

Kings, Conquerors, and Gods:

The Autobiographies of Timur, Isma'il, and Babur

As history entered its thirteenth century of the Gregorian calendar, a movement was fomenting in the steppes east of Lake Baikal that would leave an unprecedented impact upon the whole of Asia. This was the Mongol irruption, or “catastrophe,” as some like to call it.¹ Between the years 1206 and 1227, a great confederation of Mongolian tribes, led by Genghis Khan, subdued a vast territory stretching from Beijing to the Caspian Sea, and by 1272, there were few lands in Asia that the sons of Genghis did not rule. Debates about the long-term influence of the Mongols have gone both ways: some believe that the Mongol conquest was indeed a catastrophe, one that some parts of Asia took centuries to recover from. Others argue that, within a century, the Mongol ruling class had been absorbed into the cultural spheres that they resided in, and that, after the initial shock and wave of deaths, trans-continental trade and development resumed more or less unhindered.²

While both arguments have their points to make, we cannot ignore a third factor – the psychological impact. Even if the destruction was not as widespread as we once thought, there must have been no doubt among the people living under Mongol rule that a new era was upon them. As Hodgson observes, “For two or three centuries in most of the areas where they went and, in places, much longer, the Mongol tradition was looked to unquestioningly as the norm and ground of all political authority.”³ This is best illustrated by the literature of post-Genghisid dynasties in Asia. Just as Islamic rulers before 1250 employed the titles and rhetoric of the seemingly larger-than-life days of the early caliphate, so would monarchs and generals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries style themselves after this new invincible conqueror.

In 1360, a hundred years after the finalization of Mongol conquest, the most famous of these post-Genghisid rulers emerged in Kesh, not far from Samarqand. Timur Barlas, anglicized as Tamerlane, pursued a life-long career of warfare, first establishing himself in the ranks of the regional amir Kurgen and eventually awing the entire region from the Punjab to Cairo and Constantinople through his conquests. Like his predecessor Genghis, Timur has since been a hotly debated figure. At times he is the hero of Sunni Islam, or a great patron of the arts, or yet another power-crazed warlord with no regard for human life. However, Timur seems to have been more aware of his temporality than most, and actively sought to distinguish and memorialize himself in literature well before his death. He directed the production of two works, the *Tuzukat* (Institutes) and *Mulfuzat* (Memoirs), which were completed with his approval in his own lifetime. By analyzing these works, we can get an idea about how Timur attempted to secure his own sovereignty, both for his current audience and posterity, as Genghisid and as a Muslim. It is from this inquiry that we can start to distinguish a new construction of

¹ Hodgson, 286.

² Hodgson, 386.

³ Hodgson, 292.

legitimacy, both embodied and perpetuated by Timur, founded upon a blending of Mongol and Islamic traditions of rule.

In his introduction to the *Mulfuzat*, Timur very helpfully lays down the twelve rules of conduct that have served him so well.

- 1st. I have neither increased nor decreased (the portion of any one) but weighed equally to all;
- 2nd. I have administered strict justice to mankind;
- 3rd. I paid obedience to the orders of God and respected his holy laws;
- 4th. I had compassion on mankind and conferred benefits on all;
- 5th. I ever gave the affairs of religion precedence over worldly affairs;
- 6th. I always spoke the truth;
- 7th. I have always performed whatever I promised to any person;
- 8th. I considered myself as the Treasurer of the property of God;
- 9th. I ... acted according to the Law of Muhammad, and did nothing contrary to that sacred code;
- 10th. I gave currency to the faith of Islam through all my dominions ... by which means I gave stability to my Government;
- 11th. I gave free admission to the Syeds [Sayyids, descendants of the Prophet] ... and always treated them with respect;
- 12th. I asked the blessings of the Hermits [Sufis] ... and besought their prayers.⁴

While this is a pretty comprehensive list, all the traits he names can fall into one of two categories: a super-human strength of character, and extreme religious fervor. Love of justice, compassion, truth, and honor: these are personal virtues, establishing the individual ruler as a leader among men.

Obedience to God, respect of the holy men and institutions of Islam, and placing religion before worldly affairs demonstrate that he is servant of Islam. These two ideals of leadership draw from two separate traditions, the newly-established aura of personal might and fortitude from the Mongols, and the much older Islamic ideal of the pious commander of the faithful. This combination of Mongol invincibility and Islamic piety is both evidence of and access to the most intractable force of all: destiny, the favor of God. It is this image of the perfect ruler that Timur assembles from previously disparate elements and passes down to his successors.

