



Cahiers d'Asie centrale

3/4 | 1997

L'héritage timouride : Iran – Asie centrale – Inde, XV^e-
XVIII^e siècles

Timur in the Political Tradition and Historiography of Mughal India

Irfan Habib



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/asiacentrale/500>

ISSN: 2075-5325

Publisher

Éditions De Boccard

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 October 1997

Number of pages: 295-312

ISBN: 2-85744-955-0

ISSN: 1270-9247

Electronic reference

Irfan Habib, « Timur in the Political Tradition and Historiography of Mughal India », *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* [Online], 3/4 | 1997, Online since 03 January 2011, connection on 01 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/asiacentrale/500>

Timur in the Political Tradition and Historiography of Mughal India

Irfan Habib

I.

Timur's image in India before the establishment of the Indian Timurid ("Mughal") dynasty in 1526, was naturally coloured by the experience of his invasion of 1397-99. This can be seen from the account of this event in Yahya Sahrindi's *Târikh-e Mobâarakshâhi*, which was completed in 1434, though the portion containing the account of Timur's invasion was probably written much earlier¹. It was, therefore, practically contemporaneous with, and is certainly completely independent of, Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafar-nâma*, which was probably completed in 1424-5, and contains the most detailed version from the official Timurid point of view². A comparison of the two narratives is quite instructive. Despite some slips in the Indian account, like making Timur go to Multan from Tulamba, or placing his occupation of Delhi late by one month, it does give some dates and details of Pir Mohammad's attack on Uchh and Multan, 1397-98, which are lacking in Yazdi. But the essential particulars are the same in both: the route of the invasion, the slaughter and rapine, and the return. Naturally, however, while Yazdi exults in his hero's brilliant successes and atrocities, Yahya's account is hostile to Timur, though with a certain amount of restraint. The restraint is understand-

dable, since his patron's father, Khezr Khan (Khezr Khân) was appointed to the government of Multan by Timur in 1399, during his return march³. Timur is simply "Amir Timur" in Yahya, not *Şâheb-e Qerân* (Lord of the Conjunction) as in Yazdi. Those whom he slaughtered were not all infidel Hindus, deserving their fate, as in Yazdi, but both Hindus and Muslims: such as were killed by Timur when he marched towards Delhi "obtained the honour of martyrdom (*sharaf-e shahâdat*)". Like Yazdi, he too describes the slaughter of all the enslaved captives in the hands of Timur before his recrossing of the Yamuna to attack Delhi: his estimate of the number of the victims is more moderate, being 50 000 as against Yazdi's 100 000⁴.

When Timur entered Delhi after defeating Mahmud Toghloq's forces, he granted an amnesty in return for protection money (*mâl-e amâni*). But on the fourth day he ordered that all the people of the city be enslaved; and so they were. Thus reports Yahya, who here inserts a pious prayer in Arabic for the victims' consolation ("To God we return, and everything happens by His will")⁵. Yazdi, on the other hand, does not have any sympathy to waste on these wretches. He records that Timur had granted protection to the people of Delhi on the 18th of December 1398, and the collectors had begun collecting the protection money. But large groups of Timur's soldiers began to enter the city and, like birds of prey, attacked its citizens. The "pagan Hindus" (*Henduân-e gabr*) having had the temerity to begin immolating their women and themselves, the three cities of Delhi were put to sack by Timur's soldiers. "Faithless Hindus", he adds, had gathered in the Congregation Mosque of Old Delhi and Timur's officers put them ruthlessly to slaughter there on the 29th of December. Clearly, Yazdi's "Hindus" included Muslims as well. By now immense numbers of slaves had been obtained by ordinary soldiers, and Timur and his nobles took the lion's share from amongst "the several thousand craftsmen and men of skill" enslaved. No consolation needed to be extended to such people, for, says Yazdi, "Delhi was laid waste (*kharâb shod*) ... in punishment for its inhabitants' evil beliefs and vile deeds and conduct"⁶. This would hardly be a sentiment Indians could share. After Timur left, Yahya tells us, Delhi and whatever areas he and his troops had passed through fell prey to epidemic and famine, taking a further toll of lives. Delhi remained deserted and desolate (*kharab-o-abtar*) for two months. Gradually, the people of

Doab (the area between the Yamuna and Ganga), which had “escaped the grasp of the Mughal”, began to gather around Nosrat Shah (Noşrat Shâh) who re-established some administration in Delhi⁷. Timur’s invasion was thus seen as the last, and the most calamitous, of the Mongol raids, which left only huge devastation and desolation in its trail. Timur did not even care to leave any one to administer or maintain order in Delhi, and in his other Indian conquests. Multan was the only place he left in the hands of a subordinate potentate in the person of Khezr Khan.

II.

