



THE “TEMUR TUZUKLARI” IN FOREIGN SCHOLARSHIP: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND PERSPECTIVES FROM INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Ro‘ziqulova Zarina

Abstract: *This article examines the study of the Temur Tuzuklari in foreign historiography and its status as a historical source. It analyzes the authenticity, manuscript tradition, and scholarly approaches to the work from a comparative source-critical perspective.*

Keywords: *Temur Tuzuklari, Amir Timur, historiography, source studies, authenticity, manuscript tradition, intellectual history.*

The “Temur tuzuklari” is considered one of the most controversial sources for the study of the period of Amir Temur and the Timurids. The main problem lies in the fact that the claim that the work was written by Amir Temur has not been sufficiently substantiated by evidence. The version of the work that has survived to the present day is in Persian, while the existence of its original Turkic version has not been reliably established. Moreover, references to the “Tuzuklar” are absent from the works of historians who were close to the period of Temur, such as Nizam al-Din Shami and Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi. For this reason, two major approaches have emerged in historiography: one supporting the authenticity of the work and another expressing skepticism toward it [1; 4].

The English translations produced by William Davy and Charles Stewart played an important role in introducing the work into the European scholarly environment. In the nineteenth century, Henry M. Elliot and Arminius Vámbéry supported the authenticity of the work, whereas V. V. Bartold and Edward G. Browne expressed serious doubts about its origin and authorship. In particular, Bartold drew attention to the fact that some information contained in the “Tuzuklar” could not be corroborated by Timurid chronicles, while Browne argued that the Persian version

might have taken shape during a later period. Gábor Csiky examined the issue from a more systematic source-critical perspective and demonstrated that the large number of manuscripts does not, in itself, prove the antiquity or authenticity of the work [2; 4; 5; 12; 13].

Therefore, in contemporary scholarship, it is more appropriate to approach the “Temur tuzuklari” neither as an unquestionably authentic source nor as a completely fabricated one. In order to determine its historical value, its manuscript tradition, the processes of its composition and translation, its language and terminology, as well as its correspondence with Shami, Yazdi, Ibn Arabshah, and other independent sources should be examined comprehensively. In particular, the studies of A. Ahat Andican and Gábor Csiky demonstrate the necessity of evaluating the *Tüzükler* from the perspective of critical source studies. Thus, the scholarly significance of the work lies not only in the question of whether it can be attributed to Amir Temur, but also in the fact that it provides an opportunity to study the formation of the image of Temur, the ideal of rulership, and political memory in subsequent periods [1; 4].

Beatrice Forbes Manz’s “The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane” is one of the important studies that analyzes Temur’s rule from the perspective of modern political and institutional history. However, as Csiky has noted, Manz did not include the “Temur tuzuklari” among her principal primary sources. This indicates the growing cautious and critical attitude toward this source in modern Western historiography. Nevertheless, doubts concerning the reliability of the “Temur tuzuklari” do not diminish its scholarly significance. On the contrary, examining when and in what intellectual and historical environment the text emerged, why it was attributed to Temur, and how it was interpreted in subsequent periods makes it possible to study the work as an object of intellectual history and political memory [8; 4].

One of the most important historiographical problems surrounding the “Temur tuzuklari” concerns its authorship and date of composition. While some scholars in

the nineteenth century, such as Henry M. Elliot and Arminius Vámbéry, supported the historical reliability of the work, scholars including V. V. Bartold, Edward G. Browne, and H. F. Hofman expressed doubts about its authenticity from the beginning of the twentieth century. Gábor Csiky analyzed these positions and demonstrated that the principal criterion of a critical approach is to compare the text with independent sources relating to the period of Temur [4]. Bartold drew attention to the claim in the “Temur tuzuklari” that Temur participated in the campaigns of Amir Qazaghan, noting that this information is not corroborated by other Timurid chronicles. Browne, meanwhile, argued that the Persian version might have been formed during the Mughal period and that the existence of an original Turkic version has not been reliably established by convincing evidence [2; 4].

The studies of H. F. Hofman further broaden the discussion by examining the issue from the perspectives of manuscript studies and transmission history. He notes the absence of information about Temur’s autobiography in Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi’s “Zafarnama” and emphasizes that no reliable evidence has been found confirming the existence of an original Turkic version.

At the same time, the large number of manuscripts does not automatically prove authenticity. According to Csiky, Storey recorded 53 manuscripts, while Hofman identified an additional 22 [4]. Therefore, when evaluating the *Temür Tüzükleri*, the date, provenance, textual relationships, and correspondence with independent sources are more important than the number of manuscripts.

Beatrice Forbes Manz’s *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* is one of the fundamental studies that analyzes Temur’s rule from the perspectives of political power, Chinggisid traditions, dynastic legitimacy, and state administration. However, as Csiky has noted, Manz did not include the «Temur tuzuklari» among her principal primary sources. The studies of Tilman Nagel likewise indicate that the «Temur tuzuklari» was not used as a principal source. This demonstrates the emergence of a cautious methodological approach to the question of the work’s

authenticity in contemporary Timur studies. Since sources such as Shami, Yazdi, Ibn Arabshah, and Clavijo are available for reconstructing the history of Timur, the use of a text with disputed authenticity as a primary source requires considerable scholarly caution [4; 8; 9].

