

TIMUR VS BAYEZID - THE BATTLE OF ANKARA (1402)

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Timur was one of history's rare conquerors who rose from nothing, using his exceptional intelligence and determination to subdue vast lands and become a legendary ruler.

He was born during the rule of the Chagatai Khanate and spent his early years beside his father Turagay, chief of the Barlas tribe.

At that time, Transoxiana was under Chagatai control, though the khanate was in decline..

A fellow Barlas tribesman, Kazgan, became governor of Samarkand after years of

struggle, just like Timur
would later.

Timur's first steps into
military life began when he
pledged loyalty to Kazgan,
from his own tribe.

Recognizing Timur's talent,
Kazgan gave him command
of his troops. Timur served
with distinction in his army.
Kazgan was later ambushed
and killed, leading to unrest
in Samarkand.

To restore order, Chagatai
ruler Tughlugh Timur Khan
arrived—this is when he first
met Timur.

Timur introduced himself to
the Khan, earned his trust,

and joined the ranks of his
commanders.

Over time, Timur expanded
his influence and eventually
rose in rebellion against the
Chagatai Khan.

During this revolt, he faced
countless dangers and fought
many battles, especially
against the Mongols—
emerging victorious.

After proving his strength,
and with support from the
Chagatai emirs, Timur was
proclaimed sovereign, seated
upon white felt in accordance
with ancient Turkmen
tradition.

Thus, the Chagatai State

collapsed, and a new state
was founded in its place
under Timur's name.

An exceptionally intelligent
and organized man, Timur
became a great empire in
fifteen years...

Timur launched two major
campaigns against the Golden
Horde Khanate, shattering it
completely.

More than a hundred
thousand people were killed
in these battles. Tokhtamysh
Khan, the ruler of the Golden
Horde, fled to the northern
forests.

The people were left
devastated and scattered. The

capital city of the Golden Horde, Sarai, was utterly destroyed.

Thus, even without intending to, Timur paved the way for the rise of a powerful Russian state.

Much later, the Russians investigated their history to determine their greatest national day—and declared the day Timur defeated Tokhtamysh and entered Moscow as their greatest in national memory. Following this devastating defeat, the Golden Horde continued to weaken, while the Russians steadily grew

stronger.

After the Golden Horde campaign, Timur turned his sights on conquering Iran. At that time, with the collapse of the Ilkhanid State, several dynasties had risen in Iran. The strongest among them was the Muzaffarid dynasty. When Timur sent an envoy demanding their submission, the envoy was imprisoned giving Timur, who was already seeking an excuse for war, the opportunity he needed. With his entire army, he marched into Iran. The uprising against Timur in Isfahan drove Jahangir into a

furious rage. He ordered a massacre and commanded every soldier to bring back an Iranian head.

That day, 70,000 Iranians were killed. The horrific fate of Isfahan terrified other Iranian cities. As a result, within 7 years, Iran came entirely under Timur's influence.

After Iran, Timur set his sights on conquering the lands of Iraq. At that time, Sultan Ahmad of the Turkish Jalayirid dynasty ruled over Baghdad.

Frightened by Timur's campaign in Iran, he formed

an alliance with the Mamluks and the Qara Qoyunlu against him.

At the same time, he sent envoys and gifts to Timur, hoping to buy time and take precautionary steps.

However, Timur, aware of Sultan Ahmad's schemes, swiftly advanced toward Baghdad.

Upon hearing of Timur's approach, Sultan Ahmad immediately abandoned the capital and took refuge with the Mamluks.

Timur soon captured the Jalayirid lands and appointed a governor to rule the region.

Meanwhile, the threat of Timur began to seriously alarm all the Islamic states in the west.

As a result, these countries began forming alliances against Timur. Seeing that the entire western front was uniting against him, Timur withdrew from Baghdad and returned to Samarkand.

After Timur's retreat from the region, Mamluk ruler Berkuk marched his army toward Baghdad.

He defeated Timur's governor in the area and reinstated Sultan Ahmad as ruler of his country.

Timur intended to take revenge on the Mamluks, but he was forced to go on a campaign to India.

His departure to India was seen by the Islamic states in the west as a sign that Timur's threat had faded, so the alliances against him weakened.

This was exactly what Timur wanted to happen in the west.

Timur launched a campaign in India and defeated the Indian armies in fierce battles, killing more than 100,000 people.

As a result of this campaign, Timur conquered North India

and returned to Samarkand
with enormous spoils.

That same year, the death of
the Mamluk Sultan Berkuk
created a power vacuum in
the Mamluk administration.

Taking advantage of this
weakness, Bayezid captured
the Mamluk-held city of
Malatya and brought the
Dulkadirid principality, a
Mamluk vassal, under his
protection.

Thus, forming an alliance
between the Mamluks and the
Ottomans against Timur
became impossible.

This was a major mistake on
the part of Bayezid the

Thunderbolt.

Timur, who regularly gathered intelligence through his network of spies, closely monitored the instability in the Mamluk state and the rift between the Mamluks and the Ottomans after Berkuk's death.

He eventually decided that the time had come to crush both of his enemies separately, and in 1399 he departed from Samarkand.

