib al-siyar" dedicated to the history of the Turkistan khans, Chinggis Khan and his descendants at the head of his Chaghatay ulus—the ninth article—and the first part of the third volume are entirely based on "Tarikh-i arba'a ulus."

Furthermore, the scholar emphasizes that Ulughbeg's aforementioned work also served as a primary source for historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, advancing the opinion

that renowned works such as "Tawarikh-i guzida, Nusratnama" and "Zubdat al-athar" were also based on "Tarikh-i arba'a ulus."

Based on information provided in sources, B. Ahmedov notes that the opinion of certain researchers who have cast doubt on Ulughbeg's participation in writing the work is incorrect. In particular, he recalls that the renowned historian Mirzo Muhammad Haydar (1500–1551) wrote in his work "Tarikh-i Rashidi": "The learned sovereign Mirzo Ulughbeg wrote a historical work and gave it the name 'Ulus-i arba'a,'" emphasizing that such notations are encountered in the works of Khwandamir and Mahmud ibn Wali. Based on the above information, the scholar acknowledges that "Tarikh-i arba'a ulus," like Rashid al-Din Fazlullah's renowned work "Jami' al-tawarikh," was written by a team of historians, but under the direct leadership and participation of Mirzo Ulughbeg, and is a rare source.

Nevertheless, the source scholar also notes that the work is not devoid of certain deficiencies either. For example, the scholar states that the most conspicuous and numerous errors in the work are the incorrect writing of Mongolian and Chinese proper names, geographic and ethnic designations. For instance, in the work, instead of Angur Bawurchi—Kungur is written; Dutum Menen—Dutuminkhon; Gyu-Gin—Kevkik; Qutuqu Noyan—Khatoqiya Noyan; Jamuqo—Shamuqo. In some cases, the dates of events are also indicated incorrectly. For example, the Ilkhanid Ghazan Khan's war with Egypt is given in three different dates: Hijri 699, 708, and 703. Likewise, in some places the succession order of the Ilkhanid khans is shown confusedly. Exaggerated numbers are also encountered in the work. For instance, it states that the Mongol army, after a seven-month siege, captured Urgench and killed 100,000 people, drove 100,000 craftsmen and artisans to Moghulistan, that 747,000 people perished in the siege of Nishapur, and that on the eve of Chinggis Khan's invasion, the population of Merv was 1,300,000 and the population of Nishapur was 1,747,000.

It should be mentioned for information that to this day a complete manuscript of the work has not been identified. Its abridged copies made in later periods are currently preserved in the British Library in England, the library of the city of Bankipur in India, and the Harvard University Library in the United States.

The Uzbek translation of "Tarikh-i arba' ulus" rendered from Persian through the collaboration of B. Ahmedov, N. Norqulov, and M. Hasani was accomplished based on the manuscript copy (ADD 26190) preserved in the British Museum. It should be noted that this work occupies an important place in studying the socio-political history of Central and Middle Asia in the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century.

Another work by the scholar dedicated to the life and activities of Mirzo Ulughbeg is the essay, that is, literary work, entitled "Mirzo Ulughbeg" [28], first published in 1989 and republished with additions in 1994. Despite being in the historical-publicistic genre, the work systematically presents information from primary sources concerning the socio-political, economic, and cultural life during the era of Amir Temur and the Timurids. In particular, in the work the author elucidated not only Mirzo Ulughbeg but also the political processes of his era, his scholarly activities, and the foundations and characteristics of the astronomical school based on precise, reliable sources and evidence. This book quickly gained great renown among

readers. The author was even accepted into membership of the Writers' Union of Uzbekistan on account of this very work.

Beyond Mirzo Ulughbeg, during the Soviet years B. Ahmedov also specifically investigated the activities of Alisher Navoi (1441–1501) and Kamaluddin Behzad (1450–1535), who created during the Timurid period.

In the years of independence, Boriboy Ahmedov's role in the advancement of Timurid studies was substantial. His scholarly legacy marked a turning point toward reassessing the era of Sahibqiran Amir Temur and the Timurids and studying them scientifically, free from ideological frameworks. In 1991, B. Ahmedov edited and prepared "Tuzuk-i Timuri" for publication, which created the source-based foundation of Timurid studies in the independence period. "Tuzuk-i Timuri," or "Tuzukot-i Timuri," was actually copied as a supplement to another substantial work called "Malfuzot-i Timuri" or "Waqe'at-i Timuri." This circumstance has caused the work to enter the ranks of rather controversial books in historiography. For instance, while one group of scholars acknowledges "Malfuzot-i Timuri," which narrates the life journey beginning from Timurbek's seventh year, and "Tuzukot-i Timuri," considered a historical and juridical work in which Amir Temur's views concerning state structure and governance of the country are expounded, as actually one work, a second group of scholars concludes that they are two independent works compiled under one cover.

