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وقد اقتحم عساكر تيمور مدينة حلب في الحال، وأشعلوا فيها النيران وأخذوا في الأسر والنهب والقتل، فهرب سائر نساء البلد والأطفال إلى جامع حلب وبقية المساجد، فمال أصحاب تيمور عليهن، وربطوهن بالحبال أسرى، ثم وضعوا السيف في الأطفال، فقتلوهم بأسرهم، وشرعوا في تلك الأفعال القبيحة على عاداتهم، وصار الأبيكار تفتض من غير تستر، والمخدرات يفسق فيهن من غير احتشام بل يأخذ التتري الواحدة ويعلوها في المسجد والجامع بحضرة الجم الغفير من أصحابه ومن أهل حلب، فيراها أبوها وأخوها وزوجها وولدها ولا يقدر أن يدفع عنها لقلّة مقدرته، ولشغله بنفسه بما هو فيه من العقوبة والعذاب، ثم ينزل عنها الواحد فيقوم لها آخر وهي مكشوفة العورة. ثم بذلوا السيف في عامة حلب وأجنادها حتى امتلأت الجوامع والطرقات بالقتلى، وعمل تيمور من رءوس المسلمين منائر عدّة مرتفعة من الأرض نحو عشرة أذرع في دور عشرين ذراعا، حسب ما فيها من رءوس بني آدم فكان زيادة على عشرين ألف رأس، ولما بنيت جعلت الوجوه بارزة يراها من يمرّ بها..... (النجوم الزاهرة في ملوك مصر و القاهرة) لابن تغري بردي

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... قلعة حلب وطلعوا إليها، فدخلها معهم خلائق من الحلبيين وكانوا قبل ذلك قد نقلوا إليها سائر أموال الناس بحلب. هذا وقد اقتحم عساكر تيمور مدينة حلب في الحال ...

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إقتحام تيمور لنك حلب

وقصد نواب المماليك الشامية قلعة حلب وطلعوا إليها فدخلها معهم خلائق من الحلبيين وكانوا قبل ذلك قد نقلوا إليها سائر أموال الناس بحلب. هذا وقد اقتحم عساكر تيمور مدينة حلب في الحال وأشعلوا فيها النيران وأخذوا في الأسر والنهب والقتل فهرب سائر نساء البلد والأطفال إلى جامع حلب وبقية المساجد فمال أصحاب تيمور عليهن وربطوهن بالحبال أسرى ثم وضعوا السيف في الأطفال فقتلوهم بأسرهم وشرعوا في تلك الأفعال القبيحة على عاداتهم وصارت الأبيكار تفتض من غير تستر والمخدرات يفسق فيهن من غير احتشام بل يأخذ التتري الواحدة وبعلوها في المسجد والجامع بحضرة الجم الغفير من أصحابه ومن أهل حلب فيراها أبوها وأخوها وزوجها وولدها ولا يقدر أن يدفع عنها لقله مقدرته ولشغله بنفسه بما هو فيه من العقوبة والعذاب ثم ينزل عنها الواحد فيقوم لها آخر وهي مكشوفة العورة. ثم بذلوا السيف في عامة حلب وأجنادها حتى امتلأت الجوامع والطرقات بالقتلى وجافت حلب واستمر

هذا من ضحوة نهار السبت إلى أثناء يوم الثلاثاء رابع عشر ربيع الأول.

هذا والقلعة في أشد ما يكون من الحصار والقتال وقد نقبها عسكر تيمور من عدة أماكن وردد خندقها ولم يبق إلا أن تؤخذ. فتشاور النواب والأعيان الذين بالقلعة فأجمعوا على طلب الأمان فأرسلوا لتيمور بذلك فطلب تيمور نزول بعض النواب إليه فنزل إليه دمرداش نائب حلب فخلع عليه ودفع إليه أمانًا وخلعًا إلى النواب وأرسل معه عدة وافرة من أصحابه إلى قلعة حلب فطلعوا إليها وأخرجوا النواب منها بمن معهم من الأمراء والأ

عيان وجعلوا كل اثنين في قيد وأحضروا الجميع إلى تيمور وأوقفوا بين يديه فنظر إليهم طويلًا وهم وقوف بين يديه ورئيسهم سودون نائب الشام.

ثم أخذ يقرعهم ويوبخهم ويلوم سودون نائب الشام في قتله لرسوله ويكثر له من الوعيد. ثم دفع كل واحد منهم إلى من يحتفظ به.