When Sultan Ahmad and Kara Yusuf, ruler of the Qara Qoyunlu, heard that Timur was advancing westward with his armies,

they understood the campaign was aimed at them. Leaving part of their forces behind, they immediately sought refuge in Mamluk territory. However, the emirs of Aleppo and Hama did not accept these two rulers. So they sought refuge with the Ottoman ruler, Bayezid the Thunderbolt.

Bayezid the Thunderbolt took them under his protection and gave Sultan Ahmad the administration of Kütahya, and Kara Yusuf the administration of Aksaray. Meanwhile, Timur marched through these regions and

advanced as far as Tabriz.
He made Tabriz the center of
military operations and
launched a campaign toward
Georgia.

After conquering all of
Georgia, he descended into
the Basean region.

When Timur arrived, the
rulers of the former Anatolian
principalities—Menteshe,
Saruhan,

Germiyan and Aydın—whose
lands had been annexed by
Bayezid, came and declared
their loyalty and respect.

They complained about
Bayezid the Thunderbolt and
tried to provoke Timur

against him, requesting the liberation of their lands.

Timur said: “O Beys! Whether your words be truth or falsehood, I do not know.

For he is a gāzī khan—he does not oppress without cause, nor would he wrong you if you are without guilt. they said: “O Sultan! You are the Sahib-Qiran. The son of Osman is a tyrant—he has left us destitute and seized the throne of our fathers and forefathers.

You well know how we have come before you in utter supplication. That realm, too, is worthy of none but a Khan

such as yourself.

In addition, anti-Ottoman powers such as Genoa, France, Rome, and Castile were in close contact with Timur in favor of this war. Furthermore, Timur sought to weaken the Ottomans from within by winning over Qara Yuluk Uthman Beg of the Aq Qoyunlu and Mutahharten, Emir of Erzincan, by making them promises and drawing them to his side. Timur, already on campaign and aiming to advance further west, addressed Bayezid in a commanding tone and

demanded that Sultan Ahmad of the Jalayirids and Kara Yusuf of the Karakoyunlu be sent to him or executed—or at the very least, expelled from the land.

Meanwhile, Bayezid Khan, who was engaged in the siege of Istanbul, received Timur's envoys extremely coldly. He rejected Timur's demands, saying they were unbefitting of royal sovereignty and contrary to the honor of kingship.

It is also said that his letter contained severe insults directed at Timur.

In response, Timur set out

from Pasinler with a large
army in July 1400.

He marched through Erzurum
to Erzincan, and from there
continued to Sivas. Sivas was
surrounded on all four sides.

When the news reached
Bayezid, he was forced to
immediately lift the siege of
Istanbul. He sent word to his
son, Çelebi Mehmed, asking
him to come to the aid of
Sivas.

Çelebi Mehmed and
Timurtash Pasha quickly
gathered an army and
marched on Sivas.

When Timur learned that
Çelebi Mehmed was

advancing, he dispatched a unit under the command of Cihan Shah to intercept them. In the ensuing battle, Cihan Shah routed the forces of Çelebi Mehmed.

The city of Sivas resisted Timur's fierce assault, which involved catapults, massive stones, and mining tactics. However, the defeat of the Ottoman vanguard led to despair within the city. Timur had promised the people of the city that if they surrendered, no blood would be shed and amnesty would be granted. Thus, the people of Sivas

surrendered.

Upon entering the city, Timur kept his promise not to shed blood, yet had 4,000 people buried alive.

Although the Timurid historian Sharaf al-Din Yazdi claimed that those buried were Armenians,

the chronicle of Nizam al-Din Shami—his own source—contains no such indication.

The mighty Seljuk fortress of Sivas, once a symbol of grandeur, was razed to the ground, and the city never regained its former glory.

Timur released Mustafa Bey, the commander of the

fortress, instructing him to recount all he had witnessed to his sovereign, Bayezid.

Yet he did not continue deeper into Anatolia to pursue Bayezid, his true target.

At the time, Timur had not gathered sufficient intelligence on Bayezid's situation and military strength through his spies.

Instead, Timur sought to intimidate Bayezid's realm with plunder and terror, aiming to crush the will of the Anatolian population through fear.

The brave resistance of Sivas gave Timur pause. The

Jahangir, who had grown accustomed to seizing every city with ease, now feared that if the rest of Anatolia resisted as fiercely as Sivas had, his forces might wear out and lose strength. Therefore, he felt the need to return to Anatolia later with much larger armies.

In the meantime, he sent a letter to the Sultan of Mamluk Egypt, demanding that the governor of Avnik, Atlamış, be handed over.

The Mamluk Sultanate responded by arresting Timur's envoy. Thus, Timur gained a justification to

launch his Syrian campaign.
The devastating fate of Sivas
deeply grieved Bayezid.
However, as he was not fully
prepared, he could not
retaliate immediately.
While Bayezid was gathering
troops from both Rumelia and
Anatolia, the Dulkadir
Turkmens attacked Timur's
camp and captured many of
his warhorses.
Enraged by this, Timur
launched an assault on the
land of Dulkadir.
The Turkmens fled into the
steep mountains to escape
Timur's army. In response,
Timur ordered the city of

Elbistan to be plundered.