Furthermore, the question of the authorship of "Temur's Codes" has also been controversial, and in this regard a group of prominent scholars such as E.G. Browne and V.V. Bartold viewed the work's composition by Amir Temur and even its authenticity in general with skepticism. B. Ahmedov devoted special attention to this issue and attempted to shed light on it based on sources. The scholar notes that in many editions of the "Tuzukot," Amir Temur is indicated as the author of the work, while also recording that Shamsuddin Sami's renowned dictionary states: "Amir Temur wrote a collection of laws circulated under the name 'Tuzukot.' In it he recounted his life journey." He also emphasizes that in this regard the historian Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi wrote: "His Majesty composed a separate work in Turkic and Persian containing the principal events concerning his life and way of life." B. Ahmedov categorically emphasizes that the "Tuzukot-i Timuri" is a genuine historical work and that this can be ascertained by comparing information in the "Zafarname" works of Nizamuddin Shami and Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, and as a conclusion that its authorship by Amir Temur is unquestionable.

It should be noted here that, unlike E.G. Browne and V.V. Bartold, the renowned orientalists B. Charmoy and M.I. Ivanin acknowledge that the "Tuzukot-i Timuri" is a genuine work and that its author was Amir Temur.

During this period, in addition to authoring sections concerning the analysis of political events in the works "History of the Temur and Ulughbeg Era" and "Amir Temur in World History," B. Ahmedov also created a number of studies dedicated to the history of Amir Temur. In works such as "O'zbek Ulusi," "Lessons from History," "Commemorating Amir Temur," and "Amir Temur," as well as collections of articles published by the author during the independence period, various issues of the history of Amir Temur and the Timurid era were analyzed in depth.

Among these, the scholar's work "Commemorating Amir Temur" [1] is considered a comprehensive study analyzing Amir Temur's personality, his governance, military-political activities, and historical legacy through a harmonious integration of scholarly and popular-scientific approaches. At the beginning of the work, the author recalls the restoration of society's attitude toward Temur's personality, the necessity of purifying historical truth from ideological layers, and the emergence of a new approach to historical heritage with the honor of independence, emphasizing that works published between 1988 and 1994 are included in this volume.

The scholarly section of the work is dedicated to reconstructing Amir Temur's principles of state administration on a source-based foundation, wherein the administrative system during Temur's era is analyzed as a central object. In the mid-fourteenth century, the disintegration of the Chaghatay ulus in Transoxiana, the struggle among emirs, and economic instability constituted the historical background of Temur's activities. The author substantiates through sources that upon Temur's ascent to power, he first undertook to restore a centralized state structure. Within this process, the reestablishment of balance among social strata, his political support base, the nobility, religious scholars, and the military class is analyzed as a separate issue. The structure of Amir Temur's state possessed a strict hierarchy, wherein the ministerial system, military divisions, local administrative organs, tax system, and officials managing public order had clearly defined duties. The author explicates their functions while relying on historical sources. During Temur's era, five principal ministries existed, which exercised control over justice, finance, military affairs, intelligence, and economic matters. The author substantiates through sources such as the "Codes" and "Zafarname" that the stable functioning of the state depended upon strong control, responsibility, regular military preparedness, and the centralized operation of the tax system. Temur's military structure was divided into tens, hundreds, thousands, and tumens, and this system is interpreted as a refined, perfected version of Chinggisid traditions.

Extensive space is devoted in the work to the question of historical sources. The author evaluates on the basis of source-critical principles the historical significance of the principal sources written about Temur's era—the works of Nizamuddin Shami, Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, Ibn Arabshah, various divan documents, as well as "Temur's Codes." While Shami and Yazdi, as court historians, wrote in a style connected with political legitimation, Ibn Arabshah depicts Temur in a sharply negative spirit. B. Ahmedov reveals the historical-political reasons for this divergence. It is noted that the "Codes" is not the real legislative compendium of Temur's state, but rather a complex composite text possessing political-didactic character. Although the fundamental principles of Temur's governmental philosophy were embodied in strength, justice, order, responsibility, and spiritual maturity, the necessity of distinguishing its historical strata is demonstrated by the author on a scholarly basis.

In the work, the role of information in the life of society, the formation of historical memory, and the connection between historical knowledge and social needs are analyzed as important theoretical issues. The author emphasizes the damage caused to national identity by the

distortion of history and argues that the process of restoring Timur's legacy arose not from ideological motives, but from genuine scholarly necessity.