ثم سيقت إليه نساء حلب سبايا وأحضرت إليه الأموال والجواهر والآلات الفاخرة ففرقها على أمراءه وأخصائه. واستمر النهب والسبي والقتل بحلب في كل يوم مع قطع الأشجار وهدم البيوت وإحراق المساجد وجافت حلب وظواهرها من القتلى بحيث صارت الأرض منهم فراشًا لا يجد الشخص مكانًا يمشي عليه إلا وتحت رجله رمة قتيل.

وعمل تيمور من رؤوس المسلمين منابر عدة مرتفعة من الأرض نحو عشرة أذرع في دور عشرين ذراعًا حسب ما فيها من رؤوس بني آدم فكان زيادة على عشرين ألف رأس ولما بنيت جعلت الوجوه بارزة يراها من يمر بها.

ثم رحل تيمور من حلب بعد أن أقام بها شهرًا وتركها خاوية على عروشها خالية من سكانها وأنيبها قد خربت وتعطلت من الأذان والصلوات وأصبحت خرابًا يبابًا مظلمة بالحريق موحشة قفرًا لا يأويها إلا البوم والرخم. وسار تيمور قاصدًا جهة دمشق فمر بمدينة حماة وكان أخذها ابنه ميران شاه. وكان من خبرها أن ميران شاه بن تيمور نزل عليها بكرة يوم الثلاثاء رابع عشر شهر ربيع الأول المذكور وأحاط بها بعساكره بعد أن نهب خارج مدينة حماة وسبى النساء والأطفال وأسرى الرجال واستمرت أيدي أصحابه يفعلون في النساء والأبكار تلك الأفعال القبيحة وخرّبوا جميع ما هو خارج عن سور المدينة.

هذا وقد استعد أهل حماة للقتال وركب الناس سور المدينة وامتنعوا من تسليم المدينة وباتوا على ذلك فلما أصبحوا خادعهم ابن تيمور ففتحوا له بابًا من أبواب المدينة ودخل ابن تيمور المذكور مدينة حماة ونادى بالأمان فقدم الناس عليه وقدموا له أنواع المطاعم فقبلها منهم وعزم أن يقيم رجلًا من أصحابه عليها فقيل له: إن الأعيان قد خرجوا منها فخرج إلى مخيمه وبات به. ثم رحل يوم الخميس عنها ووعد الناس بخير ومع ذلك فإن قلعة حماة لم يتسلمها بل كانت امتنعت عليه.

فلما كان ليلة الجمعة نزل أهل القلعة وقتلوا من أصحاب ابن تيمور رجلين كان أقرهما بالمدينة فلما بلغ ذلك ابن تيمور رجع إليها وأقتحم البلد وأشعل النار بها وأخذ أصحابه يقتلون ويأسرون وينهبون حتى صارت كمدينة حلب غير أنه كان رفق بأهل حلب فإنه كان سأل قضاة حلب لما صاروا في أسره عن قتاله ومن الشهيد.

فأجاب محب الدين محمد بن محمد بن الشحنة الحنفي بأن قال: سئل رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم - عن هذا فقال: من قاتل لتكون كلمة الله هي العليا فهو الشهيد فأعجبه ذلك وحادثهم فطلبوا منه أن يعفو عن أهل حلب ولا يقتل أحدًا فأمّنهم جميعًا وحلف لهم فحصل بذلك بعض رفق بالنسبة إلى غيرهم. وأما أهل دمشق فإنه لما قدم عليهم الخبر بأخذ حلب نودي في الناس بالرحيل من ظاهرها إلى داخل المدينة والاستعداد لقتال العدو المخذول فأخذوا في ذلك فقدم عليهم المنهزمون من حماة فعظم خوف أهلها وهموا بالجلء فمنعوا من ذلك ونودي: من سافر نهب فعاد إليها من كان خرج منها وحصنت دمشق ونصبت المجانيق على قلعة دمشق ونصبت المكاحل على أسوار المدينة واستعدوا للقتال استعدادًا جيدًا

إلى الغاية.

ثم وصلت رسل تيمور إلى نائب الغيبة بدمشق ليتسلموا منه دمشق فهم نائب الغيبة بالفرار فرده العامة ردًا قبيحا وصاح الناس وأجمعوا على الرحيل عنها واستغاث النساء والصبيان وخرجت النساء حاسرات لا يعرفن أين يذهبن حتى نادى نائب الغيبة بالاستعداد.

وقدم الخبر في أثناء ذلك بمجيء السلطان إلى البلاد الشامية ففتر عزم الناس عن الخروج من دمشق ما لم يحضر السلطان.