Then Timur marched on to the city of Malatya, which he captured with little resistance.

He took all the Christians in the city as prisoners. He spared the lives of Muslims in exchange for ransom.

He then headed toward Aleppo to punish the Mamluk Sultan for what had been done to his envoy.

Upon learning of this, Bayezid the Thunderbolt immediately sent an envoy to the Mamluk emirs and proposed forming an alliance to act together against Timur. However, the

Mamluks, arguing that Bayezid could not be trusted and that if Timur were defeated,

Bayezid might attempt to seize Syria—just as he had previously taken Malatya rejected the alliance and decided to fight Timur on their own.

Finally, the armies of Timur and the Mamluks came face to face before the city of Aleppo. A fierce and terrible battle ensued.

Although the Mamluk army managed to strike a powerful blow against Timur's forces, in the end, it was Timur who

emerged victorious.
The Mamluk army was forced
to retreat, and the city of
Aleppo was plundered by
Timur's troops.

From Aleppo, Timur's army
marched straight to Damascus
via Hama and Homs.

The final battle with the
Mamluks took place in front
of the walls of Damascus and
ended with the surrender of
the city along with its
fortress.

Severe destruction was
wrought upon these two
important Syrian cities. Many
were killed, and looting
followed one after another.

Bayezid the Thunderbolt anticipated that Timur, after defeating the Mamluks, would proceed to Egypt and then return to Anatolia to strike him.

For this reason, he marched with his army to Kayseri. But to reach Egypt, Timur would have had to cross the Sinai Desert, a risk he chose not to take.

Instead, he decided to turn his attention to Baghdad.

When Bayezid learned that Timur was advancing on Baghdad, he saw the threat shift away from his region and seized the opportunity to

punish Mutahharten for his
betrayal by marching on
Erzincan.

He quickly captured the city.

Meanwhile, he appointed
Kara Yusuf, the former ruler
of the Karakoyunlu, as the
governor of the entire eastern
region,

and tasked him with
reclaiming his old homeland
of Azerbaijan. Thus, Kara
Yusuf began stirring unrest in
Eastern Anatolia and

Azerbaijan, harassing the
forces Timur had left behind.

Meanwhile, Timur captured
and razed Baghdad. Upon
hearing that Kara Yusuf was

attacking his troops in Azerbaijan, he immediately moved to Tabriz.

When Bayezid the Thunderbolt learned that Timur was moving from Iraq to Azerbaijan, he sent Sultan Ahmad with a large army to retake his capital.

Bayezid the Thunderbolt began to wear Timur down through tactical maneuvers. When Timur reached Tabriz, he resolved to fight a final battle against Bayezid the Thunderbolt.

But Bayezid the Thunderbolt was not a commander who could be easily defeated. A

much larger army was needed
to overpower him.

So Timur sent word to
Samarkand, ordering all of his
armies to gather in Tabriz.

It would take some time for
all the troops to assemble and
reach the city. During this
period, Timur tried to buy
time by writing letters of
reconciliation to Bayezid.

To His Majesty Bayezid the
Valiant: The greatest of the
nobles, the just ruler, the one
supported by the decree of
God, the Almighty King.

You portrayed yourself as a
jihadist in the path of Allah
and deemed me a disbeliever

who spilled blood unjustly—a mere novice in the art of war.

Know that I have devoted nearly forty years of my life to jihad. In that time, I have conquered castles and lands, liberating countless cities. And this state of mine is now clearer and more certain than ever. Throughout these struggles, many have submitted to me and sacrificed their lives for our cause.

So why do you refrain from serving me and withhold your affection? Besides, I am older than you.

Wherever I have gone until

now, Alhamdulillah, I have
conquered it swiftly. I also
captured Sivas in a short time.

You besieged Malatya for
four months and still failed to
take it. You had to retreat.

And how long has it been
since you've failed to capture
Sinop Castle?

Do not fall into arrogance and
threats as you did in your
letter, and do not speak words
that are far from reason.

Moreover, I have already
understood your situation
from the men I captured in
Sivas.

Therefore, I did not find it
appropriate to harm the

Muslims or destroy the property and homes of rulers. For this reason, consider it a noble act to send a good reply—this way, you will save your country from ruin. If you return to the path of agreement with us and respond with an apologetic expression, there will be friendship and love between us.

In this way, the Frankish infidel will not be given an opportunity, and we will give up Sivas and return.

Our intention and inclination is not to weaken you and keep you busy, and thus help the

religion of the Kafirs.

Our cause is jihadism,
sermons are read in the name
of our sultanate and coins are
minted.

There is no doubt that we are
the supreme authority of
Muslims. Moreover, it is clear
that the Ottoman soldiers
were mostly recruited from
infidels.

Our cause is jihadism,
sermons are read in the name
of our sultanate and coins are
minted.

There is no doubt that we are
the supreme authority of
Muslims. Our lineage goes
back to Ilhan-e-Alishan.

If your sincere greeting comes with a letter with good words, there will be softening and love between both sides.