After the death of Timur (18th of February 1405), the process of contraction of the Timurid Empire, and dissensions within it began, so that throughout the 15th century India remained immune from “Mughal” invasions. But as the “descendants of Timur Beg” saw their power in Central Asia disappear under the pressure of the Uzbeks, one of them, the famous Babur (d. 1530), now positioned at Kabul, decided (in 1507-8) to try his fortune in India⁸, and finally succeeded in the enterprise in 1526.

Babur naturally emphasized his descent from Timur, for whom, rather surprisingly, however, he usually employs in his memoirs no higher title than “Beg”⁹. On his seal in India he inscribed, on the circumference, the names of his ancestors going up to Timur¹⁰. Yet he nowhere directly makes the claim of an entitlement to a dominion in India on the basis of Timur’s conquests. Only in two places do indirect suggestions occur. First, he tells us that ever since Timur’s time the latter’s descendants have continued to hold parts of the Sind Sagar Doab¹¹, an affirmation which may have historical truth behind it, since Timur’s dominions did come up to the Indus, east of Bannu¹². The second statement, an incorrect one, is to the effect that Timur had given away Delhi to the founder of the Saiyid dynasty (Khezr Khan whom Babur does not name)¹³. Though an interpolation to this effect has been made in one of the manuscripts of Yahya’s *Târikh-e Mobâarakshâhi*, its original source is possibly Babur himself, for all manuscripts of Yahya’s agree on the statement that Timur had Khezr Khan released in the Panjab (not at or near Delhi) only to take control over Multan and Dipalpur¹⁴. Yazdi too makes Timur hand over to Khezr Khan nothing other than the charge of Multan¹⁵. In fact, it was

quite an independent set of circumstances which led to Kheẓr Khan's seizure of Delhi in 1414, some fifteen years after Timur's departure from India.

But it was not, perhaps, the slender historical basis for any "gift" of Delhi to anyone by Timur that made Babur refer to his conquest so casually and not draw from it any legal claim in his own favour. Even in the *fath-nâma* issued in the form of a *farmân* (29th of March 1527) after Babur's victory over Rana Sangram Singh, Babur, or rather his draftsman, Sheykh Zaïn, does not make any reference to Timur, though the *fath-nâma* sought to portray Babur in the same garb of a holy warrior against the Infidels as Yazdi had done in respect of Timur¹⁶. The conclusion seems inescapable that to Babur and his secretaries it looked as if Timur's name was not one through which much sympathy could be gained for Babur's cause in India.

III.

The duality involved in emphasizing the genealogical links to Timur, the Lord of the Conjunction (*Şâheb-e Qerân*), the World Conqueror (*Giti-setân*), to reinforce the Indian Timurids' dynastic prestige and innate claim to royalty, on the one hand, and confronting the reality of the negative image of Timur in India, on the other, becomes even more obvious during the reign of Akbar (1556-1605).

Like Babur, Akbar from early in his reign used a seal, especially in revenue-grant documents, where, on the rim of the circle, his genealogy is traced back to Timur. This seal may be seen on a *farmân* as early as that of the 7th of April 1561, assigning the revenues of a village to a Hindu master dyer, the genealogy on the seal going back to "Amir Timur"¹⁷, and on a *farmân* as late as that of the 11th of September 1598, conferring revenue grants on temples of Vrindavan, etc., near Agra, where the title of *Şâheb-e Qerân* follows the name "Amir Timur"¹⁸. Though Akbar is never known to have himself taken the title of *Şâheb-e Qerân* in imitation of Timur, this title does occur for him in quasi-official inscriptions: for example, in an inscription of 975/1567-8 at Jaunpur and one of 985/1577-8 at A'zam-pur¹⁹. 'Aref Qandahari in his panegyric history of Akbar, written in 1579, traces Akbar's ancestry to Timur, and also gives Akbar the title of *Şâheb-e Qerân*²⁰. There was thus obviously a bureaucratic tendency to treat the principal title of Timur as an especially elevated one,

whose use for Akbar, with his continuing string of conquests, could be deemed appropriate in court sycophancy.

Abu'l-Fazl, the official historian of Akbar and his major ideological counsellor, while writing (c. 1595) the *Akbar-nâma*, a history that in some ways (especially, in its meticulous collection of facts) is inspired by Yazdi's *Zafar-nâma*, begins by emphasizing the augustness of Akbar's ancestry, in which Timur naturally figured prominently. The "light" (*nur*) that shone on the achievements of Akbar was the same as had shone throughout the conquests of Babur and the "world-acquisition" of Timur, and in the virtues of the holy ancestress of the family, Alan Qua (Alan Ko'a), from whom the Imperial Mongols too were descended²¹. Timur also offered a scale of comparison. If Akbar's horoscope had something in common with Timur's, this was worth noting²²; and it was even better when it indicated higher achievement than did Timur's²³. A chapter in the *Akbar-nâma* was therefore suitably devoted to the achievements of Timur, providing a short though fairly careful chronicle apparently based on Yazdi²⁴.