أمراء الديار المصرية

فإنه لما كان ثامن عشر شهر ربيع الأول وهو بعد أخذ تيمور لمدينة حلب بسبعة أيام فرقت الجماكي على المماليك السلطانية بسبب السفر. ثم في عشرينه نودي على أجناد الحلقة بالقاهرة أن يكونوا في يوم الأربعاء ثاني عشرينه في بيت الأمير يشبك الشعباني الدوادر للعرض عليه.

ثم في خامس عشرينه ورد عليهم الخبر بأخذ تيمور مدينة حلب وأنه يحاصر قلعتها فكذبوا ذلك وأمسك المخبر وحبس حتى يعاقب بعد ذلك على افترائه ووقع الشروع في النفقة فأخذ كل مملوك ثلاثة آلاف وأربعمائة درهم. ثم خرج الأمير سودون من زادة والأمير إينال حطب على الهجن في ليلة الأربعاء تاسع عشرينه لكشف هذا الخبر.

ثم ركب الشيخ سراج الدين عمر البلقيني وقضاة القضاة والأمير آقباي الحاجب ونودي بين أيديهم: الجهاد في سبيل الله تعالى لعدوكم الأكبر تيمورلنك فإنه أخذ البلاد ووصل إلى حلب وقتل الأطفال على صدور الأمهات وأخرب الدور والجوامع والمساجد وجعلها إسطبلات للمواشي وإنه قاصدكم يخرب بلادكم ويقتل رجالكم فاضطربت القاهرة لذلك واشتد جزع الناس وكثر بكأؤهم وصراخهم وانطلقت الألسنة بالوقوعة في أعيان الدولة.

وأهل شهر ربيع الآخر فلما كان ثلثه قدم الأمير أسنبغا الدوادر وأخبر بأخذ تيمور مدينة حلب وقلعتها بآتفاق دمرداش وحكى ما نزل بأهل حلب من البلاء وأنه قال لنائب الغيبة بدمشق يخفي بين الناس وبين الخروج من دمشق فإن الأمر صعب أو أن النائب لم يمكن أحدًا من السير.

فخرج السلطان الملك الناصر من يومه من القاهرة ونزل بالريديانية بأمرائه وعساكره أو الخليفة والقضاة وتعين الأمير تمتاز الناصري أمير مجلس في نيابة الغيبة بالديار المصرية وأقام بمصر من الأمراء الأمير جكم من عوض في عدة آخر وأقام الأمير تمتاز يعرض أجناد الحلقة وفي تحصيل ألف فرس وألف جمل وإرسال ذلك مع من يقع عليه الاختيار من أجناد الحلقة للسفر. ثم رسم باستقرار الأمير أرسطاي من خجا على رأس نوبة النوب كان في نيابة الإسكندرية بعد موت نائبها فرج الحلبي.

وكان أرسطاي منذ أفرج عنه بطالاً بالإسكندرية فوردت عليه الولاية وهو بها. وأخذ الأمير تمتاز في عرض أجناد الحلقة وتحصيل الخيول والجمال وطلب العربان من الوجه القبلي والبحري لقتال تيمور كل ذلك والسلطان بالريديانية.

ثم خرج الجاليش في بكرة يوم الجمعة ثامن شهر ربيع الآخر وفيه من أكابر الأمراء مقدمي الألوف: الأتابك بيبرس والأمير نوروز الحافظي رأس نوبة الأمراء والأمير بكتمر الركني أمير سلاح وآقباي حاجب الحجاب وبلغا الناصري وإينال باي بن قجماس وعدة آخر من أمراء الطبلخانات والعشرات.

invasion by the Egyptian historian al-Taghribirdi gives a vivid account of the frenzied chaos in Mamluk ranks with each high-ranking mamluk only eager to see how the situation could be used to his best advantage as both sides outbid each other in horror. The aggressive instincts of Timur's forces could only have been further provoked when four of their vanguard were taken prisoner and were themselves severed at the waist.¹⁸ This savagery was stage-managed in front of the Syrian amirs who had assembled in Aleppo to discuss how to counter Timur's approaching storm. Though they had assembled a sizeable strike force, the amirs' sense of commitment might have been enhanced if the Mamluk sultan himself had turned up to rally their still-squabbling ranks.

