Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran

Beatrice Forbes Manz uses the history of Iran under the Timurid ruler Shahrukh (1409–47) to analyze the relationship between government and society in the medieval Middle East. She provides a rich portrait of Iranian society over an exceptionally broad spectrum – the dynasty and its servitors, city elites and provincial rulers, and the religious classes, both ulama and Sufi. The work addresses two issues central to pre-modern Middle Eastern history: how a government without the monopoly of force controlled a heterogeneous society, and how a society with diffuse power structures remained stable over long periods. Written for an audience of students as well as scholars, this book provides the first broad analysis of political dynamics in late medieval Iran and challenges much received wisdom about civil and military power, the relationship of government to society, and the interaction of religious figures with the ruling class.

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BEATRICE FORBES MANZ

Tufts University
For Eve and Ellen Manz,  
with love and admiration.
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Preface

I have profited from the support of several institutions while writing this book. A fellowship from the American Research Institute in Turkey in 1990 allowed me to begin research in the libraries of Istanbul. In the summer of 1996 I spent two months in Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarqand on a Tufts Faculty Research award. Grants from the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1991–92 and a National Council for Eurasian and East European Research Fellowship for the calendar year 1999 allowed me to take leave from teaching. Finally, in 2003–04 a membership at the School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Studies, together with an American Council of Learned Societies fellowship and a Tufts Faculty Research award allowed me to finish the manuscript while beginning my next project. To all of these institutions I want to express my heartfelt thanks.

A number of individuals have also provided valuable help. Professor Bert Fragner generously facilitated a semester spent at the University in Bamberg, in spring, 1993, which provided a peaceful place to work and an introduction to several colleagues who continue to help and inspire. Leonard Lewisohn lent me his unpublished dissertation and answered a number of important questions for me. Several colleagues have read parts of the manuscript and offered valuable advice; I want to thank in particular Devin Deweese, Jo-Ann Gross, Ahmet Karamustafa, Robert McChesney, David Morgan, Johannes Pahlitsch and Jürgen Paul. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Hesna Ergün and Hande Deniz, for their invaluable help with the index and galleys.

The work of two scholars in particular underlies much of what I have written here. The numerous articles of the late Jean Aubin provided an indispensable base and constant inspiration for me, as he has for anyone writing on this and related periods. Over the course of his long career, Professor Iraj Afshar has collected and edited an extraordinary number of medieval sources, particularly the local histories crucial to the understanding
of southern and central Iran. Without his work, the sections of the book on central and southern Iran could not have been written.

**Note on usage**

I have tried to make this book both useful for scholars and accessible to non-specialists. My solution to the perennial problem of transcription is to use classical Arabic transcription for Arabic and Persian names and terms, but not for Turkic ones. Names of well-known cities are written with their common spelling, while less well-known ones are transcribed in classical fashion. Within the text I have omitted most diacritics except for technical terms. In bibliographical references and the index to the book, full diacriticals are used. Dates are given first according to the Islamic calendar and then the Christian one.
Chronology


796/1394 Umar Shaykh b. Temûr dies and is succeeded as governor of Fars by his son, Pir Muhammad.

799/1396–97 Shahrukh is appointed governor of Khorasan.

800/1397–98 Muhammad Sultan b. Jahangir is appointed governor of northern Transoxiana.

18 Shawwal, 805/March 13, 1403 Muhammad Sultan b. Jahangir dies.

Winter, 806/1404–05 Temûr in Qarabagh, sends out inspectors to provincial divans.

17 or 18 Shawwal, 807/February 17 or 18, 1405 Temûr dies in Otrar.

Rajab, 808/December, 1405 to January, 1406 Khorezm is taken over by the Jochids.

809/1406–07 Sayyid Fakhr al-Din Ahmad comes from Samarqand to Herat, where he is appointed to divan, and then is dislodged.

Ramadan, 809/February, 1407 Pir Muhammad b. Jahangir is murdered.

Dhul-Qa’dâ, 810/April, 1408 Defeat of Aba Bakr and Amiranshah by the Qaraqoyunlu, death of Amiranshah.

811/1408 Vizier Ghiyath al-Din Salar Simnani is killed and Fakhr al-Din Ahmad is returned to divan.

Late winter of 811/1409 Khudaydad and Shaykh Nur al-Din invite Shahrukh to undertake a joint campaign against Khalil Sultan. Shahrukh arrives in Transoxiana in late spring.

27 Dhul-Hijja, 811/May 13, 1409 Shahrukh enters Samarqand; he spends about six months there and in early 812/1409 appoints Ulugh Beg governor.

3 Muharram, 812/May 18, 1409 Murder of Pir Muhammad b. ‘Umar Shaykh; beginning of Iskandar b. ‘Umar Shaykh’s rise to power in Fars.