Yet Abu'l-Fazl faces an obvious difficulty in handling Timur's invasion of India, now that both he and his patron were making such unalloyed appeals to Indian patriotism. In his main account of Timur, the invasion is mentioned with studied brevity:

"On the 12th of *Moharram* 801, he crossed the Indus after constructing a goodly bridge [of boats], and, with fortune accompanying him, conquered India²⁵".

Abu'l-Fazl touches on Timur's invasion once more merely to compare his large force, as deducted from Yazdi, with the small body of troops that Babur had before Panipat in 1526²⁶. Finally, in the *Â'in-e Akbari*, the companion work to his history, while listing "those who have come to India", he enters remarks that suggest an implicit disapproval of Timur's action:

"When the sovereignty of Delhi came into the hands of Soltân Mahmud, the grandson of Soltân Firuz [Toghloq], and the viziership in the hands of Mallu Khân, the thread of worth-recognition and work-taking fell from the hand, and sovereignty lost its lustre. At this moment, the Imperial banners [of Timur] arrived, as has been briefly noted²⁷. Although such a populous country came into his [Timur's] hands, it did not have [for him] the desired booty: out of love for home, he went back²⁸".

If Abu'l-Fazl could get away from an awkward theme by resorting to brevity and opaque comment, such a way-out was difficult for another scholarly official, Nezam al-Din Ahmad, who belonged to an immigrant family from Herat with possibly generations of service under the Timurids. He had set out to write the first general history of India, the *Tabaqât-e Akbari*, completed in 1592-3, and had therefore to give a narrative of Timur's invasion. The only device he could use was to take the Indian version as recorded in the *Târikh-e Mobâarakshâhi* and suitably modify and soften its substance and tone²⁹. He removed the epithet *shahâdat* (martyrdom) for the death of those killed by Timur, and re-worded the sentence about the slaughter of captives before the final assault on Delhi so as to suggest that while 50 000 were taken as captives, "many", not all of them, were killed. In Delhi, it averred, Timur did not deliberately go back on his promise to grant protection, but withdrew it because the people of Delhi refused to pay the protection money and killed some of the collectors – a version for which there is no sanction even in Yazdi³⁰. Needless to say he omits the prayer of consolation that Yahya had recorded in the *Târikh-e Mobâarakshâhi* for those citizens of Delhi who, escaping death, were condemned to captivity and deportation to Central Asia.

It is interesting to compare Nezam al-Din Ahmad's treatment of the invasion with that of his friend and fellow historian, 'Abd al-Qader Badauni (Badâ'uni), who, being a critic of Akbar, was under no obligation to pay any special respect to his ancestor. In his account of the event³¹, written in or before 1595-6, Badauni does not edit out the harsher words in the *Târikh-e Mobâarakshâhi* version. The execution of all the 50 000 captives before the assault on Delhi is reported; and a remark touching on the boorish ignorance of the theologians accompanying Timur is added. Some of these theologians "thinking that all these Indian Muslim captives were Hindus, put them to death out of greed for earning spiritual merit from participation in a Holy War". Badauni has apparently in mind here both Yazdi's practice of treating Indians, whether Hindus or Muslims, as Infidels, and his story of a divine who killed all fifteen of his captive-slaves with his own hand, although he had never before slaughtered even a sheep or goat³². As for the enslavement of the entire population of Delhi, Badauni departed from his source by conjuring up their mythical

release allegedly at the instance of the Indian mystic Sheykh Ahmad Khattu; “the people of India are beholden to the Sheykh for this favour”, he adds piously. The story is just a legend; an earlier biographical notice on this mystic by Badauni’s younger contemporary, ‘Abd al-Haqq, says (in 1590-91) that Ahmad Khattu had himself been made captive but obtained only his own release by virtue of his spiritual attainments³³. The legend of a wholesale emancipation possibly grew out of the belief in Timur’s affinity to and humility towards Sufis, which legend the hagiologists did so much to further³⁴.

Badauni’s final judgment of the invasion was certainly not complimentary to Timur. The year it took place (801 H), he says, could be expressed in chronogram either by the word *rakhâ* / *rokhâ*, “affluence/gentle breeze”, or by the word *khâr*, “thorn”. It was a neat way of informing the reader how differently the same event could look to the invader and the victim.

IV.

No particular interest was shown in Timur during Akbar’s son Jahangir’s reign (1605-27), but it was otherwise with his grandson Shah Jahan (r. 1628-58). Upon his coronation on the 14th of February 1628, he assumed the title of *Şâheb-e Qerân-e Sâni*; and his official historians explain, the first (Qazvini), that this was because “in most manners and ways” the new emperor “perfectly ressembled” his ancestor, Timur, the *Şâheb-e Qerân*; and, the second (Lahori), that the aptness of the title derived from “the deeds” (presumably, the conquests and the confrontation with adverse circumstances) performed by Shah Jahan as a prince that recalled Timur’s career before his accession³⁵. Both Qazvini and Lahori do not trace Shah Jahan’s ancestry beyond Timur³⁶, thus departing from the tradition of Abu’l-Fazl who took the genealogical line back to the forebears of the Imperial Mongol line, especially the blessed lady Alan Qua. Such stress on non-Muslim ancestry was, perhaps, no more seen to be suitable at Shah Jahan’s court, where a certain Islamic orientation had begun to be distinctly stressed³⁷.

