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978-0-521-15346-1 - Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran

Beatrice Forbes Manz

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## **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.

BEATRICE FORBES MANZ is Associate Professor of History at Tufts University, Massachusetts. Her previous publications include *The Rise and Fall of Tamerlane* (1989) and, as editor, *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Central Asia* (1995).

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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 Dewese, 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



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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 diacriticals 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

- 794/1391–92** Temür appoints Pir Muhammad b. Jahangir governor of Kabul and Multan.
- 796/1394** ‘Umar Shaykh b. Temür 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 Sha‘ban, 805/March 13, 1403** Muhammad Sultan b. Jahangir dies.
- Winter, 806/1404–05** Temür in Qarabagh, sends out inspectors to provincial *dīwāns*.
- 17 or 18 Shawwal, 807/February 17 or 18, 1405** Temür 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 *dīwān*, and then dislodged.
- Ramadan, 809/February, 1407** Pir Muhammad b. Jahangir is murdered.
- Dhu'l-Qa‘da, 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 *dīwān*.
- 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 Dhu'l-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 Dhu'l-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 *khānaqāh* in Herat and appoints teachers.

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- Dhu'l-Qa'da, 813/February–March, 1411** Shahrukh declares that he has abrogated the Mongolian dynastic code, the *yasa*, and reinstated the *shari'a*. He has wine from the taverns publicly poured out.
- 813–14/1410–12** Ḥāfiz-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 Chaghadayid 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'idi; 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 Khorezm under Amir Shahmalik.
- 816/1413–14** Composition of Iskandar's history of Temür 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 818/1415** Baysunghur is made governor of Mazandaran and western Khorasan.
- Early 818/spring, 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.
- 819/1416–17** Amir Buhlul begins uprising against Qaydu b. Pir Muhammad b. Jahangir, governor of Kabul.
- 819–20/1416–18** Gawharshad builds cathedral mosques, *dār al-siyāda* and *dār al-ḥuffāz*, in Mashhad.
- 820/1417–18** Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusayni Ja'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.
- Jumadi I, 820/June–July, 1417** Death of vizier Fakhr al-Din Ahmad.

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- 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 Sha‘ban, 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.
- 827/1423–24** Disturbance by Shaykh Ishaq Khuttalani and his disciple Nurbakhsh.
- 827 or 828/1423–45** Death of Rustam b. ‘Umar Shaykh. Governorship of Isfahan goes to the family of Amir Firuzshah.
- 829/1425–26** Baraq Khan of the Blue Horde claims Sighnaq.
- Muharram, 829 to end of 830/November, 1425 to October–November, 1427** Shahrukh rebuilds the Ansari shrine at Gazurgah.
- 830/1426–27** Hāfiz-i Abrū completes the *Majma‘ al-tawārīkh* and *Mu‘izz al-ansāb*.
- 6 Muharram, 830/November 17, 1426** Death of Shahrukh’s son Soyurghatmish, governor of Kabul.
- 23 Rabi‘ I, 830/January 22, 1427** A member of the Hurufi sect makes an attempt on Shahrukh’s life. Qasim al-Anwar is banished from Herat to Samarqand.
- Middle of 830/March–May, 1427** Ulugh Beg and Muhammad Juki attack Baraq and are defeated.
- 1 Sha‘ban, 830/May 28, 1427** Shahrukh leaves Herat for Transoxiana and briefly deposes Ulugh Beg from his governorship. He returns to Herat on 14 Dhu‘l Hijja/October 6.
- 831/1427–28** Completion of Sharaf al-Din Yazdi’s *Zafarnama*.
- 832/1428–29** Iskandar Qaraqoyunlu takes a number of cities, including Sultaniyya.
- 5 Rajab, 832/April 10, 1429** Shahrukh sets off on his second Azarbaijan campaign.
- 18 Dhu‘l Hijja, 832/September 18, 1429** Decisive battle at Salmas. Shahrukh defeats Iskandar and installs Qara Yusuf’s youngest son, Abu Sa‘id, in Azarbaijan.
- 833/1429–30** Shahrukh appoints Muhammad Juki to the governorship of Khuttalan.
- 8 Muharram, 834/September 26, 1430** Shahrukh arrives back in Herat from Azarbaijan campaign.
- 834/1430–31** Uzbeks, under Abu‘l Khayr Khan, begin to attack the borders of Khorezm.