Timur initially professed a 'let's talk about . . .' approach to the looming confrontation, sending an envoy in to Aleppo initially to demand again that the Damascus amir who had murdered Timur's envoy be produced. The discussions inevitably broke down and led to a new confrontation. The Syrian amirs prepared for battle. On 28 October 1400, Timur's troops invested Aleppo. Two days later the townspeople themselves exited the city and sought to stiffen the resolve of the amirs' forces by joining the battle formation. Timur attacked, his army 'filling the landscape'. Their fearsome advance was spearheaded by a troupe of war elephants brought in from an Indian campaign. It was not long before the motley Syrian contingents disintegrated, many fleeing into the city while Timur's forces overwhelmed the rest of the Mamluk army 'like locusts over a green crop'.¹⁹

The accounts we have from Arab chronicles describe a new peak in brutality when Aleppo fell to Timur. His entry into the city, according to Arabshah, was facilitated by the Mamluk garrison commander, Timurtash. Coming immediately after the slaughter of the Timurid envoys, the taking of Aleppo in the face of the aid the city's civilian population had given to the Syrian amirs was excuse enough for prolific violence. While the Syrian amirs locked themselves in the Citadel, the ferocious slaughter in the lower town continued.

The women and children fled to the great mosque of Aleppo . . . but Tamerlane's men turned to follow them, bound the women with ropes as prisoners, and put the children to the sword, killing everyone of them. They committed the shameful deeds to which they were accustomed; virgins were violated without concealment; gentlewomen were outraged without any restraints of modesty; a Tatar would seize a woman and ravage her in the Great Mosque or one of the smaller mosques in sight of the vast multitude of his companions and the people of the city; her father and brother and husband would see her plight and be unable to defend her

because of their lack of means to do so and because they were distracted by the torture and torments which they themselves were suffering; the Tatar would then leave the woman and another go to her, her body still uncovered. They then put the populace of Aleppo and its troops to the sword, until the mosques and streets were filled with dead, and Aleppo stank with corpses.²⁰

The amirs in the Citadel sued for amnesty but Timur had them brought out in chains.

Timur remained on in Aleppo for a month. The vengeance he had meted out to the citizens gave the city's surviving religious leaders little choice but to accept Timur's invitation to philosophical mind games. In Ahmad Ibn Arabshah's account, the *qadis* were terrified at Timur's familiar practice of using mercurial humour to mask grim menace. His main ploy was to set riddles to trap them into acknowledging 'Ali as the last true Caliph.

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Two years later Timur returned eastwards via Aleppo and again unleashed his forces on the city before he continued his campaign against the nascent empire of the Ottoman Turks, at this point confined to the central regions of Asia Minor. Like many of his other plans, Timur's aim to restore Seljuk authority in Asia Minor foundered with his early death in 1405 while the lack of a credible heir brought the collapse of his unwieldy empire.

[Recovery](#)

The last of the great incursions from Central Asia had been marked by the deportation of many Syrian craftsmen to embellish Timur's capital at Samarkand. The effect on Aleppo's rebuilding programme was noticeable though perhaps not as marked as had been the case after 1260 when the devastation had been more prolonged and the city more deeply impoverished by the Mongols' laying waste the countryside in addition to the city itself. One project was initiated immediately after

this site were rebuilt by the Mamluk governor Yalbugha al-Nasiri in 1389 but were reconstructed in the next century. It is not known from which version is dated the use of ablaq stone in contrasting colours which now spreads across the whole of the façade with spectacular effect.

Tamerlane 1400

Central Asian leaders anxious to recreate the empire of Genghis Khan had not quite finished with Aleppo. Timur (or Tamerlane) was a Turco-Mongolian ruler, born at Shahrisabz near Samarkand, who had since 1370 pursued territorial expansion from modern-day Uzbekistan. For thirty years he campaigned to the west and established an empire destined to be as short-lived as it was brutal. The Mongols by now had fully adopted Islam (of the Shi'i variety), though Timur seemed indifferent towards any notion of favourable treatment for fellow Muslims. He took Iran by the 1380s and campaigned into the Caucasus and even India, reaching Delhi in 1398. After Delhi he quickly turned west again and arrived in Syria via Armenia and Georgia in 1400.

Arriving from the north, Aleppo was first on Timur's list for Syria. The Syrian reaction to this looming new threat managed to combine arrogance with panic. When an envoy from Timur arrived in Damascus to explain the mission of the approaching Timurid forces (ostensibly to investigate the murder of Timur's previous ambassador), the amir of Damascus had this second envoy slaughtered too, this time by cutting him in half. The account of the events leading up to the invasion by the Egyptian historian al-Taghribirdi gives a vivid account of the frenzied chaos in Mamluk ranks with each high-ranking mamluk only eager to see how the situation could be used to his best advantage as both sides outbid each other in horror. The aggressive instincts of Timur's forces could only have been further provoked when four of their vanguard were taken prisoner and themselves severed at the waist.¹⁸ This savagery was stage-managed in front of the Syrian amirs who had assembled in Aleppo to discuss how to counter Timur's approaching storm. Though they had assembled a sizeable strike force, the amirs' sense of commitment might have been enhanced if the Mamluk sultan himself had turned up to rally their still-squabbling ranks.