In the publicistic section of the work, the author interprets the figure of Timur as a moral and ethical exemplar for contemporary youth, intellectuals, and the broader public. These essays discuss aspects of the Timurid period—such as science and learning, state administration, and the concept of justice—within the context of national pride and the restoration of historical memory. Reflections on the inadmissibility of falsifying history, the significance of historical memory, and the role of Timur's legacy in the development of modern Uzbekistan enhance the moral and educational value of the work. This section is oriented less toward strict scholarly analysis than toward the formation of historical consciousness, thereby demonstrating B. Ahmedov's position as both a historian and an enlightener.

The interview section is designed to address various themes in Timurid studies. Through conversations with historians, intellectuals, and students, it offers extensive discussion of complex issues related to Timur, including the structure of the Timurid state, major debates within Timurid historiography, problems of source studies, and the degree of reliability of historical narratives. This part of the book is built on an exchange of views and reflects the interest and attitudes of different social groups toward historical topics.

The fourth section, "Letters to Amir Timur," consists of the author's artistic and philosophical reflections presented in the form of an address to Timur's personality. Through an imagined dialogue with the historical figure, these letters link Timur's qualities—such as his commitment to justice, determination in state-building, and attention to science and learning—to contemporary values. Although this section is more literary and publicistic than scholarly, it is nevertheless important for understanding the place of the Timur phenomenon in modern Uzbek consciousness.

The most scholarly section of the work is the chapter entitled "New Research." This chapter analyzes, on the basis of new sources, Timur's struggle with one of his strongest rivals in Mawarannahr, Qamariddin; the latter's political base; the complexity of tribal and political structures of the period; and the significance of this struggle in the consolidation of Timur's power. The author fills gaps in earlier studies on the Qamariddin issue and reassesses it as an important historical process. The reasons for Qamariddin's political defeat—such as internal fragmentation, the absence of a sustainable long-term strategy of resistance, and the inability to withstand Timur's centralizing political strategy—are substantiated through scholarly argumentation. This research represents a new academic contribution to Timurid studies and enhances the overall scholarly value of the work. However, some of the information presented in this section was later critically examined by subsequent Timurid scholars, who rejected certain arguments. In particular, the prominent contemporary Timurid specialist B. Usmonov, in his analysis of the section entitled "Timur and Qamariddin," emphasized that B. Ahmedov's claim that the Timurid army under Iskandar Mirza advanced from Khotan as far as Khanbaliq and spent the winter in Khotan does not correspond to historical reality. He noted that the sources contain no evidence of a campaign reaching Khanbaliq, and that they instead indicate Iskandar Mirza spent the winter in Kashgar. Elsewhere, it is also noted that B. Ahmedov made

an error in dating Amir Qamariddin's raid on Fergana; according to later analysis, this event took place in the summer of 1376.

Nevertheless, B. Ahmedov's work *In Memory of Amir Timur* constitutes a comprehensive study aimed at re-reading the Timurid period on the basis of a new historical paradigm. It examines scholarly methodology, source studies, political analysis, historical consciousness, and spiritual heritage in their interrelation. Alongside revealing the historical essence of the Timur phenomenon, the author also analyzes its contemporary significance. Owing to its combination of scholarly rigor, source-based argumentation, and educational approach, the work may be regarded as a fundamental study that established a distinctive school within Timurid studies.

In addition, the scholar's other works devoted to the personality of Amir Timur—such as *Amir Timur: A Historical Novel*, *Sahibqiran Timur: His Life and Socio-Political Activity*, and *Lessons of Amir Timur*—also played a significant role in the development of the field. These scholarly and popular works present a broad depiction of Timur's political, military, and spiritual activities and portray him as a great figure in world civilization. B. Ahmedov's publicistic articles, including *Amir Timur's Policy of State Administration*, *The Place of Amir Timur in History*, and *Amir Timur and the Eastern Renaissance*, played an important role in communicating scholarly conclusions in this field to a wide audience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, during the years of independence, B. Ahmedov freed Timurid studies from ideological constraints and transformed it into one of the leading directions of national historiography. He reintroduced the sources of the Timurid and Timurid-period history into scholarly circulation, published rare works such as *Tarikh-i Arba' Ulus* and *The Tuzuks of Timur*, and comprehensively examined the legacy of Sahibqiran and Ulugh Beg within both historical and spiritual contexts. For these reasons, B. Ahmedov's scholarly activity occupies a decisive place in the development of Uzbek Timurid studies in the period of independence.

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