Strength of character is an arguably secular trait, or at least, not exclusive to any particular religion. Virtue, hardiness, honor, compassion, and justice were undoubtedly emphasized by both the Islamic Shari'ah and the Mongol Yasa, and Timur makes repeated reference to his own powerful personality throughout his autobiography. In his narration of the conquest of Hindustan, he is seen repeatedly honoring his soldiers,⁵ fairly dividing the spoils of war,⁶ and bestowing munificent favors upon his subjects.⁷ To maintain his position as a fair and magnanimous ruler, he also distances himself from events of wanton destruction or cruelty, such as the sack of Delhi, instead blaming the pillaging on the "savage" nature of his Turkish army and resigning himself to the decrees of God: "Although I was desirous of sparing them [the Hindus] I could not succeed, for it was the will of God that this

⁴ *Mulfuzat*, 5-6.

⁵ *Tuzukat*, 48: "I congratulated them on their victory and praised their conduct."

⁶ *Tuzukat*, 77: "I understood that some had obtained much [plunder] and others little, and I had it all fairly divided."

⁷ *Tuzukat*, 58: "I bestowed rich robes, and caps, and girdles, and swords, [etc.] . . . upon the princes and amirs and other leading men of my army, especially upon those braves who had distinguished themselves by deeds of valour under my own observation. To some I gave regiments and raised their dignity. Upon the sayyids and ulama of the city I bestowed robes and presents."

calamity should fall upon the city.”⁸ His words are quite free of any sense of remorse, however, and he clearly perceived the slaughter as God’s retribution to an infidel population, in which he was merely the instrument.

This brings us to the second aspect of Timur’s position – his zeal as a Muslim conqueror. In his personal behavior, he shows the same iron will and forceful personality previously discussed; he is relentless in the waging of jihad⁹ and is accordingly generous to those captives who convert.¹⁰ Prior to the sack of Delhi, he calmly orders the execution of 100,000 Hindu prisoners as the only lawful way to deal with such an unmanageably large number of infidel captives.¹¹ However, his devotion to the cause of Islam comes at a price: in deference to the traditions of Islamic rule, he cannot disobey the wishes of the ‘ulama and holy men, as he narrates in this episode:

At the time I invaded the province of Fars, the people of Shiraz . . . put my Governor (Hakim) to death, I therefore gave orders for a general massacre of the inhabitants of Shiraz, on which, the very religious Syed Abul Ishak waited on me, and requested that I would cancel the cruel order, I however would not listen to the request of the Syed; that very night I dreamt that I saw the Prophet . . . who frowned on me and said, “one of my posterity came to your court and interceded for a number of culprits, why did you not attend to his petition, that I might have interceded for you at the court of the Almighty;” when I awoke, I perceived my error, and immediately mounting my horse, I rode to the residence of the Syed, and begged his pardon . . . I then made a vow that I would never again reject the petition of a Syed.¹²

By deferring to the established authorities of Islam, Timur hopes to conjure a connection with the classical Islamic *amir al-mu’miniin* (commander of the faithful), a venerated ideal since the early days of the caliphate. In this role, Timur is no longer the lawmaker; he is the law’s defender. He has authority only so far as his policies fulfill the intent of God.¹³

Of course, in Timur’s view, his submission to God’s will in no way compromises his authority – indeed, it is his access to absolute power. The introduction to the *Mulfuzat* is a veritable litany of omens foretelling his special place in history, including favorable dreams,¹⁴ blessings by holy men,¹⁵ visions of the Prophet,¹⁶ celestial warriors,¹⁷ and auspicious astrology (one of his many titles was *Sahib*

⁸ *Tuzukat*, 60.

⁹ *Tuzukat*, 71: “I had won two splendid victories . . . and I was very tired . . . but then I remembered that I had drawn my sword, and had come to Hind with the resolution of waging a holy war against its infidels, and so long as it was possible to fight with them, rest was unlawful for me.”

¹⁰ *Tuzukat*, 87: “When he had thus received into the fold of the faithful, I ordered my surgeons to attend to his wounds, and I honoured him with a robe and royal favours.

¹¹ *Tuzukat*, 51: “it would be entirely opposed to the rules of war to set these idolaters and foes of Islam at liberty.”

¹² *Mulfuzat*, 19.