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ALEPPO UNDER THE MAMLUKS (1260–1516)

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Pages 190 to 192 are not shown in this preview.

ALEPPO UNDER THE MAMLUKS (1260-1516)

1.5. “Tatars” and “Turks” during the Late Turkish Period and the Circassian Period (1382–1517)

Circassian-period historians refer occasionally to *mamlūks* who arrived in the Sultanate during the late Turkish period as “Tatar” (*tatar*). They use this label much more commonly, however, with reference to *mamlūks* who arrived in the Sultanate starting from the days of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (1382–1399). How should we understand this term? As will be argued below, a general and broad distinction should be made between *mamlūks* who arrived in the Sultanate during the Timurid westward expansion (roughly 1370–1400) and those who arrived circa 1400 and afterwards. The Timurid expansion seems to have made latent ethnic and political animosities resurface. After the 1320s only rarely do Mamluk historians refer to their eastern neighbors as “Tatars,” and to their land as the “Land of the Tatars,” and more generally they dedicate to them much less space in their writing. This however changes with the conquests of Timūr (d. 1405). For example, in *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, after Ibn Taghrībirdī refers to the land of the Sultanate’s eastern neighbors as “the Land of the Tatars” (*Bilād al-Tatar*) when he describes the escape of two Mamluk amirs to the Ilkhanate in 1312, he does not refer to it so until he describes the escape of a Turkish amir to Timurid territories when the Circassian al-Ẓāhir Barqūq ascended the throne in 1382.¹⁵⁹ In addition, after hardly referring to his eastern neighbors as “Tatars” from about the 1320s, during the Timurid conquest of Syria in 1400 such references abound. The “Tatars” are of course depicted in a very negative manner. Just for example, during the conquest of Aleppo the “Tatars” are said to have killed all the children and raped the women. Ibn Taghrībirdī says that the “Tatars” used to take women to the mosque and rape them in groups in front of their fathers and brothers.¹⁶⁰

Table A below surveys *mamlūks* labeled “Tatar” who arrived in the Sultanate after the 1320s and have a biographical entry in Mamluk sources. Most of the information regarding “Tatars” appears in the history books of two historians, ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl ibn Shāhin al-Ẓāhirī al-Malaṭī (d. 1514) and Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 1470), so it will be easier to focus on them. As can be seen from the Table, as we progress in time the term “Tatar” becomes more common. Moreover, Ibn Taghrībirdī almost never labels *mamlūks* as “Tatars” in their biographical entries where they are labeled “Turks,” but rather in the historical narrative when referring to past events. According to their ages, years of death, and masters, the six *mamlūks* who are not labeled “Tatar” in their biographical entries (nos. 1, 3–7) seem to have arrived mainly during the early days of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, and Quiqār al-Qardumī (no. 1) probably arrived a little bit earlier. Two out of the six are

159 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 9: 33, 276; 11: 229.

160 *Ibid.*, 12: 223–4.



power in Baghdad.

As tumultuous and damaging as all this factional fighting was for Baghdad, it was as nothing compared with what would shortly follow.

*

On the morning of 23 July 1401, the inhabitants of Baghdad woke to another searingly hot summer day. The Tigris glittered as it slid slowly through the city on its journey south. Much of the city's skyline – dun roof terraces, the green thrust of palm trees, iridescent, blue-tiled mosque domes – was blurred in the shimmering haze. Only the minarets poked through the rolling waves of light, standing silently like warning exclamation marks. Yet the silence was not one of peace, but of imminent calamity. Looking out at a vast enemy army encamped around their city, a horizon-filling host of savage-looking soldiers, sappers and cavalry divisions, smoking campfires and ermine-lined imperial tents, 'the astonished inhabitants no longer looked upon their city as the house of peace, but as the palace of hell and discord'.³⁹

They were right to be alarmed. The noose around Baghdad was tightening with every day that passed. For the previous six weeks, Baghdad had been under siege, encircled the length of its six-mile circumference, according to the fifteenth-century Persian court historian Sharaf al Din Ali Yazdi, by a host of Tatar forces bent on rapine, plunder and slaughter. The Tatars were a Turkic people of Mongol origin, descendants of Genghis Khan's hordes, who had converted to Islam after their settlement in Central Asia. These countless thousands of warriors were loyal to the fearsome Temur, self-proclaimed Sword Arm of the Faith, Lord of the Fortunate Conjunction, Emperor of the Age and Conqueror of the World. Better known in the West as Tamerlane, he had surged out of the Asian steppe in 1370, at the outset of an extraordinary career of conquest in which he had fallen on the great cities of Asia one by one like a firestorm. Like Hulagu's forces almost 150 years earlier, the eastern invaders had built a bridge-of-boats over the Tigris and stationed archers downriver to prevent the inhabitants escaping. Upriver, two royal princes guarded the approaches to the city. All escape routes had been cut off.