Nevertheless, there is no absolute consensus in favor of a completely skeptical position toward the *Temür Tüzükleri*. The Indian historian Irfan Habib analyzed several manuscript versions of the work and argued that it should not be dismissed entirely as a fabricated text. He demonstrated that some manuscripts narrate the life of Timur only up to 1375–1376, whereas others include later events and even the death of Timur. Habib explains the text's relatively simple Persian style and its Turkic elements as possibly indicating that it was translated from an original Turkic version. However, Csiky approaches these conclusions cautiously, emphasizing that linguistic evidence and the earlier completion of a manuscript do not automatically prove that it represents an original translation. The Uzbek historian B. Ahmedov, meanwhile, attempted to substantiate the work's connection with the period of Timur by relying on its geographical information, linguistic features, and references to tribal and clan names [4; 6].

Thus, the debate over the authenticity of the “Temur tuzuklari” reveals two principal methodological approaches. The first relies on the linguistic characteristics of the text, its Turkic elements, historical and geographical information, and manuscript variants. The second focuses on the provenance of the manuscripts, the silence of Timurid historians, historical anachronisms, and discrepancies with other sources. From a scholarly perspective, the most appropriate approach is neither to regard the “Temur tuzuklari” as unquestionably authentic nor to dismiss it as entirely fabricated, but rather to verify each of its individual claims through comparison with independent sources. In particular, the presence of a single ethnonym, geographical name, or manuscript should not be accepted as conclusive evidence for determining the date of the work's composition [1; 4].

Gábor Csiky's 2006 study marked an important methodological turning point in the debate over the authenticity of the "Temür Tüzükleri". Rather than categorically classifying the work as either "authentic" or "forged," he emphasized the need to determine its historical status through a comprehensive source-critical analysis. This requires comparison with other Timurid sources and examination of the consistency of personal and tribal names, political and military terminology, and historical events [4]. This approach was further developed in A. Ahat Andican's 2017 specialized study, in which the status of the "Temur tuzuklari" as a primary historical source was reconsidered on the basis of the criteria of both external and internal criticism [1; 4].

One of the important issues raised in Andican's study is the absence of references to the *Temür Tüzükleri*, or to an autobiography of Temur in this particular form, in the works of historians close to the period of Temur, such as Nizam al-Din Shami and Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi [1; 4]. This circumstance raises a serious question regarding the authenticity of the work, but by itself it is not sufficient to declare it definitively forged. The possible loss of historical sources, the unknown extent to which individual sources were accessible or used, and the incomplete preservation of medieval texts all require such a conclusion to be approached with caution.

Therefore, although the "absence from the sources" argument constitutes an important critical criterion, it should not be regarded as conclusive evidence in itself, but rather evaluated in conjunction with other evidence.

The discrepancies in the manuscript and transmission history of the "Temur tuzuklari" also indicate a complex process of textual formation. Csiky notes that in some manuscripts Temur's life is narrated only up to the age of 44, that is, until 777 AH/1375–1376, whereas other versions include later events and even the death of Temur. These differences suggest that the text was not preserved in a single, fixed form, but may have developed through processes of translation, copying, and editorial revision. Therefore, in studying the *Temür Tüzükleri*, it is important to

distinguish between its possible historical core and the later redactions that have survived to the present day.

For this reason, the distinction between the possible historical core of the «Temur tuzuklari» and the redacted form that has survived to the present must be taken into account. Even if its earliest layer can be traced back to the Timurid period, subsequent translators, scribes, and editors may have introduced modifications and additions. Conversely, if a later author employed Timurid terminology and historical information, this does not prove that the text itself originated directly in the period of Temur. Therefore, the separate analysis of the text's historical core and its later redactions constitutes an important methodological requirement.

From this perspective, the English translation produced by William Davy in 1783 is of particular significance. According to Csiky, Davy based his translation on a single manuscript that he had purchased in 1779 [4; 5]. Since differences in the length and content of the text were subsequently identified among various manuscripts, treating Davy's edition as the sole or earliest form of the «Temur tuzuklari» requires caution. The circulation of the work in numerous Persian and Turkic copies throughout India and Central Asia demonstrates that it was widely present in cultural and political circulation; however, the large number of manuscripts does not directly prove that the work was composed during the period of Temur.

From this perspective, it is insufficient to assess the value of the «Temur tuzuklari» solely as a means of reconstructing the events of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is also necessary to examine its role in shaping the image of Temur, models of rulership, systems of state administration, political legitimacy, and historical memory in subsequent centuries. Ron Sela's study of later biographical traditions concerning Temur likewise demonstrates how the image of a historical figure can be reconstructed and reshaped in later periods [10]. Thus, analyzing the «Temur tuzuklari» at the intersection of modern source criticism and intellectual

history makes it possible to define its scholarly significance more precisely: source criticism reveals the processes of its formation and textual transmission, while intellectual history illuminates the ideas concerning rulership, governance, justice, and political legitimacy reflected in the text.