12 Dhul-Hijja, 812/April 17, 1410 Shaykh Nur al-Din defeats Ulugh Beg’s army, necessitating Shahrukh’s second campaign in Transoxiana.

813/1410–11 Shahrukh completes a madrasa and khânaqâh in Herat and appoints teachers.
Dhu'l-Qa'da, 813/February–March, 1411 Shahrukh declares that he has abrogated the Mongolian dynastic code, the yasa, and reinstated the shar'i a. He has wine from the taverns publicly poured out.

813–14/1410–12 Hāfiz-i Abrū writes a continuation of Shami’s Zafarnama; Taj al-Salmani writes Shams al-husn.

Last day of Rabi’ I, 814/July 22, 1411 Shahrukh sets out against Transoxiana on threat of another attack by Shaykh Nur al-Din, backed by the eastern Chaghadai khan. On receiving news of Shahrukh’s movement, the khan deserts Shaykh Nur al-Din.

Dhu'l-Hijja, 814/March–April, 1412 Rustam murders Qadi Ahmad Sa'id; the population of Isfahan turns against him and soon after Iskandar b. ‘Umar Shaykh takes the city.

End of 815/spring, 1413 Successful expedition against Khorasan under Amir Shahmalik.

816/1413–14 Composition of Iskandar’s history of Timur and his house, and first recension of Natanzi’s Muntakhab al-tawarikh. Iskandar begins to use title “Sultan.”

Beginning of 817/March–April, 1414 Shahrukh heads against Iskandar.

3 Jumada I, 817/July 21, 1414 Isfahan submits to Shahrukh; Iskandar flees but is captured and handed to his brother Rustam.

817/1414–15 Ibrahim Sultan b. Shahrukh is appointed governor of Fars.

Early 818/september, 1415 Sa'd-i Waqqas b. Muhammad Sultan, governor of Qum, defects to the Qaraqoyunlu. Disturbances in western regions including Fars, where Bayqara b. ‘Umar Shaykh pushes Ibrahim Sultan out of Shiraz.

17 Jumadi II, 818/August 24, 1415 Shahrukh sets off against Fars.

27 Ramadan, 818/December 1, 1415 Bayqara submits to Shahrukh at the request of the population.

Spring, 819/1416 Shahrukh campaigns against Kerman, arriving at the beginning of Rabi’ II/May–June, 1416.


820/1417–18 Jā'far b. Muhammad al-HuṣayniJa'fari presents Tarikh-i wasit to Shahrukh.

820 Work begins on Gawharshad’s complex in Herat.

820/1417 Amir Ghunashirin is appointed governor of Kerman.

Middle Rabi’ I, 820/beginning of May, 1417 Shahrukh sets off on campaign towards Kabul to put down disturbances of Hazara and others; he winters in Qandahar.

Jumada I, 820/June–July, 1417 Death of vizier Fakhr al-Din Ahmad.
End of 820/early 1418 Ghiyath al-Din Pir Ahmad is appointed sāhib dīwān.

821/1418–19 Soyurghatmish replaces Qaydu as governor of Kabul.

By 823/1420 Chaqmaq has been appointed governor of Yazd.

11 Shaw‘an, 823/August 21, 1420 Shahrukh leaves Herat for Azarbaijan campaign.

7 Dhu‘l Qa‘da, 823/November 13, 1420 Death of Qara Yusuf Qaraqoyunlu.

8 Dhu‘l Hijja, 823/December 14, 1420 Shahrukh reaches Qarabagh.

End of Rajab 824/late July, 1421 Qara Yusuf’s sons Isfand and Iskandar meet Shahrukh’s armies in Alashgird. After a hard battle Shahrukh’s forces prevail.

19 Shawwal, 824/October 17, 1421 Shahrukh arrives back in Herat.

827/1424–23 Disturbance by Shaykh Ishaq Khuttalani and his disciple Nurbakhsh.

827 or 828/1424–45 Death of Rustam b. ‘Umar Shaykh. Governorship of Isfahan goes to the family of Amir Firuzshah.

829/1425–26 Death of Qara Yusuf Qaraqoyunlu’s sons Isfand and Iskandar meet Shahrukh’s armies in Alashgird. After a hard battle Shahrukh’s forces prevail.