Qazvini quotes Shah Jahan as saying that Timur by his invasion of India (and in spite of his not being able to stay on there, owing to his preoccupations with other countries that needed to be conquered) left a standing instruction and a source of inspiration for his descendants, one

that led Babur to found his empire in India. He admitted though that “most of the laws, regulations, customs and practices” of the Indian Mughal Empire were those of Babur’s grandson, Akbar, who had also brought India under full subjection. The empire constructed by him was now being perfected by the “building skill” of Shah Jahan himself³⁸. There was, therefore, no claim of a continuance or survival of any administrative or military institutions directly from Timur’s time. Even if desired, such an unhistorical view at a time so close to that of Akbar’s great innovations and systematization of administration was hardly possible³⁹.

One can, indeed, ask why, with the achievements of Babur and Akbar providing sufficient prestige and legitimacy, Shah Jahan needed to have so strongly appealed to the name of Timur at all. The best explanation may, perhaps, lie in Shah Jahan’s ambitions to initiate an extension of the Mughal Empire in the north-west and west at the expense of the Uzbek Khanate and the Safavid Empire which had divided between the two of them the bulk of the Timur’s empire. Each annexation at their expense could be justified as nothing more than a rightful restitution to Timur’s heirs. Transoxiana (Mavarannahr) was, as Jahangir put it (1607) in his memoirs, the “hereditary dominion” of the Mughals to whose recovery Akbar had aspired and he himself was, at least on paper, committed⁴⁰. Shah Jahan intended to pursue a more energetic course. In 1638 when he had taken back Qandahar from the Safavids, his official historian could see it as the first step in the recovery and annexation of all the dominions that Timur had conquered and subjugated⁴¹. When in 1646 the invasion of Balkh and Badakhshan was undertaken, it was justified not only because these territories had once belonged to “this Imperial dynasty” (Badakhshan having been in the control of Babur and Hodayun), but also because their possession would “open the way to the recovery of Samarqand, the strong, heaven-like capital seat of His Majesty the *Şâheb-e Qerân* (Timur)”⁴².

The failure of this enterprise – the withdrawal from Balkh and Badakhshan in 1647, the loss of Qandahar in 1648, and the fiasco of three successive expeditions to recover the latter (1649, 1652, 1653) –, put a final stop to any thought of pursuing annexationist ambitions in the north-west in the minds of Shah Jahan and his successors. The utility of an appeal to Timur was, therefore, now largely over, except for the strict purposes of dynastic prestige. Indeed, it was enough for the official historian of Aurangzeb (r. 1659-1707) to refer in complimen-

tary terms to Timur as the founder of the line⁴³, just as for administrative purposes it was still important to recognise Akbar as “the renovator of the rules of sovereignty and the architect of the regulations of this eternal State”⁴⁴. But the legacy of Timur’s name no longer had any role to play in the formulation of specific strategic designs of the Mughal Empire.

V.

We may now pass on to an event of the period when Shah Jahan was particularly encouraging the cult of Timur, which is of some interest to students of the historical sources on Timur. Apparently just before the end of Shah Jahan’s 10th regnal year (lunar), the 20th of October 1637, he received what purported to be a Persian translation of the Turki *Memoirs (Malfuẓât) and Counsels (Tuzukât)* of Timur. The event is described by Qazvini, the official historian writing very soon afterwards. After telling us that Shah Jahan liked to have books read out to him, whereupon he memorised whatever interested him, he proceeds:

“Thus from the book *Vâqe’ât-e Şâhebqerâni* [Memoirs or Events of Timur], which was in the Turki language and preserved in the library of the governor (*vâlî*) of Yemen and which Mir Abu Tâleb Torbati, having obtained it in Yemen, himself translated into Persian – and it seems that some one upon orders of His Majesty Timur (*ḥāzarat-e Şâheb-e Qerâni*) had written it as if it came from His Majesty’s own august tongue – the story (*dâstân*) of the appointment of Mirzâ Pir Moḥammad, son of Mirzâ Jahângir, eldest son of His Majesty Şâheb-e Qerân, to the governorship of the capital seat of Solṭân Mahmud of Ghazni, written in the manner of a Turk [i.e. simply] and one befitting the great, was at this time read out to His Majesty [Shâh Jahân]. It was much praised by him and frequently repeated by his inspired tongue in the heaven-ordered assembly. A copy of it was sent to His Majesty’s son, His Highness Prince Solṭân-Aurangzeb Bahâdor, who a few days earlier had left [the court] for Daulatâbâd [capital of the province of Deccan] and this had relevance to his circumstances (...)”⁴⁵.