Otherwise, when the sword appears, there will be no room for the pen. Wa's-salaam, before and after, and al-khayru ma akhtarahullahu zahiran wa bātinan.

Bayezid the Thunderbolt responded to this letter as follows: “O ruler of the age, Timur-i Köregen, you have made a strange comparison by likening your coming and settling in Sivas to our march toward Tabriz.”

Moreover, if we reach

Shirvan from Kefe and send troops to that country, who can prevent us?

The Kipchak people are tired of you and prefer to be with us. Your claim about Malatya and Sinop is also not true.

The siege was abandoned for some reasons. It was not due to the lack of our soldiers or the abundance of your troops. The stubbornness of the rulers of Kastamonu and Karaman and the fact that they took the opportunity to attack some of our provinces, made it necessary for us to lift the siege on Malatya and

Sinop... I am informed that
my ancestor Ertuğrul Khan,
together with about 300 of his
veterans,
struck 10,000 Tatars of
Hülagû's army and defeated
those who had defeated
Alâeddin Keykubât.

After that, he was granted the
honor of ruling the state, he
was given the robe of honor,
and by the grace of Allah,
he ruled in place of the
Seljuks—not through
rebellion or uprising. From
the first cülûs of Osman Bey,
he fought against the infidels
on all four sides with more
than 200,000 soldiers day and

night.

Today, this star of our sultanate has reached the fourth rank, and the number of castles and towns we have conquered so far is beyond what the sultans of the past could even imagine...

After explaining the historical course of the Ottoman sultanate with these words, he explained the purpose of Ottoman power with the following statements:

“...In our eyes, the value of the world and all that is in it is as insignificant as a straw compared to jihad in the way of Allah.”

We take great pleasure in
calling the Ottoman soldier
“the son of Abdullah.”

Because the ancestors of all
the Sahâba-i kirâm were
disbelievers, yet they
themselves became Muslims.
Those who are such Muslims
are far, far superior to the
Muslim-zâdedes who have no
justice...

What can be said after you
devastated Sivas and violated
the honor of the people of
Islam? Now you are trying to
deflect the initial blame from
yourself.

Your letters in Arabic and
Persian were nothing but

harshness, rudeness,
arrogance, and pride.

The House of Osman has not
acquired lands through deceit.
Our letters were written after
consultation with our wise
state officials.

We have never and will never
take any action solely based
on our own measures.

And if anyone is coming
against us for battle, we are
ready to say tawakkaltu
‘alallah. That is our state. And
peace.

Hasbunallāhu wa ni‘mal-
Wakīl, ni‘mal-Mawlā wa
ni‘man-Nasīr. Al-ḥamdu
lillāhi Rabbil-‘Ālamīn.

Meanwhile, the Mamluks,
after their major defeat
against Timur, agreed to form
an alliance with Bayezid the
Thunderbolt.

At that time, Sultan Ahmed
had attacked Timur's garrison
in Baghdad. Timur, in
response, wrote another letter
and briefly said:

“We know that you are
fighting the infidels. On our
side, we are fighting the
Georgian infidels. Do not
include those who are not our
friends among your close
ones.”

“Sultanate affairs are tied to
courtesy. There are many

aspects that require care.”

“Ahmad Jalayir is now near Baghdad, and we have already sent troops to that region.”

“If he escapes to your side again, we do not want you to protect him. On the contrary, our request is that you capture him and hand him over to us.”

“We have arrived at Erzincan and, for now, we are stationed at the frontier, waiting for your envoys and ready to devastate the region.”

Hasbunallāhu wa ni‘mal-Wakīl, ni‘mal-Mawlā wa ni‘man-Nasīr. Rabbī ughtim bi’l-khayri wa’l-ḥusnā...

When Timur gave this letter to the envoy, he also instructed him to say: “We shall spend this winter here. In the spring, we will come to the Ottoman frontier.”

“If an envoy comes from you, this is what we wish. If not, we will meet him in battle—and turn his iron sword into a candle!”

Besides the emirs around Bayezid, many scholars were also against waging war with Timur.

Especially his sheikh and son-in-law, Emir Sultan, a great scholar and spiritual guide of the time, made significant

efforts to prevent this war.
Emir Sultan, who did not
wish to see two Muslim
Turkish armies clash,
persistently advised Bayezid
to approach Timur with
gentleness, to seem as if
accepting his terms,
and to stay away from war at
all costs. But Bayezid the
Thunderbolt did not trust
Timur.

He believed that war was
inevitable and that Timur was
only looking for a pretext.

For Timur's aim was
conquest—world domination.

He did not recognize any
ruler other than himself and

demanded the allegiance of
all.

Bayezid was not wrong in his
assumption. Timur had long
made up his mind about war.

He had pretended to seek
peace only to delay Bayezid
while gathering all his forces.
Once large armies arrived in
Tabriz from Samarkand, the
decision to go to war was
confirmed and action was
taken.

A great war was being
approached step by step.
Some of Timur's wise beys
and scholars were against
attacking Anatolia.
They did not wish to raise a

sword against a sultan who was a pioneer of gaza and a traveler on the path of jihad in Rumelia.