Earlier in the year, having plundered Sivas and Aleppo, Tamerlane had turned on Damascus, sacking it in a frenzy of killing. The great Umayyad Mosque, symbol of the ruling dynasty that had been swept aside by the Abbasids, centrepiece of the city Baghdad had displaced as capital of the Islamic Empire, was torched. It was, said Ibn Arabshah, the fifteenth-century Syrian author of a poisonous biography of Tamerlane, nothing short of a 'pilgrimage of destruction'.^{40*} Now the Unconquered Lord of the Seven Climes had his eyes on a greater historical prize and 'descended to Baghdad with troops countless like ants, moths and locusts'.⁴¹ Its people feared the worst, for all knew what happened when Tamerlane took a city that had previously slipped out of his grasp.

Even as the besieged tried not to confront their worst fears, they could hear a sickening, grating noise: Tamerlane's sappers were resolutely undermining the city walls, yard by subterranean yard. Panic-stricken, the defenders struggled to repair the mined walls as they began to collapse about them.

Yet perhaps there was still hope. Rumours were circulating that Tamerlane's princes and amirs had been pleading with the emperor to order an all-out assault, a request he had refused, the apologist Yazdi later explained (somewhat implausibly), on the grounds that the inhabitants would soon come to their senses, realize their mistake and beg forgiveness from the emperor. Tamerlane, according to this account, did not want to see the fine city of Baghdad 'entirely ruined'.⁴²

Baghdadis shivered at the memory of the last time Tamerlane had arrived outside the city walls. Yazdi recorded how, on 10 October 1393, the Tatar descended with his innumerable hordes, an army that stretched for more than five miles north and south of the city. What particularly stunned Baghdadis was the sight of this great host swimming across the river with all their armour and equipment, a feat that made the citizens 'bite their fingers in wonder'.⁴³ Wisely, they opened the city gates to Tamerlane, whose army then plundered 'whole treasures' left by its terrified ruler Sultan Ahmed – who had fled

ignominiously at his approach, first to Hilla, thence to Egypt, abandoning both his army and family in the process. Yazdi likened the Tatar troops to 'armies of pismires [ants] or grasshoppers, they covered the fields, pillaging on all sides'.⁴⁴ Although the Sword of Islam fell on the necks of hundreds of thousands more Muslims than either Jews or Christians during his bloody career of conquest, Tamerlane nevertheless always took pains to appear a devout Muslim ruler. Thus it was that he ordered all the wine discovered in Baghdad – *haram*, or forbidden by Islam, although covert drinking had been a feature of the city's life from Abbasid times – to be poured into the Tigris. He also took all Baghdad's scholars and learned men, in addition to Sultan Ahmed's wives and children, into captivity as intellectual ornaments for his beloved imperial capital Samarkand, Pearl of the East. These prisoners included 'the masters of the renowned Baghdad school of book illumination, who had enjoyed the protection of Sultan Ahmed'.⁴⁵ Those who remained were forced to pay a punitive tribute for their lives.

This time, surely, would be far worse. In the eight years since Tamerlane had brought his army to Baghdad, Sultan Ahmed and his vassal-cumally Kara Yusef, leader of the Black Sheep Turkmen tribes, had flouted his authority repeatedly, and Ahmed had retaken Baghdad. It was an affront that could not go unpunished. Fearing the retribution that he would undoubtedly inflict, Sultan Ahmed briefly considered a defence of the city and brought Turkmen troops from Kara Yusef for the purpose, only to panic and take flight again when Tamerlane's approach had been confirmed. The two men escaped to Aleppo and sought refuge at the Ottoman court in Anatolia. At this moment of great danger, Baghdad was leaderless.

By noon, the summer inferno was too intense for the defenders to remain standing on guard on the shadowless city walls. The 'violence of the heat', Yazdi reported, was such that 'birds fell down dead' in mid-flight, and armoured soldiers 'melted like wax'.⁴⁶ Boiling in their armour, the sweating soldiers propped up their helmets on sticks behind the ramparts in a clumsy attempt to convince the Tatars they were still on guard, abandoned their positions and droopily returned home.