Qazvini then reproduces the text of Timur’s narration of his counsels and injunctions to Pir Mohammad, which the historian styles *dâstân*⁴⁶.

Qazvini’s passage has largely been ignored while the shorter corresponding passage in Lahori’s work, which has been published, is much

better known⁴⁷. Thus the important statement that the translated text was not even then believed to have been written originally in Turki by Timur himself (it being supposed to have been composed at his instance by someone else who made Timur the narrator) has passed unnoticed. On the other hand, both Qazvini's text of Timur's description of his counsels to Pir Mohammad and the published text of the *Tuzukât* do read like literal translations of a Turki text with frequent occurrences of Turki words, and with a simple and awkward style throughout. The report of counsels to Pir Mohammad given by Qazvini have such an archaic and non-literary appearance that Lahori, called upon to reproduce the same text, extensively polished it, deleting and replacing words and expressions like *kankâsh* ("deliberation", replaced by *maşlahat*), and *zânu zada goft* ("knelt and said", replaced by *ma'ruz dâsht*), to make it read as if it was composed by clerks of the Mughal chancery⁴⁸.

Indeed, from Shah Jahan's criticism of Abu Taleb Hoseyni's translation as reported by Mohammad Afzal Bokhari⁴⁹, who was asked to correct it, it would seem that Abu Taleb's credibility suffered for all the wrong reasons. When his translation was presented to Shah Jahan, it was found, says Afzal, that "events that had not happened, and should not have been recorded, according to the *Zafar-nâma* and other trustworthy histories, had been added in that translation and some matters that had been chronicled in all books and histories had been omitted". The "gross deviations in additions and omissions in respect of events and dates" were brought to Shah Jahan's attention; moreover, many Turki and Arabic phrases had been left untranslated. So Mohammad Afzal was asked to remove all these deficiencies and make Abu Taleb's text conform to Yazdi's *Zafar-nâma*⁵⁰. Afzal took his task literally, and rewrote and enlarged Abu Taleb's text, converted Yazdi's ornate prose into a simpler though still literary narrative, with Timur placed in the first person, and made the story so complete as to have Timur record his own death at the end!⁵¹

Afzal's text, in turn, affected Abu Taleb's credibility further because the original narrative in Abu Taleb's translation (i.e. the so-called *malfuzât* portion placed between his preface and the *tuzukât* portion) was replaced by Afzal's text in a number of manuscripts⁵², thus creating what may be called a doctored version (or, more politely, Version B) of Abu Taleb's translation. Both Dowson, who thought Timur's "Memoirs" to have a genuine core, and Rieu, who thoroughly doub-

ted its genuineness, confounded Version B with Abu Taleb's own original translation, and believed that there was no substantive difference at all between Abu Taleb's work and Afzal's, both, for example, making Timur record his own death⁵³.

But Abu Taleb's version in its original form (Version A) survives in several manuscripts. Here his Preface is followed by a narrative (*malfuzât*, according to Stewart), running up to 777 H/1375-6 corresponding to the 41st year of Timur's life, with Timur represented as writing in his 72nd year (the year of his death)⁵⁴. This narrative appears to be the one that Stewart has translated, for his translation too comes to the 41st year of Timur's life only⁵⁵. In some manuscripts, the narrative is extended to 783 H/1381-2 (Version AA). In both sets of manuscripts, the narrative is followed by the translator's note declaring his intention to translate the remaining Turki text comprising 40 000 *beyt* (lit. distiches; words?) containing the "Institutes" (*Yarligh-e tuzuk*) that he had copied from the original on to his own note-book⁵⁶. The translation of the *tuzukât* portion then follows. Excerpts from this portion, or from the *Tuzukât* reproduced in Version B, were published, along with an English translation, by Major Davy⁵⁷. The two versions, designated A and B by us, have unfortunately not been distinguished in library catalogues, as may be seen from Storey's standard listing of the manuscripts⁵⁸. My own scrutiny has established that two Aligarh manuscripts contain Abu Taleb's original version (Version A)⁵⁹; and, from the cataloguer's description, it would seem also to be contained in a Salar Jung manuscript⁶⁰. As for Version AA (with the narrative coming down to 983 H.) it is contained in one India Office manuscript and at least three British Library manuscripts⁶¹.

