

TACTICS AND MILITARY STRATAGEMS USED IN AMIR TEMUR'S CAMPAIGNS

Kadirov Ilxomjon Odiljonovich

Associate Professor, Lieutenant Colonel, Military

Security and Defense University of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Abstract: This article reveals the periods of activity, organizational structure of troops, weapons, campaigns and the tactics and military cunning used in them of the great commander Amir Temur.

Keywords: Movorounahr, period, military campaigns, Amir, Mongols, ulus, military leader, cavalryman, firearms, howitzer, battle formation, cannon, military affairs.

Amir Temur, son of Tarag'ay Bahodir (1336-1405), had two clearly distinguishable periods in his life and activity.

The first period covers the years 1360–1386. During this time, Temur struggled to establish a strong centralized state independent from the Mongol Khanate in Movarounnahr. Together with social forces such as the Turkic and Tajik aristocracy and the *oq suyaklar* (nobles), who were interested in unifying Movarounnahr, he fought against the arbitrary feudal rulers of the Middle Ages whose actions opposed centralization and unity, and who sought to keep the country in a state of fragmentation.

The second period of Temur's activity begins mainly from 1386 and continues until 1402. This period is characterized by his so-called three-year, five-year, and seven-year military campaigns.

In his youth, Temurbek developed a special affection and passion for military affairs. There is no doubt that the influence of his noble father-Amir Tarag'ay, one of the dignitaries of Amir Qazag'an's state, famed for his bravery, courage, and nobility-played a considerable role in the very early emergence of Temur's interest in the art of war.

Having reached adolescence, Temurbek realized that putting an end to nearly one and a half centuries of Mongol oppression, eliminating the internal conflicts and wars that had arisen due to feudal fragmentation in the Chagatai Ulus, supporting the common people exhausted by internal and external tyranny, restoring ruined cities and villages, and protecting the ulus from external invasions could be achieved only through gaining power.

In accomplishing the task he had set himself, Temurbek relied on the sincere assistance of brothers-in-arms who pledged loyalty to him-vowing to share with him moments of joy or hardship, and never to abandon him in difficult times. With their selfless support, and especially with the direct participation and backing of all strata of the Movarounnahr population, who suffered under Mongol oppression, Temur succeeded in seizing power in 1370, unifying a country deprived of its unity, re-establishing independence, and launching campaigns to regions such as Northern Anatolia and India.

Temurbek's accession to the throne led to positive developments in social, political, and economic life, which were also reflected in military affairs and the art of war.

In pursuit of the priority goals of establishing control over major caravan routes, increasing the power of the ulus, and improving the people's living conditions, Temurbek, with his mighty

and unmatched army, repeatedly marched to regions such as Jata, Iran, Afghanistan, the Caucasus, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, the Dasht-i Qipchoq, Northern Anatolia, and India, achieving world-shaking victories.

Military history rightfully recognizes Temurbek as one of the greatest commanders of all time.

His military genius manifested itself primarily in two directions:

- as a skilled military organizer,
- and as an outstanding commander.

As a great general and innovative military organizer, Temurbek succeeded in forming a highly disciplined army, masterfully controlling his units during battle, skillfully deploying forces in decisive locations at the right time, overcoming obstacles with ingenuity, and maintaining the fighting spirit of the army at a high level.

The Sahibqiron thoroughly studied and analyzed the military organization of the Turkic-Mongol peoples-particularly the army of Chinggis Khan-along with their methods of warfare, and introduced necessary reforms.

Although the structure of Temurbek's army was in some ways similar to the military system established by Chinggis Khan, it differed in the following key aspects:

- While the Chinggisid army was formed based on universal conscription of the population, Temurbek's army did not have a general popular character;
- In Chinggis Khan's era, the core of the army consisted of nomadic peoples. By contrast, Temurbek's army included a significant number of soldiers recruited-by explicit order of the supreme commander-not only from pastoral communities but also from sedentary populations engaged in crafts, handicrafts, and agriculture;
- Temurbek's forces included not only horsemen, who formed the main striking power, but also sizeable infantry units. Chinggis Khan's army, excluding forcibly recruited local militias from conquered territories, had virtually no infantry;
- Temurbek was among the first in the East to introduce fire-shooting weapons-cannons (ra'd) into his army;
- The Sahibqiron established special infantry units capable of conducting combat operations in mountainous terrain;
- Temurbek became the first in world military history to introduce the system of deploying the army in battle formation divided into seven units;
- His army also included detachments composed of women, who fought alongside men and demonstrated courage and perseverance;
- The army consisted of soldiers assembled from Movarounnahr, the Dashti Qipchoq, Khurasan, Iran, Badakhshan, Moghulistan, Khwarazm, Mazandaran, and Jata;
- The army possessed many features typical of a standing force.