Gábor Csiky's methodological approach is based not on categorically judging the «Temur tuzuklari» as either “authentic” or “forged,” but on identifying its distinct historical layers. This requires examining personal and tribal names, political and military terminology, historical events, and the consistency of the text with other Timurid sources. A. Ahat Andican likewise reconsidered the issue on the basis of external and internal criticism, drawing attention to the question of the original Turkic version, the silence of Timurid historians, historical inconsistencies, and the possibility that the work may have taken shape during a later period [1]. Therefore, caution is required when using the «Temur tuzuklari» as a direct document of the period of Temur.

However, the fact that the authenticity of the source is disputed does not entirely negate its scholarly significance. The circulation of the work in India and Central Asia, its translation into different languages, and its active use in political and cultural contexts during subsequent periods make it an important object for studying historical memory and political thought concerning Temur [4; 10]. Ron Sela's studies likewise demonstrate that the image of Temur was reconstructed by authors of later periods [10].

From this perspective, it is appropriate to study the “Temur tuzuklari” not only as a means of reconstructing the history of the period of Temur, but also as a source of intellectual history reflecting ideals of rulership, concepts of state administration, political legitimacy, and the formation of the image of Temur in subsequent centuries.

The approaches in foreign historiography can, conditionally, be divided into three stages. Initially, scholars such as Davy and Vámbéry adopted a positive attitude

toward the work. Subsequently, Bartold, Browne, Hofman, and other scholars critically reconsidered its authorship and historical provenance. In the contemporary stage, Csiky and Andican have examined the issue using comprehensive source-critical approaches [1; 2; 4; 5; 8; 13]. This evolution demonstrates that comparative, textological, and intertextual analysis has become the principal methodological approach for determining the historical status of the *Temür Tüzükleri*.

The research demonstrates that neither accepting the »Temur tuzuklari« uncritically as a direct and complete autobiographical work of Amir Temur nor rejecting it categorically as a “forged” source is methodologically sufficient. The work’s late Persian textual tradition, the absence of reliable evidence confirming an original Turkic version, the silence of Timurid historians, and certain historical inconsistencies complicate its status as a primary source [1; 4; 15].

At the same time, the Timurid political and military concepts, ideas concerning governance, and the wide circulation of the text in subsequent periods preserve its scholarly significance. Therefore, the most appropriate approach to determining the historical value of the “Temur tuzuklari” is to compare its information with independent sources such as Shami, Yazdi, Ibn Arabshah, and Clavijo; to conduct a textological analysis of its manuscript and translation traditions; and to examine its role in shaping the image of Temur. Thus, the scholarly significance of the “Temur tuzuklari” lies not solely in the question of whether or not it was written by Amir Temur, but also in its potential to illuminate the processes through which historical knowledge and political memory concerning Temur were formed.

REFERENCES

1. Andican, A. Ahat. “Tüzükat-i Timuri Gerçek mi ve Geçerli Bir Birincil Tarihî Kaynak Olarak Kullanılabilir mi?” *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 27, no. 2 (2017): p. 33–83.
2. Browne, Edward G. *A Literary History of Persia*. Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

3. Clavijo, Ruy González de. Embassy to Tamerlane, 1403–1406. Translated by Guy Le Strange. London: Routledge, 1928.
4. Csiky, Gergely. “The Tuzūkāt-i Tīmūrī as a Source for Military History.” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 59, no. 4 (2006): p. 437–452.
5. Davy, William, trans. *The Institutes Political and Military of Timour*. Oxford, 1783.
6. Habib, Irfan. “The Tuzuk-i-Timuri.” 1997.
7. Ibn Arabshah. *Tamerlane or Timur: The Sultan of Samarkand*. Translated by John H. Sanders. London: Luzac, 1936.
8. Manz, Beatrice Forbes. *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
9. Nagel, Tilman. *Timur der Eroberer und die islamische Welt des späten Mittelalters*. München: C. H. Beck, 1993.
10. Sela, Ron. *The Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane: Islam and Heroic Apocrypha in Central Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
11. Shami, Nizam al-Din. *Zafarnama*. Translated by Felix Tauer. 2 vols. Prague: Oriental Institute, 1937–1956.
12. Stewart, Charles, trans. *The Mulfuzat Timury; or, Autobiographical Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Timur*. London, 1830.
13. Vámbéry, Ármin. *History of Bokhara; or, Transoxiana from the Earliest Period to the Present*. London: W. H. Allen, 1873.
14. Woods, John E. *The Timurid Dynasty*. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1990.
15. Yazdi, Sharaf al-Din Ali. *Zafarnama*. Edited by Muhammad Abbasi. Tehran, 1957–1958.