But due to fear of Timur, none of them dared to express this. Finally, a scholar from the ulema, Shamseddin Efendi of Almalik, stood before Timur and said:

“Sultan Bayezid is a ruler girded with the belt of zeal, and his state is one with armies that share in victory.”

“His sharp sword is a scourge upon the Franks, and his pearl-scattering hand is a most precious treasure.”

He is a sultan who has drawn

the reins of his endeavors to
the path of expedition and
jihad

and has set his head to protect
the borders of Islam. To fight
with such a shāhanshāh is to
fight with a ruler who spreads
the religion and implements
the way and rulings of the
prophet;

it is neither worthy of your
state nor in accordance with
the sentiments of the hearts of
your powerful lords.

Even if the winds of victory
blow in our favor, in reality it
will cause the enemies of
religion to rejoice.

Time will quickly bring about

the collapse of this state,
perhaps even its extinction.
Timur hesitated in the face of
these words. At that time, a
comet appeared in the sky and
he called the astrologer
Abdullah bin Lisan
and asked for the
interpretation of this celestial
event. The famous astrologer:
“If the comet appears in Burc-
i hamel, the army coming
from the east will attack the
Greek sides and the Greek
ruler will be captured.”

With this comment, he
reported that Timur would be
victorious. Having decided to
wage war, Timur was now

looking for ways to shift the
blame for the war onto
Bayezid
and began to put forward
proposals that Bayezid could
not accept.

“Ol memleket-i menâbî-i
saltanat kubâb-ı felek ve el-
hükkâmü fî’z-zamân,
Bāyezīd-i bahādır hān, I have
been working for peace until
now and finally I came to
Sivas.

Worried about not giving an
opportunity to the infidel and
destroying the lands of Islam,
we took our revenge on the
Mamluks by going to
Damascus.

While the rumors were circulating that you were ill, we took this as an opportunity and ignored it. However, you took the opportunity to come to Erzincan, which was under our control, and offended our governor.

Our man Muttaharten wrote to us that you regretted it in order to make peace. So we trusted and sent letters several times in the hope that a treaty would be reached for peace.

But you became more and more rigid. Until the word that we and our soldiers were infidels and infidels worse than infidels became a

household word.

Your envoys, Sungur and Ahmed, have been with us for a long time. They know our Islam and faith.

Our goal was to head towards Kefe and Crimea, but we had to turn back from Şirvan and reach that direction again through Erzincan.

Our request is that you inform us that Sivas, Malatya, Elbistan, Erzincan and Kemâh have been ceded to us with a strong covenant-name before our soldiers enter your cities.

I am not opposed to peace and I am committed to it. A

copy of this treaty should be kept sealed in Bâb al-Harâm in Makkah al-Mukarrama so that it will be revealed who has and who has not abided by this treaty. This letter was sent with Sungur, Ahmad and Haji Bayazid.

“Al-hamdu lillâhi wahdeh wa’s-salâtu ‘alâ sayyidinâ Muḥammad wa âlihî’t-ṭayyibîn at-ṭâhirîn, wa’s-salâm wa’l-ikrâm.”

Timur was constantly talking about Muslim brotherhood and saying that he did not want to devastate Islamic countries, but he was preparing for war

down to the last detail. From the beginning until the moment he moved to clash with Bayezid, Timur was always making demands, and in every letter he always spoke in a high tone.

However, there was no legitimate reason for Timur to demand land from the Ottomans. He only wanted Bayezid to submit to him and acknowledge his power.

In his response, Bayezid essentially said: "If Ahmed Jalāyir returns to the Ottoman lands, you have asked me to deliver him to you, along with

Kara Yusuf."

The sword shall not be drawn
against a guest who enters
this mansion, and those who
take refuge in this land shall
not be harmed.

It is unmanly to drive away
someone who seeks refuge
and especially to hand him
over to his enemy.

Even Hülagü Khan did not
ask the Sultan of Egypt for
the Abbasids who fled there.

He gave up on such petty
demands.

Surely, this friend of yours
cannot offend your memory
by protecting one or two
people who have suffered the

slap of fate.

What we desire is that you withdraw your hand from Sivas and its surroundings. Doing so will be taken as a sign of your goodwill.

Yet in any case, no one can escape the decree of Allah, and we have no fear of anyone... If harsh words are to lead to conflict, let it be known that the first letter full of severity came from you. If flattery is expected from us, know that our dynasty has never begged anyone but God. Both victory and defeat are among the traditions of the saints.

Enough words have been spoken. It is not possible to prevent the excuses of those who seek war.

Whoever starts the strife, on either side, shall bear the burden. Wa kafā billāhi shahīdan baynanā wa baynakum. Wa razaqnā wa iyyākum khayran mā qadara. hasbunallāhu wa ni‘ma al-wakīl", "ni‘ma al-Mawlā wa ni‘ma al-Nāşir" wa’s-salām wa’l-ikrām.

After fully completing his preparations, Timur brought his army to Erzurum and established his headquarters there.

A careful examination of the course of events shows that the one responsible for the war was not Bayezid, but Timur himself.

It was Timur, not Bayezid, who initiated the attack. As Timur waged wars of conquest and advanced westward into eastern Anatolia, he encountered Bayezid.