It was the cue for Tamerlane, far too cunning to be taken in by such a simple ruse, to order a general assault. The Tatar trumpets sounded, kettle drums shook the air in a barrage of noise, and the army stormed the city. Those Baghdadis who had been cowering behind the walls and now peered gingerly over them to see what was happening were met with a terrifying vision. Countless scaling ladders were being lifted up and slammed against the lofty walls. A seemingly unstoppable torrent of soldiers surged up them, as massed ranks of archers behind them loosed volley after volley into the city. Within moments one of the emperor's most trusted commanders, Sheikh Nur al Din, had mounted Tamerlane's dreaded horsetail standard, crowned with a half-moon, on the city walls. 'Faraj [governor of the city] and the inhabitants of Bagdad were struck with fear,' Yazdi wrote, 'so that they fought not so much out of bravery as from despair.'⁴⁷

There was no way out for the besieged. Many Baghdadis, fearing the whole city would be massacred, frantically threw themselves into the Tigris with their families, only to be cut down by the archers waiting below. Others took to small boats and chanced their luck on the river, but were quickly felled by the vicious volleys of arrows. Faraj and his daughter tried to escape in a boat, but it was shot at and capsized. In an echo of the unsuccessful escape attempt made by the caliph Mustasim's vice-chancellor under fire from Hulagu's forces in 1258, they both drowned in the Tigris. Tamerlane's boatmen retrieved Faraj's soaking corpse and dumped it unceremoniously on to the river bank.

For the second time in his career, Baghdad belonged to Tamerlane. Those Baghdadis who already knew the Conqueror of the World's fearsome reputation for butchery must have been completely transfixed by the news, for there was an inevitability about what would follow the city's fall. Through three decades of calculated savagery, terror had been used to strike fear into his enemies' hearts, to rid newly conquered territories of opponents and to minimize the risks of future rebellion. It encouraged prompt surrender, since defiance would meet only with the swiftest and most terrible retribution. No matter how magnificent or illustrious a recalcitrant city had once been, it would be reduced to a

smoking ruin, decapitated corpses piled high in the streets, their severed heads built into great towers and set alight as flaming beacons, totems of his wrath, to mark another conquest.

The retaking of Baghdad had vexed Tamerlane and cost him many men. Mercy – except for the religious leaders and scholars who threw themselves at his feet, begging pardon and quarter, and were given robes of honour and escorted to safety – was out of the question. ‘He turned towards the city the reins of anger and destroyed whatever his hand obtained, by flood and fire and overshadowed them with dense clouds of affliction, after he had attacked like thunder and lightning,’ wrote Ibn Arabshah.⁴⁸

In practice this meant one of his most vengeful orders. Each of his soldiers, Arabshah reported, must fetch him two Baghdad heads.

They brought them singly and in crowds and made the river Tigris flow with the torrent of their blood throwing their corpses on to the plains, and collected their heads and built towers of them; but they slew violently of the people of Baghdad about ninety thousand. Some, when they could not have Baghdadis, cut the heads of Syrians who were with them and other prisoners; others, when heads of men were wanting, cut off the heads of ladies of the marriage-bed.⁴⁹

The slaughter was so rampant, and Tamerlane’s orders so feared, that some were reduced to killing their companions to bring the emperor the requisite number of heads. Even Yazdi, Tamerlane’s most stalwart apologist, admitted that the conqueror ‘spared neither old men of fourscore, nor children of eight years of age. No quarter was given either to rich or poor; and the number of dead was so great that no one could count ‘em up.’⁵⁰

The physical destruction of Baghdad came next, and again it was complete. In Yazdi’s account, ‘Temur gave orders that there should not remain one single house in the city unrazed.’⁵¹ Mosques, colleges and hospitals alone were to be spared, according to Yazdi, doubtless with an eye on Tamerlane’s posthumous reputation, though after events in Damascus, including the devastation of the Umayyad Mosque, whether they actually were seems highly improbable. Tamerlane’s traditional practice was to visit wholesale destruction on recalcitrant cities. Markets, caravanserais, hermitages, monasteries, palaces and Ibn Battuta’s beloved bath-houses went up in smoke. Arabshah confirmed how the Tatar ‘laid waste the city’, sacking it and plundering its ‘hidden wealth’. He ‘overturned the whole city from top to bottom’, leaving in his wake a scene of total desolation.⁵²

This was the time of the annual *hajj* to Mecca, the holiest time in the calendar for Muslims. Having put 90,000 – mostly Muslims – to the sword, the Sword Arm of Islam now went serenely on a pilgrimage to the tomb of Imam Abu Hanifa in eastern Baghdad, a graceful shrine topped with a white cupola, ‘to implore the intercession of this saint’, without a touch of irony.⁵³ When Hulagu sacked Baghdad, as Baghdadis still recall with a wince today, the Tigris was said to flow black from the ink of all the books hurled into the river. After Tamerlane fell upon the city, the chroniclers had it flowing red with blood.

