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### CLASH OF KHANS: THE HISTORIC BATTLE BETWEEN TIMUR AND TOKHTAMYSH

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#### Annotatsiya

Amir Temur va Toxtamishxon o'rtasidagi mojarolar XIV asr oxiri Markaziy Osiyo va Dashti Qipchoq tarixida hal qiluvchi burilish yasadi. 1391 yildagi Qunduzchoq jangida Temur qo'shini Oltin O'rda xonini mag'lub etib, Dasht hududlarida siyosiy ustunlikni qo'lga kiritdi. 1395 yildagi Terek jangida esa Toxtamishning so'nggi urinishlari ham barbod bo'ldi; natijada Oltin O'rda parchalanish jarayoniga kirishib, Markaziy Yevroosiyo savdo yo'llarida kuchlar muvozanati Temuriylar foydasiga o'zgardi. Ushbu mavzu Temuriy diplomatiya, harbiy strategiya va mintaqaviy kuchlar dinamikasini o'rganishda muhim empirik material bo'lib xizmat qiladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** Amir Temur, Toxtamishxon, Qunduzchoq jangi, Terek jangi, Oltin O'rda, Dashti Qipchoq, Temuriylar davlati, harbiy strategiya, siyosiy ta'sir, savdo yo'llari, tarixiy burilish, davlatlararo ziddiyat, diplomatik munosabatlar.

#### Аннотация

Конфликт между Амиром Темуrom (Тамерланом) и ханом Тохтамышем в конце XIV века стал переломным моментом в истории Центральной Азии и Дешт-и-Кыпчака. В битве при Кундузчаках (1391 г.) войска Темура нанесли поражение Золотой Орде, утвердив политическое превосходство на кочевых территориях. Окончательный разгром Тохтамыша под Тереком (1395 г.) ускорил распад Золотой Орды, изменив баланс сил на евразийских торговых путях в пользу Тимуридов. Тема предоставляет ценный материал для исследования тимуридской дипломатии, военной стратегии и региональной политической динамики.



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**Ключевые слова:** Амир Темур, Тохтамыш, битва при Кундузчаках, битва на Тереке, Золотая Орда, Дешт-и-Кыпчак, государство Тимуридов, военная стратегия, политическое влияние, торговые пути, исторический поворот, межгосударственный конфликт, дипломатические отношения.

### Annotation

The rivalry between Amir Timur (Tamerlane) and Khan Tokhtamysh at the close of the 14th century marked a turning point for Central Asia and the Qipchaq Steppe. Timur's triumph at the Battle of Qunduzchaq in 1391 weakened the Golden Horde's authority, while his decisive victory at the Terek River in 1395 shattered Tokhtamysh's last resistance. The subsequent fragmentation of the Horde re-shaped Eurasian trade routes and consolidated Timurid influence across the steppe. This topic offers rich material for analyzing Timurid diplomacy, military strategy, and regional power shifts.

**Keywords:** Amir Timur, Tokhtamysh, Battle of Qunduzchaq, Battle of the Terek, Golden Horde, Qipchaq Steppe, Timurid state, military strategy, political influence, trade routes, historical turning point, interstate conflict, diplomatic relations

Tokhtamysh's policy included the plan to seize Transcaucasia, including Azerbaijan and Iran, and establish himself in this region, and then threaten Transoxiana from the south. These lands, located on an important trade route, were also of great economic, military and strategic importance. If Tokhtamysh had captured these territories, he would have become dominant in the entire Near and Middle East, along with the Mamluk state. That is why he had carefully prepared, gathered a large army, and turned the Darband gorge into a fortified camp. Amir Temur understood well that the growing Golden Horde Khanate posed a serious threat to his country. He fought three military battles with Tokhtamysh, who had openly adopted the path of treachery, and completely defeated him. In fact, the conquest of the Golden Horde Khanate was not in his sights. However, he was well aware that in the future, if the White Horde and the Golden Horde were to unite, a strong state would be extremely dangerous for him. Therefore, he planned to eliminate the threat from the north of his country by elevating a loyal ruler to the position of khan in this region and