As the Sultan of the Ottoman realm, it was Bayezid's most natural duty and most honorable right to defend his own land.

Perhaps Bayezid's greatest fault was his excessive pride

and overconfidence in his
own strength.

Wasn't it possible to handle
Timur's threats with gentle
distractions and small
concessions, as recommended
by His Eminence Emir
Sultan?

But considering Timur's
demands, this was no easy
task. In general, his demands
were as follows:

- 1– The surrender or execution
of Sultan Ahmed, the ruler of
Baghdad, and Kara Yusuf of
the Karakoyunlu.
- 2– The handover of Erzincan,
Sivas, Malatya, Elbistan, and
Kemah to Timur.
- 3– Sending

one of Bayezid's sons as a
hostage to Timur.

4– Submitting to Timur and
donning the ceremonial robe
of allegiance. 5– Not doing
anything that would go
against Timur's wishes.

Bayezid the Thunderbolt was
a sovereign of pride and
valor. He had never lost a
battle he had entered until
then.

He had crushed the massive
crusader army at Nicopolis
and succeeded in every
endeavor he had undertaken.
Moreover, as a Turk, he was
firmly committed to the
principle that one cannot live

without independence.

In this situation, the clash between these two sovereigns had become inevitable...

Timur advanced on Erzincan with his massive army of 160,000 men.

Erzincan was captured in 15 days and the army reached Sivas.

Timur, who wanted to cunningly win over the Karatatars—of Mongolian descent and present in the Ottoman ranks—sent Emir Fazıl to them.

He succeeded in winning them over by promising principalities from the

conquered territories.
He was also accompanied by
his elite troops, forces under
the command of his sons and
grandsons,
the sultans of Shirvan and
Gilan, the rulers of Diyarbakir
and its surroundings, the
shahs of Sistan and
Badakhshan,
the khans of Turkestan, and
the rulers of former Anatolian
principalities. Upon hearing
that Timur had arrived in
Sivas, Bayezid took position
in Akdağmadeni and Kadi
City.

He planned to ambush the
mostly cavalry-based enemy

army in rugged mountainous terrain and then attack.

Timur recognized this danger and deemed it unwise to move his cavalry through mountainous areas.

Since most of Bayezid's army consisted of infantry, Timur wanted to wear them down and strike while they were exhausted.

So, he avoided a direct clash and turned toward Kayseri.

After looting and plundering the city of Kayseri, he seized the farmlands of its people to provision his army.

Timur then moved on to Kırşehir, carefully avoiding a

raid, and headed towards
Ankara, the center of the
Ottoman camp.

He arrived in Ankara before
Bayezid and began besieging
the castle.

Bayezid, who had intended to
fight the battle in the
mountains due to the majority
of his army being composed
of infantry,
gathered his commanders to
discuss measures after
learning that Timur had not
gone to Tokat and was
following the Kızılırmak
bend.

Grand Vizier Ali Pasha
proposed staying in the

mountainous region and
wearing down Timur's army
by ambushing and raiding
from the hills,
and then fighting the final
battle at a suitable location.
But Hodja Firuz proposed to
immediately march upon
Timur in order to save
Anatolia from his tyranny and
destruction.

Because with every passing
moment, the Ottoman people
were being massacred.
Bayezid, deeply affected by
the Sivas disaster, accepted
Hodja Firuz's proposal and
swiftly marched toward
Ankara to intercept Timur.

Despite the fact that most of his army were infantry and exhausted, he still pressed on to catch up with Timur.

He finally reached the area during Timur's siege of Ankara and took up position opposite him.

While Timur was still besieging the castle of Ankara, he prepared his army for an attack from the southeast,

expecting Bayezid to come from that direction. However,

Bayezid the Thunderbolt suddenly appeared from the northeast—an unexpected direction.

Timur's forces were astonished to see the Ottoman armies coming from a totally different direction at an unexpected moment.

Timur had truly been ambushed. According to Timur's historian Nizameddin Shami, who was present at the battle that day, the raid so frightened the army and Timur that he reported he spent the night praying to God for victory in the battle as he reorganized the army.

If Timur's army was surprised and unprepared, the advantage would go to the

Ottoman army.

His sons and pashas were begging Bayezid to attack immediately. However, Bayezid the Thunderbolt said,

“Let them gather! Let Timur’s people come together so we may fight valiantly!” and rejected the idea of a raid.

Thus, this great opportunity was lost and Timur’s prayers were answered.

The Ottoman army, mostly composed of infantry, was already exhausted and thirsty before the battle began.

Timur had achieved his goal, and even poisoned all nearby water to make it undrinkable

so that the Ottoman soldiers
would suffer further.

Bayezid's hesitation at the
start of the war gave Timur
extra time. He immediately
reorganized and redeployed
his forces in front of the
Ottomans.

