

THE ART OF WAR OF AMIR TEMUR AS REFLECTED IN THE “TEMUR TUZUKLARI” (“INSTITUTES OF TIMUR”)

Qosimov Muhammatali Khakimovich
Senior Lecturer, Institute of Ground Forces

Abstract

This article analyzes the military art of Amir Temur, the structure of his army, the organization of battle formations, tactical maneuvers, operational deployment, and strategic command as reflected in the Temur Tuzuklari (“Institutes of Timur”). Although Temur’s military system shared certain organizational principles with the army of Genghis Khan, it differed significantly from the latter in terms of structure and function. Temur’s army was characterized by the integration of cavalry and infantry units, the use of artillery, specially trained units adapted to operations in mountainous terrain, the flexible modification of battle formations according to the situation, feigned retreat, outflanking maneuvers, ambushes, and successive strikes. The article also examines the deployment principles for armies of 12,000 and more than 40,000 troops described in the Temur Tuzuklari, demonstrating the interrelationship between tactics, operational art, and strategy.

Keywords: Amir Temur, Temur Tuzuklari, military art, tactics, strategy, operational art, battle formation, favj, barong‘or, javong‘or, hirovul, chopovul, shiqovul, cavalry, infantry, maneuver.

Introduction

The political and military processes that took place in Movarounnahr and the surrounding regions during the second half of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries are closely associated with Amir Temur. In a relatively short period, the Sahibqiran not only established a centralized state but also developed a sophisticated system of military organization and command for his time. In his numerous military campaigns, particular importance was attached to the rapid command of troops, adaptation of battle formations to changing circumstances, thorough assessment of enemy forces, and the application of various tactical methods.

The Temur Tuzuklari is one of the important sources for studying Amir Temur's military views and experience. The work contains information concerning the organization of the army, maintenance of troops, duties of amirs and soldiers, preparation for battle, actions against the enemy, deployment of troops in battle formations, and the command of large military forces.

From this perspective, Amir Temur's military art should not be regarded merely as a collection of battlefield techniques. Rather, it is appropriate to consider it as an integrated military system combining troop organization, command and control, tactics, operational art, and strategy.

Although the military system created by Amir Temur appeared, at first glance, to be close to the Mongol military traditions established during the era of Genghis Khan, it differed considerably from them in terms of content and practical functions. One of the most important differences was the social and functional diversity of the army.

While the main body of Genghis Khan's army consisted primarily of warriors from nomadic tribes, Amir Temur's army combined the military potential of both nomadic and settled populations. Nomadic tribes mainly provided highly mobile cavalry and skilled archers, while the settled population played an important role in supplying infantry units. The involvement of peasants, artisans, and other social groups in military service broadened the social base of the army.

This circumstance determined the **sociodynamic character** of Amir Temur's army and contributed to its flexibility in performing various military tasks.

Although cavalry units constituted the principal striking force of the army, infantry also performed important functions. In particular, infantry played a significant role in besieging and capturing fortresses, taking fortified positions, and conducting military operations in mountainous and difficult terrain.

One of the most important aspects of Amir Temur's military art was the rational deployment of troops in battle formations. The Temur Tuzuklari provides detailed information about the division of an army of 12,000 cavalymen into nine parts.

According to this arrangement:

- one favj was assigned to the central (qo'l) section;
- three favjs to the right wing (barong'or);

- three favjs to the left wing (javong‘or);
- one favj to the rear guard (hirovul);
- one favj to the guard or reconnaissance unit (qorovul).

The barong‘or and javong‘or themselves were further divided into hirovul, chopovul, and shiqovul units. Such an organization was more complex than a simple linear formation and enabled the gradual deployment of troops during battle and the concentration of striking forces in the required direction.

Thus, this organization of the battle formation demonstrates the existence of a functional division between the center, flanks, forward elements, and rear elements in Amir Temur’s army.

The Temur Tuzuklari also describes the deployment of troops in situations where the enemy army exceeded 12,000 soldiers. When the enemy had more than 40,000 cavalrymen, an even higher level of military command was envisaged. This demonstrates that as the size of the army increased, its command structure and battle formation also became correspondingly more complex.

In Amir Temur’s military art, the outcome of a battle was considered to depend not only on actions during the battle itself but also on preparations made beforehand.

When selecting a location for his troops, the Sahibqiran paid attention to several factors, including:

- the proximity of water sources;
- the suitability of the terrain for accommodating troops;
- the availability of higher ground than the enemy’s position;
- ensuring that the sun would not be directly in the soldiers’ eyes;
- ensuring that the battlefield was open and sufficiently wide in front of the army.

These requirements demonstrate that Amir Temur attached considerable importance to military geography and the effective use of natural conditions on the battlefield.

In addition, commanders were expected to determine the enemy’s numbers, weapons, and methods of warfare in advance. This indicates that intelligence and information were regarded as important instruments in military decision-making.

One of the distinctive features of Amir Temur's military art was the rapid and concealed maneuvering of elements of the battle formation. Alongside frontal attacks against the enemy's main forces, reaching the enemy's flanks and rear was considered an important tactical objective.

When the enemy possessed numerical superiority or occupied a favorable position, light cavalry units avoided direct engagement and instead employed outflanking maneuvers. This method served to disrupt the enemy's battle formation and place the opposing forces in an unfavorable situation.

Amir Temur's troops also made extensive use of **feigned retreat**. In this maneuver, a military unit deliberately appeared to retreat, encouraging the enemy to pursue it. Once the enemy abandoned its advantageous position and began the pursuit, it could be subjected to a counterattack by previously concealed main forces or troops positioned in ambush.

Such tactics required a high level of discipline, effective command and control, and coordinated action among different military units.