If one takes Abu Taleb's original translation, criticisms such as those based on his virtual conformity with Yazdi's *Zafar-nâma*, or on Timur being made to record his own death no longer apply. The language appears natural, its derivation from Turki quite obvious; the narrative is similar to one which would be given while reminiscing or dictating from memory. In the *Tuzukât* portion, memoirs, oral counsels and documents mix freely. There are no obviously anachronistic elements in either the narrative or its terminology, no visible error in the mention of persons, tribes and major events. How could Abu Taleb, without following Yazdi as his source (for his translation does

not accord with Yazdi in many places, as Shah Jahan and his scholars noticed), have possibly invented such a text? And if he was inventing a text for approval by Shah Jahan, why would he have composed the fierce diatribe against the people of India that appears in the *Tuzukât* portion⁶²? Nor can we press the point of the non-survival of the Turki original or the fact of its remaining unknown until its discovery in the library of the Turkish governor of Yemen. The Turki manuscripts of Babur memoirs, for example, are very rare: only two unfragmented manuscripts exist, while the extant manuscripts of the Persian translation by ‘Abd al-Rahim are extremely numerous⁶³. Turki was at the time neither the official nor the major literary language of Central Asia so that the extinction of the Turki original of Timur’s *Memoirs and Counsels* is in itself not very surprising.

If, then, Abu Taleb had a genuinely Turki text before him, from which he translated, a text moreover that belonged to a much earlier time, it still does not make that text genuinely of Timur’s authorship. The fact that Yazdi knew of no such memoirs, a point Dowson is most unpersuasive about in his defence of the memoirs (or rather of Version B), must certainly be held against the Turki original being a work based even on Timur’s dictation or instructions⁶⁴. Moreover, the reference to his 72nd year of life (though not to his own death, as in the doctored version), already alluded to, would suggest that Timur was engaged in compiling his memoirs while marching against China. This, being just before his death, could hardly have been a suitable time for such an autobiographical enterprise. It is, therefore, likely that the Turki text is not genuinely Timur’s work; but it might still have been compiled soon after his death, and many of the documents in it must have been extracted from official records. In such a case, it may indeed represent a very early post-Timur historical tradition. The original version of Abu Taleb (as against the doctored) need not, therefore, be dismissed as of no relevance or significance in reconstructing the history of Timur.

Shah Jahan and his official scholars need not, therefore, be held guilty of encouraging a fabrication. Owing to his acceptance of Abu Taleb’s presentation of his translation, Shah Jahan enabled an important early source on Timur to survive, though he himself strongly suspected its accuracy. There was no fabrication involved in his ordering Mohammad Afzal to rewrite the Memoirs, for, as Mohammad Afzal’s

preface makes it clear, the use of Timur as narrator was in his book a mere literary device. The confusion came only by the mixing at some stage of the two texts, to produce a doctored version of Abu Taleb (Version B), much to the latter's discredit. His original translation is, however, fortunately extant (Version A), as we have seen; and this needs to be more seriously explored by the students of the history of Timur than has hitherto been the case.

Irfan Habib
Aligarh, India

NOTES

1. This is because the work was written for presentation to Mobarak Shah, who ascended the throne on 20 May 1421 and was assassinated on the 19 February 1434. The work is not carried beyond November-December 1434. Edition: Yahyà Sihriñdî, *Târikh-i Mubâarakshâhî*, ed. M. Hidayat Hosain, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1931. The account of Timur's invasion is on p. 162-167.
2. Sharaf'uddîn 'Alî Yazdî, *Zafarnâma*, ed. Maulawî Muhammad Ilâhdâd, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1888, vol. II, p. 14-17, 47-182.
3. Yazdi, vol. II, p. 175; Yahyà, p. 167. The statement that Timur had already released Khezr Khan in Delhi and told him, "I give you all of Delhi that I have taken" (p. 166), is found in only one manuscript of Yahya's work and is obviously a later interpolation either based on the *Bâbur-nâma* (see below), or, more probably, on 'Abdu'l Qâdir Badâûnî's *Muntakhabu't Tawârikh*, ed. Ali, Ahmad and Lees, Calcutta, 1864-69, vol. I, p. 271.
4. Yahyà, p. 165; Yazdi, vol. II, p. 92-94.
5. Yahyà, p. 166.
6. Yazdi, vol. II, p. 116-25. On p. 123, Yazdi similarly exults (in verse) at the slaughter: "Out of the excessive blood shed of those who were killed, India became an expanse of calamity. (...) Yea, the ill-omened Infidelity, cruelty and error [of its people], brought forth from that land the smoke of annihilation".
7. Yahyà, p. 167.
8. For the reasons behind this decision, see *Bâburnâma*, Turki text, ed. Eiji Mano, Kyoto, 1995, p. 333-334; and transl. A.S. Beveridge, London, 1922, vol. I, p. 340.
9. *Bâburnâma*, ed. Mano, p. 10-11; transl. Beveridge, vol. I, p. 13-14.
10. As on the *farmân* issued on the 13th of *Zîqa'd* (*Zu'l-qa'da*) 933/11 August 1527, making a *soyurghâl* grant in *pargana* Batala (in the Panjab): India Office (London), I.O. 4438 (1).
11. *Bâburnâma*, ed. Mano, p. 354; transl. Beveridge, vol. I, 382.
12. Yazdi, vol. II, p. 46, 182.