The Ottoman army was less
than half the size of Timur's
army. Against the
Ottomans—unlike any of his
other enemies—Timur had
gathered his best-armored
troops,
and his army numbered
160,000 men. The Ottoman
army, according to most
sources, was between 70,000

and 90,000 men at most.
Bayezid the Thunderbolt was positioned in the center of the army, along with the Grand Vizier Çandarlı Zade Ali Pasha and the Janissaries. Prince Isa, Prince Musa, and Prince Mustafa were positioned in front of the Sultan along with the Azaps. On the left flank were the Rumelian troops under the command of Prince Süleyman and Hoca Firuz Bey, On the right flank were the Anatolian troops under the command of Kara Timurtaş Pasha, the Beylerbey of Anatolia.

Behind the left flank were the Serbian troops under the command of Serbian King Stefan Lazarevic, and the Qara Tatars who had secretly joined Timur before the battle.

The Kipchaks and Turkmens who had defected from Timur and joined the Ottomans were positioned on the left wing under the command of Evrenuz Bey.

Prince Çelebi Mehmed was at the rear of the army with the reserve forces composed of the Timariot Sipahis of Amasya, Tokat, and Sivas. In Timur's army, the central

forces were divided into two
and assigned to Emir Celal
and Omar Sheikh.

Miran Shah was on the right
wing, and Shahrukh was on
the left wing. Halil Sultan and
Süleyman Shah were on the
second left wing,
while Sheikh Nudin,
Burunduk, and Mutahharten,
the ruler of Erzincan, were on
the right.

The second line of forces was
divided into two parts, one
commanded by Emirzade
Sultan Hussein and the other
by Emirzade Abu Bakr.

Qara Yuluk Uthman Beg of
Aq Qoyunlu was positioned

behind the forces led by Abu Bakr.

The reserve forces were under the command of Mehmet Sultan. Timur was positioned at the center of the second line of the center.

In front of the army, 32 elephants brought from India were lined up. Among the Anatolian beys who had taken refuge with Timur, İsfendiyar Bey, Mehmet Bey of Menteşe, Aydınoglu, and Yakup Bey of Germiyan were also present with their elite troops.

Both armies were fully prepared to fight each other

fiercely. Muslim Turks made up the backbone of both sides.

Timur had arrived in Ankara earlier and was rested.

Bayezid's army was exhausted.

Since most of Timur's army was cavalry, it had greater speed and mobility. In addition, Timur had numerical superiority.

As a result, before the battle began, the overall conditions were in Timur's favor.

This great confrontation, one of the most important pitched battles in history,

Began with an attack by

Miranshah on the right flank
of Timur's army.

The dust raised by
Miranshah's cavalry nearly
made the battlefield invisible.
The Rumelian troops on the
Ottoman left flank were
fighting fiercely.

Bayezid the Thunderbolt
ordered the Serbian forces to
go support Süleyman Çelebi.
With the arrival of the Serbs,
Timur's right flank became
virtually ineffective.

Seeing Miranshah slowly
retreat, Timur realized that
this flank was about to
collapse.

To support Miranshah, Timur

brought forward Emirzade
Ebubekir and Karayülük
Osman Bey,
and sent his central attacking
forces along with 32
elephants chained together
toward the Ottoman center.
The Azaps in the front lines
met Timur's center as it
advanced toward Bayezid the
Thunderbolt. But the Azaps
were helpless against Timur's
elephants.

While the elephants trampled
the Azaps, the Janissary
archers were aiming and
shooting arrows at the
elephants.

Timur's chained elephants and

Samarkand's armored cavalry
had neutralized the Ottoman
central attack.

The Anatolian soldiers on the
Ottoman right flank were also
fighting very well and
inflicting heavy casualties on
Timur's left flank.

The Qara Tatars suddenly
switched sides and came to
Timur's rescue. The Qara
Tatars suddenly switched
sides and came to Timur's
rescue.

The Qara Tatars, mostly horse
archers, attacked the Serbian
and Rumelian army on the
Ottoman left flank.

This betrayal shocked the

Ottoman left wing. However, the left wing did not collapse and continued to fight Timur's army in front and the Qara Tatars in the rear.

When Timur saw that his left flank was melting against the Anatolian soldiers on the Ottoman right flank, he sent reinforcements here as well.

Timur had also sent his former Anatolian beys here. Some of the soldiers on the right flank were from lands whose principalities had been conquered by Yıldırım.

It was not long before they warmed up to the Ottomans. Moreover, their beys were on

Timur's side.

The former beys were waving their flags and calling for their soldiers from the ranks of Timur.

In response, the soldiers of the principalities of Aydın, Karaman, Mentеше, Germiyan and Saruhan switched sides and joined Timur's army, striking the other Anatolian soldiers from behind.

In response to this betrayal, Prince Çelebi Mehmet rushed to the right flank to help with the reserve cavalry.

A fierce battle was taking place on the right flank and

the situation here was critical
for Timur.

But he had managed to
psychologically break the
Ottoman soldiers on the
flanks as a result of the
betrayals.

To use this advantage more
effectively, he ordered a
general attack in the
afternoon.

The whole army rushed at the
Ottoman soldiers like raging
waters. Despite the retreat and
subsequent deterioration of
the Ottoman flanks,
Bayezid's center still held
firm and the Janissaries
fiercely resisted.

Many elephants were killed in the center and Samarkand's troops began to weaken. But the Ottoman sipahis had broken down and the burden of the battle fell on the infantry.