The army was precisely organized numerically; its battle formation (*yasol*) was refined from one battle to another. It was equipped with the advanced weapons and technology of its time and standardized armaments and equipment. Units were distinguishable by their uniforms and banners, which greatly facilitated battlefield command. Temurbek's strategy-destroying enemy defenses using various methods, striking fortified cities unexpectedly and powerfully, capturing

enemy leaders (especially commanders), defending castles and fortresses for extended periods, encircling enemy forces on a wide front, capturing villages and regions one after another, pursuing the enemy until complete destruction, and appointing trusted representatives to govern newly conquered territories-brought numerous triumphs.

Tactically, Temurbek's army had distinctive features.

Unlike the battle formations used by the Qarakhanids, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, and Chinggisids, Temurbek's forces were divided into seven units, reconnaissance was highly developed, detailed plans were prepared to ensure proper maneuverability during marches and on the battlefield, and enormous attention was given to operational command during combat. Temurbek personally supervised the selection of commanders of the tens, hundreds, thousands, and tumans. The correct appointment of capable commanders significantly influenced the successful outcome of battles.

One of his great contributions to the development of military art was the introduction of a mounted unit-the qunbul, responsible for protecting the army's flanks during battle and, conversely, for circling the enemy to strike from the rear.

This entirely new type of military unit had no counterpart in the armies of Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Louis XIV, Frederick the Great, or even Chinggis Khan. Only in the army of the great 19 th-century general Napoleon Bonaparte can we find a unit assigned to protect the flanks. Military experts note that before his Eastern campaigns, Napoleon carefully studied the structure of Temurbek's army and adopted some of his tactical methods.

Heavily armed cavalry were equipped with helmets, armor, swords, bows, quivers, shields, and spears. They were composed of elite soldiers, bore the brunt of the enemy's main attack, and played a decisive role in determining the outcome of battles.

Before each campaign, Temurbek summoned state councillors, viziers, commanders, beks, and amirs to a military council. At the same time, a special decree-buruq (toqnal) was issued to assemble troops from various provinces, districts, and subordinate lands. The order was delivered rapidly by a high-ranking official-the *tavachi*, the commander-in-chief's adjutant. Besides conveying the order, the *tavachi* was also responsible for organizing troop positions in camp or on the march, overseeing formations (*yasol*), and supervising movements.

According to the decree, provincial governors, district or city beks, and fortress commanders were strictly required to arrive at the designated assembly point (*miod*) on time with their soldiers, horses, weapons, provisions, feed, and other necessary supplies, according to the list prepared by Temurbek.

Before the campaign to the Dashti Qipchoq (1390-1391), Temurbek ordered his deputies to ensure that the army was supplied with food, weapons, clothing, and other necessities sufficient for one year. Each cavalryman received a bow, 30 arrows, a quiver, a shield, and an extra horse. For every ten soldiers, one tent, two shovels, one pickaxe, one sickle, one saw, one adze, one axe, and 100 needles were issued. Each soldier was also required to bring a rope, a piece of treated leather, and a cauldron.

Before campaigns, Temurbek sent spies (*ayg'oqchi*) to gather precise intelligence on the enemy's forces, fortifications, and internal situation. Only after collecting complete information did he begin preparations.

During expeditions, Temurbek paid close attention to hiring local *qajarchi* guides to lead the army through difficult terrain.

Before setting out, he traditionally visited his spiritual mentors with pure intentions and completed the rites of pilgrimage.

Once the army-consisting of archers, spearmen, *qorura-andoz* (grenade throwers), *sangandoz* (stone-throwers), *taxshandoz* (crossbowmen), *mayjaniq* (catapult operators), *arroda* (stone-throwing machine operators), *tiricharx* (crossbow) shooters, and other units-was assembled, a full inspection was carried out.

Temurbek's army included *ra'dandoz* (artillerymen) who operated *ra'd* (cannons), which used vessels filled with flammable materials. Their number reached 10,000. Temurbek first used *ra'd* in 1379.

During his campaign to India (1398-1399), Temurbek faced forces commanded by Prince Sultan Mahmud, Mallu Khan, and other notable Indian generals-10,000 cavalry, 20,000 elite infantry, and 120 war elephants. Temurbek sought ways to neutralize the elephants, which terrified soldiers. He ordered thousands of triangular spike devices (*mondul*) to be made to stop the elephants' advance; instructed that camels or bulls be tied with bundles of burning brushwood and driven toward the elephants; and commanded his soldiers not to shoot arrows or spears at their bodies but to sever their trunks with swords.

When the battle began, Temurbek ordered his forces to retreat. Mistaking this for real flight, the Indian army advanced rapidly. As the elephants stepped onto the field of spikes, their feet were injured, and Temur's forces attacked their trunks, forcing them to retreat, causing chaos in their own ranks. The panicking elephants trampled the enemy's two flanks, bringing Temurbek victory.

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