¹³ *Mulfuzat*, 23: “I request, O Timur . . . Obey the commands of God”

¹⁴ *Mulfuzat*, 15: “I was seated on the sea-shore, and that I had in my hands a large net, which I dexterously threw, and caught a number of crocodiles and other large fish; this dream I interpreted thus, that the net was my dominion, which shall spread over the face of the globe, and that all mankind will become subject to me.”

¹⁵ *Mulfuzat*, 24: “The Saint looked at me and said, “although this boy is in appearance so little and young, he is in fact, a great personage.”

¹⁶ *Mulfuzat*, 11: “In a dream I saw the Prophet Muhammed . . . who congratulated me and said, “in consequence of the support you have given to my descendants, the Almighty has decreed that seventy-two of your posterity shall sit on the throne”

¹⁷ *Mulfuzat*, 14: “I called out for a spear, but none of my attendants were in readiness; suddenly I saw a Spearman in the form and dress of an Arab at my side, who gave into my hand a lance, and said, “O God assist Timur,” . . . When I made inquiry for the Arab, he was no where to be found”

Qiran, or *Lord of the Fortunate Conjunction*).¹⁸ At the battle for Dehli, he even seems to suggest that he has a direct line of communication with God: “I bowed my head to the ground and besought the Almighty for victory. As I did this I perceived signs that my prayers were heard.”¹⁹ By incorporating this religious servitude, Timur both draws from the authority and prestige of Genghis Khan and one-ups him at the same time. Like a fallen prophet, Genghis was initially marked by divine favor, but in his failure to uphold the laws of Islam, he “abandoned the *duty* of a conqueror, by slaughtering the people, and by plundering the dominions of God, and put to death many thousands of the Muselmans,”²⁰ while Timur specifically informs his audience that he took every care to spare the lives of the Muslim inhabitants of Dehli.²¹ Nonetheless, Genghis’ prestige was still such that Timur was always careful to maintain a puppet khan of direct Genghisid lineage.²² Because this goes completely unmentioned in his autobiography, one can assume that he hoped, through this kind of work, to ease Genghis out of the picture altogether.

In this way, Timur’s biography fuses two disparate notions of authority and legitimacy into a single, all-encompassing package. Through his powerful personality, virtue, and leadership, respected qualities among Muslims and Mongols alike, he argues for his natural position at the top. However, he avoids making the mistake of the Mongols and relinquishes his authority to the holy law of Islam and its most esteemed practitioners – this, of course, is the ultimate signifier that he is the true servant of God and is *divinely willed* to hold absolute power. It is a curious arrangement that, while appearing circular on one level, is also self-actualized and self-perpetuating – a rather god-like characteristic in and of itself.

Another extraordinary circumstance is this; whenever I undertook any thing, I cared not whether it was deemed a lucky or an unlucky hour, but placing my faith in God, I commenced it, yet the Astrologers always affirmed that whatever I had undertaken, the hour had been propitious for the event.²³

After Timur’s death, his empire, following the pattern of his time, was divided between four sons, and within a hundred years, most of the Timurid line had been reduced to local amirs as the Turkomen soldiery took politics back into their own hands.

At the turn of the sixteenth century, two warlords were consolidating power and establishing the framework for two now powerful empires, the Safavid and the Moghul. The founder of the Safavid state, Shah Isma’il, came from a line of Sufi pirs that had been steadily gaining political power for the last two hundred years. While he bore no relation to Timur, and much of his propaganda ignores him as a historical figure, he nonetheless drew heavily from Timur’s precedent of religious absolutism, with important modifications. Babur, the founder of the Moghul Empire, *was* a descendant of Timur, and in his famous autobiography, the *Baburnama* (which he, unlike his ancestor, wrote himself), he too employs the Timurid ideal, in a very different fashion from that of his Safavid counterpart.

¹⁸ *Mulfuzat*, 13: “the planets were in so favourable and auspicious conjunction as certainly to predict the stability and duration of my good fortune and Sovereignty”

¹⁹ *Tuzukat*, 53.

²⁰ *Mulfuzat*, 28. Emphasis added.

²¹ *Tuzukat*, 60: “Excepting the quarter of the saiuids, the ‘ulama, and the other Musulmans, the whole city was sacked.”

²² Thackston, 28.

²³ *Mulfuzat*, 15.