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xvi  Chronology

835/1431–32 Hurufi uprising in Isfahan.
7 Jumadi I, 837/December 20, 1433 Death of Baysunghur b. Shahrukh.
2 Rabi' II, 838/November 5, 1434 Shahrukh sets out on third Azarbaijan campaign.
Jumadi II to Rajab, 838/January to February, 1435 Outbreak of plague in Herat.
2 Shawwal, 838/May 1, 1435 Death of Zayn al-Din Khwafi.
4 Shawwal, 838/May 3, 1435 Death of Ibrahim Sultan b. Shahrukh.
Spring to summer 838/1435 Shahrukh in Azarbaijan. Iskandar Qaraqoyunlu retreats. Shahrukh receives submission of most local rulers, including Jahanshah Qaraqoyunlu. Jahanshah Qaraqoyunlu is left as vassal.
839/1435–36 Uzbeks take the northern part of Khorezm.
2 Rabi' II, 840/October 14, 1436 Shahrukh arrives back in Herat.
840/1436 Death of Amir Ghunashirin. Governorship of Kerman goes to his sons, notably Haji Muhammad.
840/1436–37 Muhammad b. Falah Masha'shaq declares himself mahdi.
841/1437–38 Completion of mosque and madrasa of Gawharshad.
842/1438 Accession of Mamluk Sultan Chaqmaq. Relations with the Mamluks improve.
17 Jumadi I, 844/October 14, 1440 Amir 'Alika dies.
13 Shawwal, 844/March 7, 1441 First military encounter between the Timurids and the Masha'shaq, near Wasit.
22 Rabi' I, 845/August 10, 1441 Diwan upheaval; Pir Ahmad Khwafi is forced to accept a new partner.
Early 846/1442 Death of Yusuf Khwaja, governor of Rayy. Appointment of Sultan Muhammad b. Baysunghur as governor of northern Iran.
846/1442–43 Shahrukh sends Shah Mahmud Yasawul to assess tax arrears of 'Iraqi's Ajam.
Late 847 through early 848/March to June, 1444 Serious illness of Shahrukh. Gawharshad makes Firuzshah swear bay'a to 'Ali's al-Dawla.
848/1444–45 Misappropriation of taxes of Balkh is proven, leading to the disgrace and death of Firuzshah.
848/1444–45 Death of Muhammad Juki; Khuttalan is given to his son Aba Bakr.
5 Safar, 850/May 2, 1446 Sultan Muhammad enters Isfahan at the request of its notables, an overt move against Shahrukh.
Middle of Ramadan 850/early December, 1446 Shahrukh, campaigning against Sultan Muhammad, executes several Isfahani notables at Sawa.
25 Dhu’l Hijja, 850/March 13, 1447 Shahrukh dies near Rayy.
851/1447–8 Sultan Muhammad is consolidating power in Iran.
c. Late Safar, 851/early May, 1447 Ulugh Beg takes Abu Bakr b. Muhammad Juki captive, crosses Oxus to camp at Balkh, makes peace with ‘Ala’ al-Dawla.
25 Rajab, 851/October 5, 1447 Sultan Muhammad defeats the army of Fars outside Shiraz.
Middle Ramadan, 852/mid-November, 1448 Ulugh Beg learns that Yar ‘Ali has escaped and is besieging Herat.
Dhu’l Hijja, 852/February, 1449 Abu’l Qasim Babur takes Herat from Yar ‘Ali, executes him.
Rabi’ I, 853/April–May, 1449 Abu’l Qasim Babur offers submission to Sultan Muhammad.
Probably early summer, 853/1449 ‘Abd al-Latif’s opposition becomes so open that Ulugh Beg has to go against him.
8 or 10 Ramadan, 853/October 25 or 27, 1449 ‘Abd al-Latif murders Ulugh Beg after defeating him near Samarqand.
13 Ramadan, 853/October 30, 1449 Sultan Muhammad defeats the army of Abu’l Qasim Babur near Jam.
Ramadan, 853/October–November, 1449 Sultan Muhammad pushes Abu’l Qasim Babur out of Herat.
25 Rabi’ I, 854/May 8, 1450 ‘Abd al-Latif is killed by emirs in Samarqand.
3 Rabi’ II, 854/May 16, 1450 Sultan Muhammad sends Hajji Muhammad b. Ghunashirin against Abu’l Qasim Babur; Hajji Muhammad is killed in battle.
22 Jumada I, 855/June 21 or 22, 1451 In Transoxiana Abu Sa’id seizes power from ‘Abd Allah b. Ibrahim Sultan.
15 Dhu’l-Hijja, 855/January 9, 1452 Abu’l Qasim Babur defeats Sultan Muhammad near Astarabad and has him killed.
Rajab, 856/August, 1452 The Qaraqoyunlu take most of central and western Iran.
Family tree of major Timurid princes

Temür (Tamerlane)
1354–55 to 1394

Ishāq ibn Khwāja Umar Shaykh
1356–58 to 1377–78
(Turnush Agha)

Amiranshah
1366–67 to 1408

Shahrukh
1377–1447

Note: The names of mothers with political or genealogical importance are given in parentheses below the name of their sons.

For reasons of space I have abbreviated the name of Malikat Agha after the first use.

* denotes a woman of Chinggisid descent.