

# CHAPTER 5: TAMERLANE AND THE TIMURIDS

## Tamerlane

Tamerlane, also known as Timur, was a prominent figure born in 1336 in Kesh, Uzbekistan, who rose to power despite an early leg injury. He became a renowned military leader, capitalizing on the disarray in the Mongol Empire. His strategic brilliance and military tactics enabled him to create the vast Timurid Empire, conquering territories across Central Asia, Persia, India, and Anatolia.

Beyond his military conquests, Tamerlane was a patron of art and architecture, leaving behind impressive structures like the Registan Square and Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum in Samarkand. His rule fostered a cosmopolitan environment, attracting scholars and artists, turning his empire into a center of cultural exchange and intellectual advancement.

Tamerlane's rise to power was influenced by his lineage and the fragmentation of the Mongol Empire. His military campaigns, marked by significant brutality, played a central role in his ascent. His legacy remains controversial, as some celebrate him for his achievements while others criticize the suffering caused by his conquests. Tamerlane's historical interpretation varies across cultures and regions, reflecting the ethical and moral questions surrounding his methods and the humanitarian consequences of his actions, which included large-scale killings and displacement.

In essence, Tamerlane was a conqueror and builder of empires who made significant architectural and cultural contributions while leaving behind a legacy marked by both admiration and condemnation.

### Military Conquests: Timeline

- April 9, 1336: Timur is born in the city of Kesh (modern-day Shahrisabz, Uzbekistan).
- 1360s: Timur begins his military career, serving various leaders and gaining experience in warfare.
- 1370: Timur establishes himself as ruler of Samarkand after a series of conquests and political maneuvers.
- 1370s-1380s: Timur expands his empire by conquering neighboring territories, including parts of Persia and Central Asia.
- 1393: Timur captures and sacks the city of Herat in Persia.
- 1398: Timur launches a campaign into India, capturing Delhi and looting the city.
- 1400-1401: Timur's forces capture Aleppo and Damascus in the Middle East.
- 1402: Timur's forces defeat the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I at the Battle of Ankara.
- 1404: Timur dies while preparing for a campaign against Ming China. He is buried in Gur-e-Amir, Samarkand.

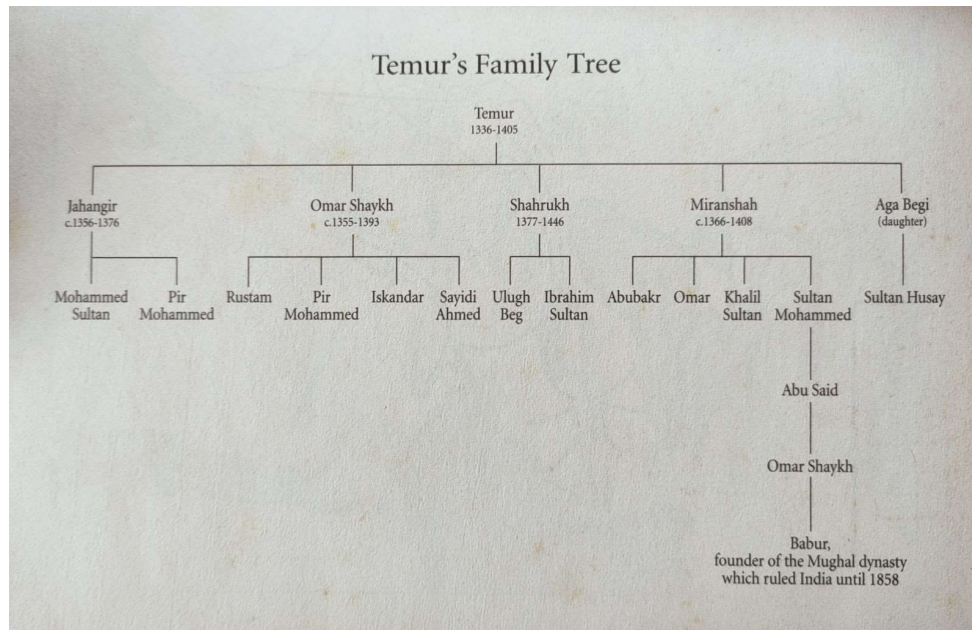
### Timur's Legacy

- **Positive Legacy**
  - Architectural Marvels
  - Cultural Exchange
  - Artistic Contributions
  - Timurid Dynasty
  - Influence on Later Empires
- **Controversial Legacy**
  - **Brutal Conquests:** Tamerlane's military campaigns were marked by extreme violence, leading to widespread destruction and loss of life.
  - **Humanitarian Consequences:** Tamerlane's conquests led to significant human suffering, including enslavement, displacement, and cultural upheaval
  - **Ethical and Moral Questions:** Tamerlane's methods raise ethical questions about the means he employed to achieve his goals

- **Historical Interpretations:** Tamerlane's legacy has been interpreted differently across cultures and regions. While some view him as a national hero, others see him as a conqueror responsible for immense suffering.

## Timurids (1370-1507)

After his death, Timur's empire began to decline as internal conflicts and external pressures weakened his successors' rule.



- 1405-1447: Shah Rukh, Tamerlane's son, focused on consolidating the empire's territories, promoting culture, and strengthening ties with neighboring powers.
- 1447-1449: Ulugh Beg, the son of Shah Rukh, came to power; he is known for his patronage of astronomy, mathematics, and culture; his reign saw a focus on intellectual pursuits, including the establishment of an observatory in Samarkand.
- 1449-1457: The Timurid Empire experienced internal divisions and power struggles among his descendants.
- 1457-1506: Sultan Husayn, a grandson of Tamerlane, managed to reunite parts of the Timurid Empire, he faced conflicts with the Uzbeks and the Safavid Empire.
- 1526-1540: Babur, a descendant of Timur through his father's side, captured Delhi and established the Mughal Empire in India, marking the end of the Timurid Dynasty's direct rule in Central Asia.
- 16th century: The Timurid Empire fragmented into smaller states such as the Khanate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva.

The Timurid cultural and artistic legacy continued to have an impact, but the political influence diminished, as the Safavids, Ottomans, and Russians, exerted control over the region.

### Ulugh Beg: Timur's Grandson, Ruler and Scientist

- Ulugh Beg was born on March 22, 1394, in Sultaniyeh, Persia (modern-day Iran)
- Scientific Contributions:
  - Renowned for his contributions to astronomy and mathematics; established an observatory in Samarkand, which became a center for astronomical research
  - He constructed a large sextant, an instrument used to measure angles in astronomy; He used it to compile a star catalog known as the "Zij-i Sultani" containing the positions of over a thousand stars
- Ruler of Samarkand:

- He ruled over the city of Samarkand from 1409 to 1449, promoting learning, culture, and scientific research
- He was also engaged in political affairs and military campaigns to expand and maintain his territories
- Downfall and Death:
  - In 1449, he was overthrown and assassinated by his own son, Abdal-Latif, who sought to gain power. This event marked the decline of the Timurid dynasty in Central Asia

### **Babur: Founder of the Moghul Empire**

- Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur was born in 1483, in Andijan, Uzbekistan
- Babur was a descendant of Timur on his mother's side and Genghis Khan on his father's side
- He inherited the kingdom of Fergana in Central Asia at a young age but faced political rivalries and external threats.
- He embarked on a series of military campaigns to expand his territory
- In 1526, he defeated the Sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, at the First Battle of Panipat, establishing the foundation of the Mughal Empire.
- He appreciated the arts and literature. He wrote his memoir, "Baburnama," which provides valuable insights into his life and the historical context of his time.
- He passed away on December 26, 1530, in Agra, India and was succeeded by his son, Humayun.