The familial heritage of Shah Isma'il is one of the most interesting of any Islamic ruler in history. The founder of the Safavi movement, Safi al-Din (d. 1334), a holy man who, like Timur, had been born under auspicious portents,²⁴ established his base in Ardabil in northwestern Iran and began a campaign of aggressive proselytism that eventually launched a large-scale religious movement throughout Iran, Syria, and eastern Anatolia. By the time of Timur's conquests, the Safavi movement was already a powerful force in the region; Timur himself recounts a pilgrimage to Safi al-Din's son, Sadr al-Din, who was now head of the movement, as part of his own propaganda of piety.²⁵ As the movement increased its popularity, the Aq Quyunlu (White Sheep) Turcoman confederation that ruled the area attempted to smash its leadership; after some initial setbacks, the Safavids managed to take advantage of inter-tribal quarreling and drove the Aq Quyunlu from Tabriz in 1501.

During this uncertain period, Isma'il produced a number of poems under the pseudonym Khata'i, written in unornamented Azeri Turkish and clearly meant to inspire devotion to his cause. In this work, he echoes the language of absolutism, in a manner of speaking, that had been established by Timur.

*Shah Isma'il is my name, I am the mystery of Truth
Of all these Ghazis I am the commander
Fatima is my mother, 'Ali is my father
Of the Twelve Imams I am the Pir*²⁶

*I am God Himself, God Himself, God Himself;
Come now and see the Truth, O blind man gone astray.
I am that Absolute Agent of whom they speak;
Sun and Moon are in my power.*²⁷

However, it should be noticeable that Isma'il uses a slightly different language of authority than Timur does. Not only does he claim lineage from and mastery of the first Imam 'Ali and his descendants, he claims to be the physical manifestation of God himself. He expands this image with verses that envelop him in immortal timelessness and omnipresence: "*I was on the gallows with Mansur (al-Hallaj) / I was in the fire with Khalil (Abraham) / I was on the Sinai with Moses.*"²⁸ Isma'il's verses also identify him with non-religious figures – Faridun, Khusraw, Jamshid, Zahhak, Rostam and Alexander are all named.²⁹ It may seem odd that he would reference to obviously non-Muslim heroes of Iranian folklore while proclaiming himself the reincarnation of God, but the existence of such a paradox, as it did for Timur, is a tremendous boost to Isma'il's self-mythologizing. In this poetry, Isma'il is a transcendent figure, unknowable and undecipherable to the common man. He succeeds in bringing together the totality of glory and heroism throughout time and representing himself as its final, singular manifestation. This apocalyptic aspect of Isma'il's arrival is another major theme in his work.

*The perfect guide has arrived; he is the Imam for all people
All the Ghazis rejoice that the seal of the prophets has come*

²⁴ Savory, 5.

²⁵ *Mulfuzat*, 7: "When I was seventy years of age, and was returning in A. H. 806, from the conquest of Anatolia, I paid my respects to the Kutb al Aarifyn, (Pole Star of Wisdom), Shaikh Sudder Addeen Ardebilly [Shaykh Sadr al-Din Ardabili]."

²⁶ Khata'i, n. 16 [Woods, 29].

²⁷ Khata'i, n. 207 [Woods, lecture].

²⁸ Khata'i, n. 20 [Woods, 30].

²⁹ Khata'i, n. 198 [Woods, lecture].

*He has put on Abraham's form, He has been given the name of Isma'il
Be a sacrifice to him O souls, for from God the call has come.*³⁰

Isma'il's selection of heroic figures in his poetry is noteworthy. The two major groups he draws from – and claims to be the culmination of – are the great Abrahamic prophets and the giants of Iranian folklore. Both of these groups, to some extent, make up the popular mythology of the region. Modern conquerors, like Salah al-Din, Genghis, or especially the religious Timur, are conspicuously absent. Because he was not actually descended from the Timurid line, Isma'il could not employ the Timurid and Moghul traditions and establish himself on the basis of their prestige. Coming from a family of holy men, however, had its advantages. In order to establish his own legitimacy as one who did *not* claim lineage from Timur, and to surpass those who did, Isma'il draws from the heroic mythology of his culture, both religious and folkloric (two categories that are quite interchangeable). He thus redeploys the Mongol tactic of lineage in a way that he, as head of the Safavi order, had unique access to; while Timur could only profess to *serve* God, Isma'il claims to embody that which Timur could only submit to:

*Ghazis say Allah Allah
Ghazis I am the faith of the Shah*³¹

Although Timur is absent from this list of conquerors, kings, and prophets, his presence is nonetheless felt. Like Timur and his ideological predecessor Genghis, Isma'il dedicates the bulk of his propaganda to the aggrandizement of his personhood, to the point that disobedience to the Shah's command is sin itself.³² The personality cult and the aura of invincibility and infallibility it generates for Isma'il is quite in line with the Mongol tradition. To be sure, Muslim rulers before the Mongol conquest employed lofty language in their decrees, but the extreme to which Isma'il goes would have been completely unacceptable before Timur established the new Mongol-Islamic authoritarianism of the fifteenth century.