Towards the afternoon, Emir Süleiman and Vizier Ali Pasha, realizing that the battle would be lost, retreated from the battlefield and fled.

After the afternoon, Çelebi Mehmed left the battlefield with some of his commanders and started to retreat towards Amasya, his standard.

The regiment around Mustafa Çelebi was destroyed and he

himself was lost in the confused ranks of the battle. Of the şehzades, İsa Çelebi was able to escape the battlefield safely. Şehzade Musa Çelebi, on the other hand, did not leave his father's side.

It was now clear that the Ottomans had lost the battle. But Bayezid the Thunderbolt continued to endure and be an example to those around him with his bravery.

Timurtaş Pasha, Hodja Firuz Bey, and some other members of the army were fighting bravely.

In the evening, Bayezid the

Thunderbolt and the remaining troops withdrew fighting to Çataltepe.

Only a force of 10,000 Janissaries remained around him. Timur's forces had surrounded the hill with 70,000 men.

The Janissaries told the Sultan: “Do not leave us; until the last soldier remains, no one shall touch even a hair on your head.”

Finally, as night fell, Bayezid and the Janissaries launched one last attack to break through the enemy encirclement.

Meanwhile, Bayezid's horse

was struck by a mace and collapsed to the ground. The Germiyanid soldiers who leapt upon Bayezid recognized him, tied his hands, and brought him to Timur's tent.

Bayezid, with his hands bound, was brought before Timur at the time of the night (Isha) prayer, while Timur was playing chess with his son Shahrukh in his tent. Upon seeing Bayezid, Timur smiled and stood up, having noticed that Bayezid had a squint in one eye. Then Bayezid said: "To laugh at a man whom Allah has

made miserable does not befit someone who claims to be a world conqueror like you.”

Timur replied: “No, I do not intend to mock. I am laughing at how Allah has left this world to a blind man like you and a lame man like me,” he said.

Thus, the Battle of Ankara ended in Timur’s victory. In this clash, which was one of the greatest field battles in history, both sides suffered casualties amounting to 50,000. Timur sent a conquest letter to King Charles VI of France and King Henry IV of England,

declaring that he had defeated
the Ottoman sultan whom
they had failed to overcome at
the Battle of Nicopolis.

Timur's armies pursued the
retreating Ottoman troops.
Prince Süleyman, who fled
with the largest number of
soldiers, quickly reached
Bursa, took his wife and
children with him and left
Bursa with his army.

While Prince Süleyman was
fleeing, some of the people of
Bursa, who heard that
Timur's forces were coming,
fled to the coast and some to
Uludağ.

When Timur's cavalry

reached Bursa, they captured most of the people who had fled toward the coast.

Among the captives were also highly valuable scholars.

Timur's forces, having occupied Bursa, plundered homes and the palace.

All the treasures in the Bursa palace fell into Timur's hands. Then they set fire to the city.

Since most of the houses were wooden, Bursa was quickly ruined. Bayezid's daughters and his wife were taken captive.

Timur's soldiers attacked and pillaged all across Anatolia.

They gained much booty and wealth.

In the Battle of Ankara, Timur not only defeated the Ottomans, but also aimed to dismantle the Ottoman state by returning their Anatolian lands to the former beys.

The beys whose lands had been seized by Yıldırım Bayezid regained possession of their former territories thanks to Timur.

Moreover, Greece was lost in Rumelia, the vassals had declared independence, and the Ottoman borders in Rumelia, which had once extended to

the Adriatic Sea, were pulled back to the east of the Pindus Mountains.

Thus, the remaining Ottoman territories in Anatolia were reduced to the lands around Amasya, Tokat, and Çorum, as they had been in the time of Orhan Ghazi.

Timur also advanced toward İzmir and captured the coastal city known as "Gevur İzmir", which was under the control of the Knights of Rhodes.

Yıldırım Bayezid had planned to conquer the city during his first Anatolian campaign but postponed the conquest, calculating that the Latins

might provoke the Balkan Principalities. Soon afterward, news came that Yıldırım Bayezid had become seriously ill.

It was already known that he had been in poor health even before the battle. His captivity further worsened his condition.

Timur personally appointed his own physician to treat Yıldırım Bayezid. But all efforts were in vain, and Yıldırım Bayezid passed away on March 9, 1403, at the age of only 47, due to whooping cough...

When Emir Timur received

the news of Bayezid the Thunderbolt's death, he is reported to have said the following words:

“Alas, the world has lost a hero.”

He then sent his body to Bursa for burial with a ceremony worthy of his honor. He then released Bayezid's relatives who had been held captive and withdrew from Anatolia with an enormous treasure. He left behind a fire and chaos.

Three months after his return to Samarkand, he decided to march on Jin. He gathered an

army of 200 thousand people
for this.

But a while after he set out on
the expedition, he fell ill and
lost his life.

Thus, the world lost a
jihangir. This great empire he
had established was not based
on solid foundations and was
soon disintegrated.

However, the Ottoman
Empire, which was thought to
have disintegrated, was based
on solid foundations and
recovered in a short time
and became the most
powerful state in the world...

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