13. *Bāburnāma*, ed. Mano, p. 434; transl. Beveridge, vol. II, p. 481 (the translator makes a mistaken identification of the receiver of the gift in the footnote).
14. Yahyà, p. 166-167. For what it is worth, in his account of Timur's raid, based obviously on the *Tārikh-e Mobārakshāhi*, Feyzallah Banbani, in his *Tārikh-e Šadr-e Jahān*, written in 1501-02, omits any mention of Timur's disposal of Delhi, least of all, of his granting of it to Khezr Khan (*Tārikh-i Šadr-i Jahān*, ed. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, Aligarh, 1988, p. 83).
15. Yazdi, vol. II, p. 175.
16. *Bāburnāma*, ed. Mano, p. 509-520; transl. Beveridge, vol. II, p. 553-574.
17. Published by Irfan Habib (ed.), *Akbar and his India*, New Delhi, 1997, with translation on p. 270.
18. Original in National Archives of India, New Delhi.
19. *Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement, 1969*, Delhi, 1973, p. 68, 81.
20. *Tārikh-i Akbarī*, ed. M. Nadwi, A.A. Dihlawi and I.A. Arshi, Rampur, 1962, text, p. 3, 8.
21. *Akbarnāma*, ed. Abdur Rahim, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1877, vol. I, p. 122. It is characteristic of Abu'l Fazl's attitude that he should exalt the pre-Muslim ancestors of Akbar, comparing Alan Quā to the Virgin Mary (*ibid.*, vol. I, p. 65).
22. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 25.
23. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 42-43.
24. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 77-81.
25. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 79.
26. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 97. Yazdi's statement, which Abu'l Fazl explicitly cites, occurs in *Zafarnāma*, vol. II, p. 83.
27. I.e. in the *Bāburnāma*.
28. *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, ed. Nawal Kishore, Lucknow, 1892, vol. III, p. 163.
29. *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*, ed. B. De, Calcutta, 1913, vol. I, p. 253-256.
30. It is of some interest that as early as 1606-07, Mohammad Qasem "Fereshta" noticed the divergence between the description of events in the official version and the explanation offered by Nezam al-Din Ahmad (see, Muhammad Qâsim Firishta, *Gulshan-i Ibrâhîmî*, ed. Nawal Kishore, Kanpur, 1874, vol. I, p. 158, lines 10-8 from bottom). Fereshta derived his own account of Timur's invasion (*ibid.*, p. 156-161) directly from Yazdi, and not from Mir Khwand's abridgment in the *Rowzat al-šafâ*, which he lists among his authorities in his preface. He also used Yahya's *Tārikh-e Mobārakshāhi*.
31. *Badâûnî*, vol. I, p. 267-271.
32. Yazdi, vol. II, p. 92.
33. *Ak̄hbâru'l ak̄hyâr*, Deoband, 1332 H/1913-4, p. 163-164.
34. This is shown by Mohammad Šâdeq's *Ṭabaqât-e Shâhjahâni*, written c. 1636-37 (manuscript in the Centre of Advanced Study in History Library, Aligarh, f. 39a-65b, esp. f. 44b-45a), where the biographical notices of Saiyids (*seyyed*) and Saints contemporaneous with Timur are given. On Timur's actual relationship with the theological classes, see V.V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, ed.