While Isma'il was setting himself up as a god among men, his contemporary and fellow empire-founder Babur was having rather difficult time establishing any enduring realm for himself. Starting with his homeland in Fergana in modern-day Uzbekistan, he slowly moved south to Kabul and eventually to Delhi, winning and losing empires as he went. He nevertheless identified wholeheartedly with the Timurid legacy that so saturated his environment, and fondly recalled the pleasant climate, beautiful architecture, and sweet fruit of Timurid Kabul during his years in India. His autobiography, the *Baburnama*, is unique among the works so far studied because it was not intended as propaganda to secure his place in history – or if it was, he had a very different (and obviously successful) idea about how immortality could be achieved. Like Isma'il's poetry, he wrote in his native vernacular, Chagatay Turkish, in prose that was unprecedented in its frankness and unapologetic simplicity. From his work, we can see a very different way of incorporating the Mongol traditions in Islamic rule that both draws from and rejects certain aspects of Timur's legacy.

³⁰ Khata'i, n. 252 [Woods, 32].

³¹ Khata'i, n. 20 [Woods, 30].

³² Savory, 33.

Upon first reading of the *Baburnama*, a potential difficulty arises. Babur does not once exalt the names of either Timur or Genghis in his prose; when they come up, it is merely in reference to some important building they founded or princeling they sired. This could problematize any argument that would claim Timur and Genghis had left such a great impression on the minds of future rulers, yet it is understandable when we remember that for Babur, Timur's heritage was an obvious fact of life; it was the air he breathed. Every local khan or sultan had some kind of connection to Timur, and the mark of sovereignty in Babur's language is to "sit on Timur Beg's throne."³³ As a consequence, we have look more closely at his narrative, beyond the things he would have taken for granted, to see how he distinguished himself in this environment where everyone was related to the famous conqueror.

One thing that comes to light in Babur's narrative is the importance of honor, allegiance, and kinship, all very telling features of the code of Genghis Khan, the *Yasa*. In a visit to Herat, Babur makes the following observation:

In former times our fathers and forefathers meticulously observed the Genghisid Code. In assemblies and court, at banquets and dinners, in sitting and serving, nothing was allowed to go counter to the code. However, Genghis Khan's code is not a binding text according to which a person must act absolutely. Rather, it is necessary to act in accordance with a good rule when someone leaves one behind; if an ancestor has set a bad precedent, however, it should be replaced by a good one.³⁴

Much of Babur's behavior seems to stem from this tradition. Generally, he is not a vindictive figure; however, the obligations of fealty and service play a very important role in Babur's view of society, and the disruption of these bonds is one of the few things which can agitate him from his normally calm prose. While he hardly bats an eye at the death of his mother,³⁵ he admits to weeping uncontrollably at the desertion of his military allies³⁶ and the suspicious death of a friend.³⁷ To those who commit such deeds of treachery, like one Khusrawshah, his wrath knows no bounds: "A hundred thousand curses upon anyone who performs or has performed such a despicable act!"³⁸ He is similarly incensed at the capriciousness of his Mongol troops.³⁹ However, when he is well served and faithfully treated, he makes a point to reward his followers and bestow his patronage upon local lords and elites.⁴⁰ Honor and allegiance, not religious zeal or personal power, is Babur's *modus operandi*; as he tells one advisor, "It is more important for me to serve my kinsmen the khans than to rule over Tambal as king."⁴¹ Such a trade-off was clearly shocking to some.

At the same time, Babur distances himself from the self-aggrandizement of Timur and Shah Isma'il. His account of the taking of Samarqand is remarkably free of boast or swagger: he lists a few

³³ *Baburnama*, 162b [Thackston, 204].

³⁴ *Baburnama*, 186b [Thackston, 232].

³⁵ *Baburnama*, 156b [Thackston, 198]: "As her time must have come, she passed away"

³⁶ *Baburnama*, 55b [Thackston, 93].

³⁷ *Baburnama*, 98b [Thackston, 134]: "I was singularly affected. Rarely have I been so moved by anyone's death. I wept for a week or ten days."