In Amir Temur's military art, operational-level command was as important as tactics. Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, in his Zafarnama, records that in certain major battles Amir Temur divided his army into seven sections.

This seven-part operational formation consisted of the central force, the right and left wings, and supporting units. Such a system made it possible to command large forces, determine the principal direction of attack, and rapidly deploy reserves to areas where reinforcement was required.

The assignment of specific military units to Amir Temur's sons, grandsons, relatives, and experienced amirs also demonstrates the existence of a hierarchical command system.

In this respect, the division of the army into seven sections may be interpreted not simply as a battlefield formation, but as a form of **operational command of large military forces**.

The Temur Tuzuklari establishes a separate battle formation for situations in which the enemy army consisted of more than 40,000 cavalymen. Commanding an army on such a scale required a highly organized system of central command. In this system, the responsibilities of beglarbegi, amirs, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of tens, and bahadurs were

defined. The work also envisaged the distribution of units belonging to ulus, qo'shun, and tuman formations into designated favjs.

In addition to the principal favjs in the barong'or and javong'or, the organization of hirovul, chopovul, and shiqovul units made it possible to introduce different elements of the army sequentially during various stages of battle.

Therefore, the formation designed for armies exceeding 40,000 troops demonstrates the existence of a mechanism within Amir Temur's military system for commanding strategically significant forces and coordinating them under a unified command.

Another important characteristic of Amir Temur's army was its willingness to make use of military and technological innovations. Sources contain information concerning the use of rahdandoz units and various projectile-firing weapons.

The principal functions of artillery and related siege weapons included inflicting damage on enemy manpower, capturing fortified positions and fortresses, and strengthening important sectors during siege operations.

This demonstrates that Amir Temur's military art did not rely exclusively on the mobility of traditional cavalry forces but also incorporated **military-technical means into the conduct of warfare**.

At the same time, the presence of specially trained infantry units capable of operating in mountainous terrain demonstrates the considerable attention given to adapting the army to different natural and geographical conditions.

The Temur Tuzuklari attaches particular importance to the command of troops. Army commanders and officers responsible for supervision were expected to remain constantly vigilant and to determine the size, weapons, and methods of warfare of the enemy.

The commander's responsibility was not limited to issuing orders. He was expected to assess the battlefield, determine the enemy's capabilities, control the battle formation of his own forces, and make appropriate decisions as circumstances changed.

The instructions concerning successive attacks and, when necessary, the commander's personal participation in battle also demonstrate the importance attached to morale and the personal example of commanders.

An important feature distinguishing Amir Temur's military art from the battlefield practices of many other commanders is the **integration of strategic, operational, and tactical levels of warfare.**

At the strategic level, the overall objectives of a campaign, mobilization of forces, and general direction of operations were determined. At the operational level, large forces were divided into sections and favjs, and their coordination was organized. At the tactical level, methods such as battle formation, attacks from the flanks, outflanking, ambushes, and feigned retreats were employed.

Therefore, the military instructions contained in the Temur Tuzuklari should not be viewed merely as a collection of individual battlefield techniques. Rather, they should be studied as a **comprehensive concept of military command and organization.**

The influence of Amir Temur's military art on subsequent military thought is also of considerable scholarly interest. Russian military specialist General M. Ivanin analyzed the organization and command structure of Amir Temur's army and drew attention to the issue of a large tactical unit consisting of 12,000 troops and its supply system.

His views concerning the improvement of troop organization and the transportation of supply reserves demonstrate that Amir Temur's military system possessed significance not only in a historical context but also for the development of military theory in later periods.

However, when making such historical comparisons, it is necessary to take into account the significant differences in the military-technical and organizational conditions of different historical periods.

The chess tradition is also relevant when examining Amir Temur's strategic thinking. In medieval Central Asia, various forms of chess existed, including complex variants such as large chess. Ibn Arabshah recorded that Amir Temur played large chess and that the game included certain pieces that do not exist in modern chess.

The larger chessboard and diverse range of pieces created a more complex gaming environment that may be considered relevant to the development of strategic thinking.

At the same time, claims that chess was a direct source of Amir Temur's military art or that he personally invented it should be treated cautiously in a scholarly article. Such statements require separate source-critical and historiographical analysis based on reliable historical evidence.

Amir Temur's military art is presented in the Temur Tuzuklari as a systematic and multi-level concept of military organization and command. The work addresses issues ranging from the organization of troops to the selection of battlefields, intelligence gathering, the formation of battle lines, command of military units, assessment of enemy capabilities, and organization of decisive attacks.

The analysis makes it possible to identify the following principal characteristics of Amir Temur's military system:

- 1. Diversity of the army's composition** — the military potential of nomadic and settled populations was integrated.
- 2. Coordination between cavalry and infantry** — the army was adapted to perform a wide range of military tasks.
- 3. Well-organized battle formations** — the functions of units such as qo'l, barong'or, javong'or, hirovul, chopovul, and shiqovul were clearly defined.
- 4. Adaptability to circumstances** — troop formations were modified according to the strength of the enemy and the conditions of battle.
- 5. Maneuver-based tactics** — outflanking, feigned retreat, ambushes, and counterattacks were employed.
- 6. Rational use of the battlefield** — factors such as water sources, terrain, the direction of sunlight, and the openness of the battlefield were taken into consideration.

In general, the military concepts presented in the Temur Tuzuklari demonstrate that Amir Temur's military experience went beyond individual battlefield skills and developed into an integrated military system encompassing **troop organization, command and control, tactics, operational art, and strategy**. The principal strength of the Sahibqiran lay not merely in possessing a large army, but in his ability to reorganize available forces according to circumstances, direct them toward a unified objective, and conduct rapid maneuvers on the battlefield.



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