

## THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF THE STATE OF AMIR TEMUR AND THE TEMURIDS AND ITS DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

**Turgʻunov Muhammadbobur Abdusalom oʻgʻli,**

Independent Researcher at the Institute of State and Law,  
Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan

**Abstract.** This article offers an in-depth scholarly analysis of state administration in the era of Amir Temur and the Temurid dynasty, focusing on political–military governance, the legal order, and the essence and characteristics of the “Temur Tuzuklari” (Temur’s Code) as the written normative foundation of the empire.

**Keywords:** state, governance, Amir Temur, Temurid state, Temur’s Code, legal order, Sharia, custom, justice, office-holding, tax system, property rights, court system, application practice, legal sources, code, political governance, socio-economic legal relations.

Amir Temur Kuragon ibn Amir Taragʻay Bahodir was a prominent statesman, an undefeated commander, the founder of one of the largest states of the medieval period, a leader who skillfully identified prudent courses in foreign relations, and a renowned general who developed the rules and laws of warfare.

Temur was born on the twenty-fifth of Shaʻban in the year 736 AH (April 8, 1336), which, according to the twelve-animal Turkic calendar, corresponded to the Year of the Mouse, in the village of Khoja Ilgʻor near the city of Kesh. The American historian Beatrice Forbes Manz, however, has expressed doubts, advancing the view that his birth may fall in the 1320s; she bases this on the observation that some records attesting to the year 1336 were written after Temur’s time and that a few contemporaneous reports imply an earlier birth. Nevertheless, no standard historical work explicitly states a birth year other than 1336.

The state of Amir Temur and the Temurids occupies a distinctive place in historical development. Formed in the 14th–15th centuries, the empire encompassed not only Central Asia, but also the Near and Middle East, the Caucasus, Iran, and India, maintaining a powerful political, military, and legal system. The regulation of state administration and socio-economic relations was consolidated through the “Temur Tuzuklari,” which provided the empire’s written legal-normative basis.

Because he was not of Genghisid blood, Temur did not assume the title of “Khan,” and instead bore the title “Amir,” recognized as the head of the Muslims. Grounding his campaigns in Islamic learning, he styled himself the “Sword of Islam” and, following his conquests, received the honorific “Abu’l-Fath/Abu’l-Ghazi.” After repeated victories over the Catholic Hospitallers at Izmir and over Georgian Christian forces, he was also addressed as “Abu’l-Ghazi.” Ruy González de Clavijo, the Castilian ambassador who visited Samarqand in 1404, likewise used the form “Temurbek” in his travel diary.<sup>1</sup>

The “Temur Tuzuklari” sets out the duties of tax-collecting officials and provincial governors: collected revenues must be entered into a receipt ledger, and expenditures recorded in a disbursement ledger; amir-governors had to monitor provincial conditions, ensure just assessments and payments, avoid additional burdens such as gratuitous requisitions or quartering, and refrain from harming the population.

In the legal order, Sharia served as the principal norm—embodying Islamic law, fatwas, juristic opinions, and customary practices. Temur recognized Sharia as state law and considered adherence to it inseparable from governance. Accordingly, courts and qadis adjudicated in line with Sharia; the maintenance of roads, fair justice, and measures against oppression were esteemed elements of state policy.

The apparatus of state governance rested on the structure of the “arkoni-davlat,” including the Amir, the chief minister (devonbegi), various vizierates, local governors, and provincial heads. Among the requirements imposed upon office-holders were the rendering of just decisions, attention to the needs and size of the populace, and the protection of both public and private interests. A system of supervision and accountability operated between the center and the provinces: governors and heads of revenue were obliged to report to the imperial capital.

Within the judicial system, matters ranging from international disputes to property conflicts were resolved through Sharia courts, qadis, and governmental adjudicatory bodies. The “Temur Tuzuklari” intertwines legal disputes with the themes of oppression and justice: if state officials or provincial rulers harmed individuals, the loss was to be recovered from the responsible dignitaries and restored to the injured parties.

The legal system also sought to protect people in material and social terms. In collecting taxes, assessments were tied to income, land, and yield; the burden could be lightened, and temporary exemptions granted to those unable to pay or to newly reclaimed lands—measures aimed at encouraging resettlement, husbandry, and productivity.<sup>1</sup>

Normative written sources and historical chronicles occupy a central place among the legal sources of the period. Works such as Ibn Arabshah's "History of Amir Temur," Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's "Zafarnama," Mihrkhwand, and Khwandamir record the conditions of the Temurid era, its legal practice, socio-economic relations, and tax policy, and constitute foundational materials for both historians and legal scholars.

At the same time, the legal order was not without shortcomings: the principle of justice was not always realized in practice; local officials sometimes abused their powers; and in certain cases tax collectors used unlawful pressure or even violence. Such problems are acknowledged in the Tuzuklar as subjects of criticism, revealing the dependence of justice on administrative capacity and oversight—i.e., the gap that could exist between written norms and real practice.<sup>2</sup>

In theory the Temurid legal system rested on firm norms; however, given the vastness of the realm, geographic and ethnic diversity, varied customs, and limited means of communication, central control could not always be uniformly maintained across all provinces. Questions of succession and the personal qualities of rulers also significantly affected legal stability.

Overall, the legal system of Amir Temur and the Temurids was characterized by centralization; a synthesis of Sharia and custom; a striving for justice; concern for productivity, economic stability, and the public interest. This legacy has left a marked imprint on subsequent conceptions of the rule of law, tax policy, judicial practice, and principles of public administration. The legal doctrines of the Temurid period—standards for office-holding and the pursuit of justice—remain instructive for modern scholarship and governance.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> On the titles applied to Temur (including "Temurbek") and related biographical materials: see, inter alia, Encyclopaedia and medieval studies references; Ruy González de Clavijo's travel diary.

<sup>2</sup> On critiques of administrative abuse and the gap between norm and practice in the Temurid era.

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