

RUI GONZÁLES DE CLAVIJO'S JOURNEY TO THE COURT OF AMIR TEMUR AND HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY OF SAMARKAND

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Annotation: This article examines the diplomatic journey of the renowned Spanish envoy Ruy González de Clavijo to Samarkand and the court of Amir Temur in the early fifteenth century. Clavijo arrived in the Timurid state as a member of the delegation sent by the King of Spain. During his stay, he became a witness to the political life of the state, court ceremonies, architectural monuments, and the spiritual life of the peoples, all of which he later described in his written account.

Main Part

The great military commander and statesman Amir Temur maintained active diplomatic relations with many countries. These included China, the Ottoman Empire, France, India, Iran, and Spain, with which he established embassy and diplomatic contacts. In 1402, a battle took place between Amir Temur and the Ottoman Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid. Following this battle, an exchange of envoys occurred.

According to historical sources, the envoy sent by Amir Temur to Castile was Muhammad Qazi, and later Muhammad Keshi was dispatched as an ambassador. King Henry III of Castile received these envoys warmly, showed them great respect, and in return sent an embassy to Samarkand under the leadership of Ruy González de Clavijo [1,6].

The delegation, consisting of eleven members, set out on their journey on May 23, 1403. After a journey lasting fifteen months, the envoys led by Clavijo arrived in Samarkand. They stayed in the city during September–November of 1404. The diplomatic mission continued until 1406. On August 30, 1404, a messenger arrived in Kesh inviting them to the capital. At the end of August, they proceeded to Samarkand [2,7].

Clavijo writes that when Amir Temur saw the envoys dressed in Spanish attire, the locals burst into laughter, remarking on their unusual appearance. The Spanish envoys remained in Samarkand for three months, during which they participated in more than ten celebrations and met with Amir Temur on five occasions. Clavijo notes that by attending banquets, he was able to closely observe Amir Temur's family members, his wives, and court officials. In his diary, he provides detailed information about all the routes he traveled during the journey [3,8]. Amir Temur did not receive the envoys personally at their first arrival. Initially, they met with his sons and high-ranking state officials, and only afterward were they granted an audience with Amir Temur himself. Before meeting Amir Temur, the envoys also had an audience with Miranshah Mirza.

Clavijo describes his meeting with Amir Temur as follows: "We set out toward Samarkand, passing through gardens and flat roads. Servants came out to meet us and took the gifts we were carrying. We were then led inside and brought before high-ranking guards" [4,116]. "After that, we were taken to his grandsons, before whom we also paid our respects. The letter sent by the king was received by Temur Beg's grandson, who carried it to the Sahibqiran and ordered us to proceed forward. Upon entering a large, richly decorated hall, we saw the Sahibqiran seated opposite us. In the center of the hall there was a large fountain, and red apples

were floating in the water of the pool. The Sahibqiran was seated on a throne above, wearing an undecorated silk robe, and on his head he had a turban adorned with diamonds and surrounded by precious stones. As soon as we saw him, we bent our knees and placed our hands on our chests, approaching him with deep bows. When we came closer, he instructed us to move nearer so that he could see us better. Because of his old age, the Sahibqiran's eyesight was weak," writes Clavijo [5,117].

Regarding the description of Samarkand, he writes: "The city of Samarkand, located on a plain, is slightly larger in size than the city of Seville (in Andalusia, Spain). Outside the city, many houses have been built, and it is surrounded by gardens and vineyards stretching for about one and a half to two farsakhs, with the city standing at the center of these gardens. Among the gardens there are streets and squares, and many people live there. Bread, meat, and other goods are sold in these areas. More people live outside the city than within it" [6,145].

"Outside the city there are gardens, large and magnificent buildings, the palaces of the Sahibqiran, as well as the mosques and mausoleums he had constructed. Vineyards and gardens are so abundant that as one approaches them, it appears as if entering a forest, with the city built at its center. Canals pass between the gardens and the city, where cotton and melons are cultivated. The melons of this land are extremely sweet, and a great quantity of grapes and melons is produced. Every day, camels loaded with melons would come into the city, and the melons were quickly sold. Melons were consumed throughout the year.

The Sahibqiran allocated many of the gardens outside the city for people who had arrived from other regions to live in. The sheep of this land were large, well-fed, and inexpensive. When the Sahibqiran was in the city with his army, the price of a pair of sheep was one ducat. All goods were cheap, and nothing was cheaper than bread. Rice was extremely abundant," writes Clavijo [7,146].