- V. and T. Minorsky, vol. I, Leiden, 1956, p. 58-60.
35. Amin Qazvini, *Pādshāhnāma*, MS British Library, Or. 173, fol. 124; ‘Abdu’l Ḥamīd Lāhorī, *Pādshāhnāma*, ed. Kabir Al-Din Ahmad, Abd Al-Rahim and W.N. Lees, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1867-72, vol. I, p. 96.
36. Qazvini, f. 29a-32b, and Lāhorī, vol. I, p. 43-45, for notices of Timur as the founder of the imperial line.
37. On which see Shri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, Bombay, 1962 (2nd ed.), p. 104-126.
38. Qazvini, f. 32a-33a.
39. Iqtidar A. Khan, *The Political Biography of a Mughal Noble: Mun’im Khān, Khān-i Khānān, 1497-1575*, New Delhi, 1973, p. IX-XIII, has in fact argued that the centralised monarchy created by Akbar stood in direct contradiction to the Timurid traditions of dynastic and clan claims of participation in the state.
40. *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī*, ed. Syud Ahmad, Ghazipur and Aligarh 1863-64, p. 11. Jahangir himself followed “a cautious and defensive policy” in the north-west (M. Athar Ali, “Jahāngīr and the Uzbeks”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Ranchi Session, 1964*, Aligarh, 1967, p. 108-119).
41. Lāhorī, vol. II, p. 62.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 482.
43. Muhammad Kāzim, *‘Alamgīrnāma*, ed. Khadim Husain, Abd al-Hai and W.N. Lees, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1868, p. 9.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 387.
45. Qazvini, fol. 417b.
46. *Ibid.*, f. 417b-419a. In his preface, Abu Taleb Hoseyni gives the name of the Governor of Yemen as Ja’far Pasha (Maulana Azad Library MS: University Collection F(4)240/10, p. 1-2).
47. Lāhorī, vol. I/2, p. 288-289.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 288-289.
49. To be identified presumably with Mohammad Afzal, son of Tarbiyat Khan, who died in 1651-52 (M. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire: Awards of Ranks, Offices and Titles to the Mughal Nobles, 1574-1658*, Delhi, 1985, p. 267, entry No. S5601).
50. Mohammad Afzal’s preface: Aligarh, Maulana Azad Library, MS: Lytton Collection, F: *Akhbār* 44, f. 2b-3a. Afzal’s remarks about the inaccuracies and omissions detected in Abu Taleb’s translation help to explain why Lāhorī (vol. I, p. 41-42) excludes Timur’s *Memoirs and Institutes* from amongst the sources listed by him for Timur, mentioning only “the *Zafarnāma* of Mollā Sharaf al-Din ‘Ali Yazdi and the *Timurnāma* of Mollā Hātefi and other works of historians”.
51. Afzal says the task was assigned to him in the 10th regnal year (1636-37), during which Abu Taleb’s translation had been received. For Afzal’s text I have consulted the Aligarh manuscript, cited in the preceding note; this is excellently calligraphed, 1220/1805 for the Mughal prince Ized Bakhsh. This manuscript shows that Mohammad Afzal omitted the section of the *Tuzukāt*, closing his text with Timur’s death. This is confirmed by the description of the manuscript of Afzal’s text in the Salar Jung Museum, Hist. 165, in M. Ashraf, *A Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in*

the Salar Jung Museum, vol. I, Hyderabad, 1965, p. 193-194 (Catalogue No. 173).

52. Version B is contained in Aligarh Maulana Azad Library, MS: Sulaiman Collection, 900 F625/2 (transcribed in 1201/1786-7) [personal scrutiny], and, to judge from descriptions in the catalogues, in the following other manuscripts: British Library, Or. 158 (Ch. Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. I, London, 1879, p. 179-180) and in the India Office manuscript catalogue No. 202 (= 1.0.1606) (H. Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the India Office*, vol. I, Oxford 1903, col. 83-86). Other catalogues may disclose other manuscripts of Version B, and some defective manuscripts may also be copies of it.

53. Dowson found “no great difference” (H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, London, 1867-77, vol. III, p. 393-394); and Rieu, comparing Afzal’s text in Add. 16,686 with Version B in Or. 158, believes that Afzal hardly made any changes, since the two texts “agree in the main very closely” (Rieu, *Catalogue*, vol. I, p. 178).

54. Aligarh: Maulana Azad Library, MS University Collection, F(4) 240/10, p. 47, for reference to the age of Timur at the time of writing. The narrative portion under the 41st year, equated with 777/1375-6, ends in this manuscript on p. 376.

55. Major C. Stewart, *The Malfuzat Timury, or Autobiographical Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Timur*, London, 1830.

56. Aligarh Maulana Azad Library, MS University Collection, F(4) 240/10, p. 47. The note is also reproduced by Ashraf, *Catalogue*, p. 189-190, in the description of Salarjung manuscript, Hist. 161 (catalogue No. 168) and by Ethé, *Catalogue*, col. 84-5, in his description of the India Office manuscript, Ethé 196 (=1.01943).

57. *Institutes, Political and Military, written originally in the Mongol language, by the great Timour, & c.*, with text and translation, by Major Davy, notes by Joseph White, Oxford, 1783.

58. C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature – a Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, vol. I/2, London, 1936, p. 280-282.

59. Aligarh Maulana Azad Library, MS University Collection, F(4) 240/10 (1755-56); and Sulaiman Collection, 900F, 625/3 (1303/1886, copy made from a manuscript of 1093/1682). Despite such variations as may be expected from manuscripts of separate lineages, both carry the same text throughout.

60. Salar Jung, Hist. 161, described by Ashraf, *Catalogue*, p. 188-189 (catalogue N° 168).

61. India Office Library, Ethé 196 (1.0.1943) (Ethé, *Catalogue*, col. 84-85); British Library manuscripts: Add. 26,191, Egerton 1005 and Add. 23,518 (Rieu, *Catalogue*, vol. I, p. 177-180).

62. Aligarh, Maulana Azad Library, MS University Collection, F(4) 240/10, p. 520-522. This also appears in Version B, Aligarh Maulana Azad Library, Sulaiman Collection, 900 F 624/2, f. 583a-584a.

63. Storey, *Persian Literature*, vol. I/2, p. 530, 533-534.

64. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, vol. IV, p. 559-563.