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**835/1431–32** Hurufi uprising in Isfahan.

**7 Jumadi I, 837/December 20, 1433** Death of Baysunghur b. Shahrukh.

**c. 838/1434–35** Eastern Chaghdayids retake Kashghar.

**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 Hajji Muhammad.

**840/1436–37** Muhammad b. Falah Musha'sha' declares himself *mahdī*.

**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 Musha'sha', near Wasit.

**845/1441–42** Rains and floods through much of Iraq and Fars. Beginning of quarrel between Yusuf Khwaja and Malik Gayumarth of Rustamdar. Defeat of Shahrukh and Yusuf Khwaja's joint forces.

**22 Rabi' I, 845/August 10, 1441** *Dīwān* 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 'Iraq-i 'Ajam.

**847/1443–44** Return of Shah Mahmud Yasawul. News of Sultan Muhammad's ambitions. Power of Amir Firuzshah exceeds bounds. Shahrukh orders investigation into the taxes of Balkh, under Firuzshah's charge.

**Late 847 through early 848/March to June, 1444** Serious illness of Shahrukh. Gawharshad makes Firuzshah swear *bay'at* to 'Ala' 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.

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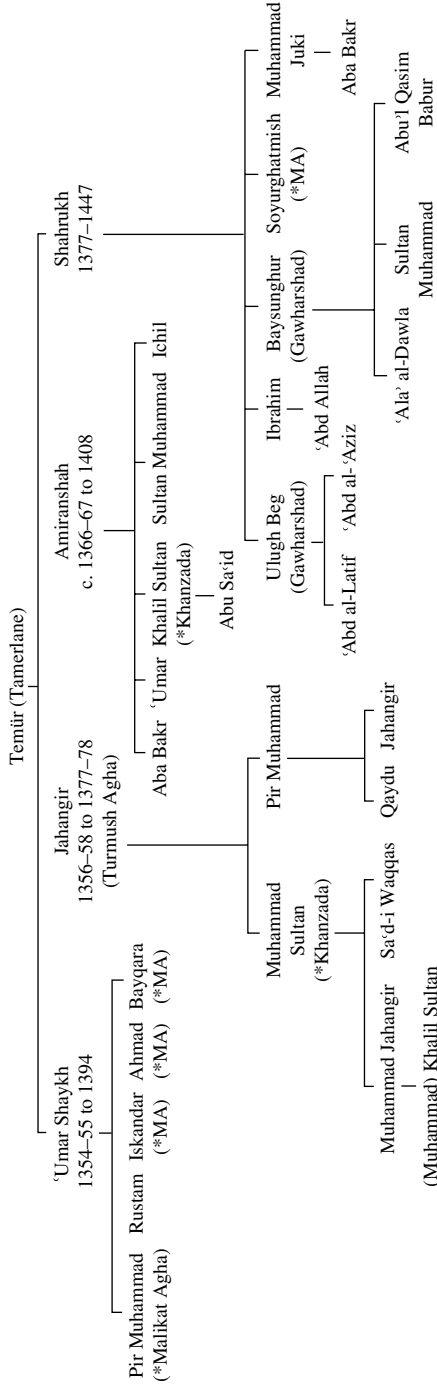
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- 25 Dhu'l Hijja, 850/March 13, 1447** Shahrukh dies near Rayy.
- 851/1447–8** Sultan Muhammad is consolidating power in Iran.
- c. Late Safar, 851/early May, 1447** Ulugh Beg takes Aba Bakr b. Muhammad Juki captive, crosses Oxus to camp at Balkh, makes peace with 'Ala' al-Dawla.
- 25 Rajab, 851/October 5, 1447** Sultan Muhammad defeats the army of Fars outside Shiraz.
- Early 852/spring, 1448** Ulugh Beg and 'Abd al-Latif invade Khorasan, defeat 'Ala' al-Dawla in Tarnab.
- 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



Note: The names of mothers with political or genealogical importance are given in parenthesis 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.