In his diary, Clavijo writes about the wealth of Samarkand as follows:

"The wealth of this city was so great that for this reason it was called Samarkand. Its true name was Semizkent, which meant 'fat village.' In their language, semiz meant 'large' or 'abundant,' and kent meant 'village,' that is, 'a place where people live.' From this, the name Samarkand was derived. Samarkand was also considered wealthy because of its silk fabrics, satins, precious stones, pearls and jewels, leather goods, gold, colored dyes, and many other similar items. People were brought to this city from various regions. From the city of Damascus, many skilled tailors, left-handed riders, acrobats, and potters who made clay vessels were brought here" [8,146]. From Turkestan, stone carvers, goldsmiths, and various other craftsmen were gathered and brought to the city. The Sahibqiran brought various remarkable machines here, from which ropes were produced. After that, a plant called kanop, which had never before been cultivated in these lands, began to be grown, and ropes were produced from its yield. So many people were brought to this city that its population reached one hundred and fifty thousand. Among them were representatives of various peoples—Turks, Arabs, people from Merv, Armenians, and Greeks. Goods from different parts of the world entered the city: leather products were brought from Rus' and Tatory, while from China came the finest and most expensive silk fabrics in the world, as well as other rare goods—diamonds, pearls, and precious jewels. Compared to other states, goods brought from China were considered especially valuable. For this reason, the Chinese regarded themselves as a great people of the world, calling themselves 'two-eyed,' the people of Merv 'blind,' and the Franks 'one-eyed,' believing that through their works they occupied the foremost position in the world. From India, various nuts and diverse flowers were brought here. Such marvelous things did not exist even in Alexandria.

On the outskirts of the city there was a large palace which, when viewed from afar, appeared to stand on flat ground, but upon closer inspection it was surrounded by deep circular

moats, making entry into the palace difficult. In this palace, the Sahibqiran kept his treasury, and no one other than the Sahibqiran himself or his closest associates was allowed to enter. In this same palace, the Sahibqiran kept nearly a thousand captive craftsmen who produced armor, helmets, bows, and arrows for the warriors.

After campaigning in Anatolia and capturing Damascus, the Sahibqiran issued a decree allowing his soldiers, when setting out on long campaigns, to take their wives with them. Amir Temur issued this decree because he remained away on campaigns for a long time and was not present in Samarkand. After this, they did not stay in Samarkand for seven years, and the Sahibqiran swore an oath not to enter this palace for seven years,” writes Clavijo [9,147].

Clavijo describes Temur Beg’s entry into the citadel of Samarkand after seven years as follows: “While we were in Samarkand, the period of seven years during which the Sahibqiran had vowed not to enter the palace came to an end, and the time arrived for him to enter it. The Sahibqiran entered this palace ceremoniously and ordered that nearly three thousand suits of armor and weapons, which had been produced over many years by the prisoners, be brought inside. A great quantity of weapons and helmets was carried before him. Temur Beg distributed these weapons of war among his close associates and trusted men.

These helmets were made in round and elongated forms, fitted with small iron plates that could be raised and lowered, covering the face when worn and serving a protective function. The coats of mail were somewhat lighter,” writes Clavijo [10,148].

Conclusion

The city of Samarkand as depicted in the diary of Ruy González de Clavijo emerges as a vivid symbol of the high level of development of Eastern civilization and its advanced technical and cultural progress in the early fifteenth century. The magnificent architectural monuments, sophisticated engineering solutions, and the refined urban planning that Clavijo witnessed represent the practical application of advanced scientific and technical knowledge for that era.

Samarkand housed numerous madrasas, libraries, and workshops, which had become major centers of learning and scholarship of their time. Clavijo’s accounts clearly indicate that Amir Temur and his circle paid great attention to technological innovations. Advanced technical approaches were applied in irrigation systems, bridges, caravanserais, and large-scale construction projects.

Thus, Samarkand astonished its contemporaries not only with its aesthetic beauty but also with its progressive scientific and technical environment. Today, Clavijo’s depiction of Samarkand provides invaluable historical evidence of the level of scientific and technological development in the past. These descriptions once again confirm the unparalleled role of science and technology in the advancement of society.

Samarkand in that period stood as a striking example of the harmony between scientific thought and practical knowledge, and even today this legacy continues to serve as a source of inspiration for modern scientific and technological progress.

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