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keeping him in subjection. In accordance with a well-thought-out political plan, he raised the son of Toyhoja Oglan, Prince Totamish, who had come to seek refuge in 1376, provided him with military support and sent him three times to seize the throne of the Golden Horde. Tokhtamish was defeated by his rivals in open battles and barely escaped each time. Finally, when Orus Khan died, his son Tokhtakiya took his place, but after a short time he was also killed, and Temur Malik took the throne. This prince, given to drinking and living, lost his reputation and could not stay on the throne for long. Sensing that his opportunity had come, Amir Temur sent Tokhtamysh to the White Horde for the fourth time in 1378. This time, with the support of Sahibkiran, he triumphed and took the throne of the Golden Horde, captured the cities along the Volga, and defeated Mamai, effectively uniting the White Horde and the Golden Horde into a powerful state. In 1382, he invaded Moscow and subjugated the Russian principalities. The powerful Lithuanian principality in the west was now forced to reckon with him. Intoxicated by his victories, Tokhtamysh began to ignore his former patron, Amir Temur. In 1383, he had coins minted in his name in Khorezm. At this time, Amir Temur was seeking to conquer Northern Iran and seize Azerbaijan. As mentioned above, it was natural for Sahibkiran to claim these territories, which had once been in the hands of the Ilkhanids. At the same time, Tokhtamysh, who was a member of the Genghisids and was becoming increasingly powerful, was also trying hard to take control of this country. Thus, this rich land became a point of contention between the parties. Now Tokhtamysh began to openly oppose Amir Temur's plans. He broke his promise and, when Amir Temur returned to Samarkand, in 1385-1386, he invaded Tabriz through the lands of Darband and Shirban, and despite receiving a large fortune - 250 dunams of gold, he plundered the cities and villages. At that time, a complex political situation had developed in the Middle East and the Caucasus. The Egyptian Mamluks, who were gaining strength and building a strong centralized state, the Ottoman Turks, the governor of Kaysari-Sivas, Qazi Burkhaniddin, and the governor of the Jaloyirs, Sultan Ahmed and Kara Yusuf, whose throne was in danger, began to bother the Turkmens. It is known that in this critical situation, Tokhtamysh sent an embassy to Cairo in January 1385 with the aim of uniting against Amir Temur. This embassy was received with honor. "There is no doubt that the intended goal of



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the embassy was to attract Sultan Barquq to an alliance against Amir Timur. First, the Golden Horde and Egypt had long been allies against the forces that were concentrated in the east and south of Azerbaijan. For example, during the time of the Haloquids, who controlled Iran, Azerbaijan, and Iraq, the interests of these two sides required mutual visits. The Golden Horde, as mentioned above, was interested in Azerbaijan. For Egypt, it was important to prevent the Haloquids from moving westward, that is, toward the territories under the Mamluks' influence. In his letters, the Egyptian sultan urged the Golden Horde to march through the Caucasus against Azerbaijan and Iran, and emphasized that he would support them in this matter. Secondly, the Egyptian rulers were against Amir Timur's westward movement. "They were not interested in the movement of the Turkmen, and this could be a sufficient basis for their alliance with Tokhtamysh Khan." Thus, this evidence indicates that Tokhtamysh was secretly preparing for war against Amir Temur. In the current situation, Amir Temur understood well that after gaining strength in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, he could count on other opponents, including Tokhtamysh. Tokhtamysh, taking advantage of the situation, wanted to enter the war and strike Amir Temur before he became stronger. In the winter of 1386-1387, Amir Temur and Tokhtamysh's army met face to face on the banks of the Samur River. Despite Sahibkiran's orders to his emirs not to enter the battle, a short battle took place. When the army led by Miranshah entered the battle, Tokhtamysh was defeated and retreated. But this defeat did not teach him a lesson. Amir Temur, who spent the winter in Karabakh, began to march on Kara Yusuf of Karakuyun, who ruled in Eastern Anatolia and around Lake Van. This ruler was rampant with piracy, causing great discontent among pilgrims and trade caravans during the Holy Hajj. The Turkmen retreated, and Amir Temur returned to Iran. Defeated in the Caucasus, Tokhtamysh, taking advantage of Sahibkiran's Iranian presence, again led an army to the borders of Transoxiana in 1387. He crossed Sighnaghi and reached the city of Sarbon. A fierce battle took place near Otrar with the army of Umarshaikh, who had arrived from Aksikent. Umarshaikh was defeated. Now there was no force in Transoxiana that could resist Tokhtamysh. He captured many cities and villages and went as far as Bukhara, but could not capture the city. The governor of Khorezm, Suleiman Sufi, also rebelled against Amir Temur. The commander was forced to