³⁸ *Baburnama*, 58b [Thackston, 96].

³⁹ *Baburnama*, 90 [Thackston, 126]: "These wretched Mongols always do this. If they win they take booty; if they lose they unhorse their own people and plunder them for booty."

⁴⁰ *Baburnama*, 50b [Thackston, 89]: "As soon as I took the throne of Samarqand, I reconfirmed the begs of Samarqand in the favor and estates they had formerly enjoyed. I also promoted and awarded the begs who had been with us according to their status."

⁴¹ *Baburnama*, 108b [Thackston, 146].

points that he feels are his due credit, such as the fact that he was merely nineteen years old, and that his opponent was in a strong fortress, but he concludes this episode with, “I do not say this to denigrate anyone else . . . I do not intend to aggrandize myself with what I have written. What I have written is the truth.”⁴² In fact, he actively disengages himself from the prestige of descent from the Timurid line. In one telling passage, he orders his followers to drop the title *mirza*, an abbreviated form of *amirzada*, or “born of the amir [Timur],” and instead to call him *padishah* [king].⁴³ He emphasizes his brotherhood with the common soldiers; when his troops are caught in a massive blizzard in the passes outside Kabul, he refuses to take shelter in a cave: “I figured that to leave my people out in the snow and the storm, with me comfortable in a warm place . . . was neither manly nor comradely. Whatever hardship and difficulty there was, I would suffer it too.”⁴⁴

A third significant absence in the *Baburnama* is religious zealotry. While Babur is not irreligious, abstaining from “questionable foods” and wine for a great part of his career,⁴⁵ and careful to acknowledge all of his victories and defeats as God’s will, not once does he bring up “holy war” or the ghazi tradition that Timur and Isma’il both so favored. Also unlike Timur, his life is free of favorable omens, religious ceremony, symbolic dreams, and the like. The only dream he recollects takes place before the battle for Samarqand, and while it does feature a mullah, it is appropriately surreal and totally lacks any of the obvious polemic intent of Timur’s narrative.⁴⁶ Babur attributes his success to the moderate view that God’s will is done all things and beyond that, it was his own abilities that determined the outcome of his life: “When one has pretensions to rule and a desire for conquest, one cannot sit back and just watch if events don’t go right once or twice.”⁴⁷

The *Baburnama* is, as we can see, extremely different from the work of Isma’il and Timur. While it is clear that the latter two wrote with a specific political intent in mind, Thackston acknowledges that nobody really knows why Babur wrote his biography, especially one so frank and unornamented, unless it was truly motivated out of a scholarly love of unbiased history.⁴⁸ Considering Babur’s education and love of literature, this is not implausible. However, his straightforward appraisal of his time and his detailed observations of his environment provide another much more grounded perspective on Timur’s legacy in Central Asia. Due to his lineage and native city, Babur was not only aware of Timur’s historical presence, but grew up in the very culture that had been imported by Genghis and fused with the Islamic element by Timur. Because he seemed to have not had any interest in mythologizing his reign, Babur avoids the hyperbole and astrology that he could have borrowed from his ancestor. Once stripped of embellishment and titanic personality, however, Babur’s life

⁴² *Baburnama*, 86 [Thackston, 122].

⁴³ *Baburnama*, 215 [Thackston, 266].

⁴⁴ *Baburnama*, 194b [Thackston, 241-242].

⁴⁵ *Baburnama*, 189 [Thackston, 235]: “In my childhood I had no desire for wine, for I was unaware of the enjoyment of it. Occasionally my father had offered me some, but I had made excuses. After my father’s death I was abstinent and followed piously in Khwaja Qazi’s blessed footsteps. How could I, who avoided suspect food, have committed the sin of drinking wine? Later, with the desires of young manhood and the promptings of the carnal soul, when I had an inclination for wine, nobody offered – no one even knew that I was interested.”

⁴⁶ *Baburnama*, 83b [Thackston, 120].

⁴⁷ *Baburnama*, 55b [Thackston, 93].

⁴⁸ Thackston, 9.

illustrates a very effective fusion of traditional Mongol-Turkic honor codes and Islamic morality, one that was probably shared by most of his comrades and was a very real way of life in Central Asia. His example goes to show that, behind the bluster, Timur's impact on Islamic history went beyond literary self-exaltation and a new standard of authoritarianism; he did establish a lasting cultural tradition that could well have signified, at least for those living in the region, a new era of Islam.

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