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immediately return to Maveronnahr and seize the initiative. Suleiman the Sufi fled and found refuge with Tokhtamysh. Tokhtamysh had become the main obstacle to Amir Temur's political activities in Iran, Azerbaijan, and the Middle East. He had also shown great zeal and gathered a large army. Among his soldiers, in addition to Turks and Mongols, there were representatives of various tribes and peoples, including Russians, Circassians, Alans, Moksha, Bashkirs, and Crimean Singars. Sooner or later, a fierce clash was inevitable. In the fall of 1390, Tokhtamysh sent his ambassadors to Amir Temur, who was marching towards Dashti-Kipchog. Amir Temur, who spent the winter in Karabakh, began to march on Kara Yusuf of Karakuyun, who ruled in Eastern Anatolia and around Lake Van. This ruler was rampant with piracy, causing great discontent among pilgrims and trade caravans during the Holy Hajj. The Turkmens retreated, and Amir Temur returned to Iran. Defeated in the Caucasus, Tokhtamysh, taking advantage of Sahibkiran's Iranian presence, again led an army to the borders of Transoxiana in 1387. He crossed Sighnaghi and reached the city of Sarbon. A fierce battle took place near Otrar with the army of Umarshaikh, who had arrived from Aksikent. Umarshaikh was defeated. Now there was no force in Transoxiana that could resist Tokhtamysh. He captured many cities and villages and went as far as Bukhara, but could not capture the city. The governor of Khorezm, Suleiman Sufi, also rebelled against Amir Temur. The commander was forced to immediately return to Maveronnahr and seize the initiative. Suleiman the Sufi fled and found refuge with Tokhtamysh. Tokhtamysh had become the main obstacle to Amir Temur's political activities in Iran, Azerbaijan, and the Middle East. He had also shown great zeal and gathered a large army. Among his soldiers, in addition to Turks and Mongols, there were representatives of various tribes and peoples, including Russians, Circassians, Alans, Moksha, Bashkirs, and Crimean Singars. Sooner or later, a fierce clash was inevitable. In the fall of 1390, Tokhtamysh sent his ambassadors to Amir Temur, who was marching towards Dashti-Kipchog. Knowing full well that the young khan's words were deceitful, Sahibkiran, despite receiving the envoys with kindness, openly stated that it was too late and that he had no intention of stopping the march. According to Yazdi, Amir Temur replied to the ambassadors: "I took his hand from the Russian Khan, gave it to him, and made him sit on the throne and make him Joji



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Ulusidha Khan. If God Almighty had given him, I would have been the cause. And he was like a son to me, and I was like a father to him. Now he has become a leader in the state, and he has shown greatness and compassion, and when he forgets his rights and goes to the Iranian province, he comes and invades our province, causing concern to the Muslims... So! How many evil deeds have been committed since then. Now his words cannot be trusted, and we will not return from this campaign and we will be punished for it. Let us see whom God Almighty will give victory to." In this military campaign, Amir Temur for the first time formed his army in the "seven-armed" order, which had not been used before. Yazdi writes about this: "The Hazrat himself walked and pulled the seven hands of the cherik, which no king had ever done or heard of. And there were many properties and many secrets in these seven numbers, which the scholars of Sab' ul-Masanin were already aware of."

On June 18, 1391, in a clash near Kunduzcha, Tokhtamysh's numerically superior army was crushed. The khan himself barely escaped. Shortly after Amir Temur's army retreated, Tokhtamysh recovered, gathered a large army, and began to continue the opposition. Tokhtamysh's contacts with the Egyptian Mamluks, who were threatened during Sahibkiran's 1392-1393 campaign, in 1394-1395 further strained the military situation. While Amir Temur was in Georgia, Tokhtamysh, who was constantly looking for a pretext for war, passed through Darband and invaded the Shirvan territories. The enterprising and extremely generous Sahibkiran did not rush this time, first sending Shamsiddin Almaliqu as an ambassador to Tokhtamysh Khan, reminding him of the previous filial piety and urging him to refrain from military actions. At the same time, various diplomatic means were used. Letters and notes were sent to the people and uluses of the Kipchak steppe on this subject. "Whoever joins me will be glorified, whoever tries to fight me will be destroyed," it is written in "Tuzuklar". However, under the influence of the Khan's beks, he wrote an inappropriate reply to Amir Temur and sent the ambassador back. This pretext alone was enough to start the war. On April 15, 1395, in a heavy battle on the Terek River, Tokhtamysh's army was completely crushed. After this defeat, he was not destined to regain the throne of the Khanate. This victory also created great opportunities for Amir Temur's activities in the East and the implementation of his military strategic plans. Now he completely eliminated the great threat that was pouring into





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Transoxiana from the North and East, and opened the way for his citizens to live in peace and freedom.

The wildest dreams of Tokhtamysh, who had planned to seize the Caucasus and Iran, strangle Transoxiana both politically and economically, isolate it, and completely crush it together with the forces of the "Defense Union", and who had betrayed his former patron, did not come true. The Khan of the Golden Horde was never able to regain the throne after this defeat. At the same time, the brilliant victory of Amir Temur put an end to the cooperation between Egypt and the Golden Horde, which lasted for about 200 years. Yildirim Bayezidninh, who was fighting hard to subjugate Europe, did not realize his intention to unite with the Golden Horde. The Golden Horde's future aggression against the Middle East and other countries was put to an end. After the Golden Horde weakened, a strong state capable of opposing Amir Temur in the Near and Middle East could not reappear on the stage of history. Amir Temur proved in practice that he was a wise politician who acted with foresight and great military power. There is every reason to call Amir Temur, who is rightly considered the "savior of Europe" in the West, the Mongol autocracy.

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