While Tamerlane said his prayers at the shrine, his soldiers were putting the finishing touches to the 120 towers of skulls they had erected around the flattened city.⁵⁴ Vultures circled above the ruins of Baghdad, dropping out of the sky to pluck eyes from their sockets. Owls and crows made their nests in the remnants of royal palaces. The air was putrid with the stench of corpses decomposing fast in the midsummer heat.

Tamerlane’s ‘pilgrimage of destruction’ was nearing its end. Baghdad, like Antioch and Acre, Baalbek and Beirut, Hama and Homs, Damascus and Aleppo, before it, lay in ruins. The ‘city of peace’, wrote Arabshah, had become ‘the house of surrender’.⁵⁵

* It was not mentioned by Juzjani, writing in around 1260, or any of the following: Abul Faraj (1286); Rashid al Din (1300); Fakhri (1300); Hamd Allah Mustawfi Kazwini (1330); Ibn Khaldun (1380); Suyuti (1500).

* The five ilkhans were puppets to the short-lived Jalayirid and Chobanid dynasties, which emerged from the wreckage of the Ilkhanate.

* Arabshah had good reason to despise Tamerlane. At the tender age of eight or nine, he was captured by Tamerlane’s forces during the sacking of Damascus in 1401 and carried off to Samarkand as a prisoner with his mother and brothers. Although he subsequently enjoyed an illustrious career, serving as confidential secretary to the Ottoman sultan Mohammed I, he never forgave Tamerlane for the terrible scenes of rape and pillage he had seen the Tatar hordes commit. Hence chapter headings such as ‘This Bastard Begins to Lay Waste Azerbaijan and the Kingdoms of Irak’ and ‘How that Proud Tyrant was Broken & Borne to the House of Destruction, Where He Had

His Constant Seat in the Lowest Pit of Hell'.

GENOCIDE AND INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

Yusuf ibn Taghri Birdi, *Tamerlane's Invasion of Syria* (1400–1401) (excerpts)

Yusuf ibn Taghri Birdi (1409–70) was the son of an important official of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt who became a historian and composed a history of Egypt from the time of the Muslim conquest in 641 until 1469, the year before his death. Taghri Birdi's father had been involved in government affairs at the time of Tamerlane's invasion of Syria; thus Taghri Birdi had access to eyewitness reports of the invasion and the massacres that took place at Aleppo and Damascus. Although Tamerlane (1336–1405) was not a direct descendant of Genghis Khan but married into the khan's family, he was a Mongol by birth and wanted to restore the Mongol Empire to its former size. Tamerlane was a Muslim and considered himself a warrior for the faith; however, most of his wars were conducted against other Muslims. He is estimated to have killed as many as 17 million people in the course of his conquests. Although Taghri Birdi's description of the piles of human heads left by Tamerlane's soldiers was thought at one time to be an exaggeration, later archaeologists have corroborated his report.

[Capture of Aleppo, October 28–November 2, 1400] Only a short time passed before the Syrian forces turned in flight toward the city of Aleppo, with Tamerlane's men in hot pursuit; and a countless number of the inhabitants of Aleppo and others who were on foot perished under the horses' hoofs, for the citizens of Aleppo had gone out from the city to fight Tamerlane, even the women and boys; moreover, as they tried to enter through the city gates people crowded so closely together that they trampled upon one another; and corpses lay there man-high while crowds walked over them. The Syrian viceroys made for the Aleppo citadel and ascended to it, hordes of the inhabitants entering with them; they had previously transported to the Citadel all the property of the men of Aleppo.

Tamerlane's army had in the meanwhile immediately assaulted the city, lighted fires in it, and began to take prisoners, to plunder, and to kill. The women and children fled to the great mosque of Aleppo and to the smaller mosques, but Tamerlane's men turned to follow them, bound the women with ropes as prisoners, and put the children to the sword, killing every one of them. They committed the shameful deeds to which they were accustomed; virgins were violated without concealment; gentlewomen were outraged without any restraints of modesty; a Tatar would seize a woman and ravage her in the great mosque or one of the smaller mosques in sight of the vast multitude of his companions and the people of the city; her father and brother and husband would see her plight and be unable to defend her because of their lack of means to do so and because they were distracted by the torture and torments

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which they themselves were suffering; the Tatar would then leave the women and another go to her, her body still uncovered. They then put the populace of Aleppo and its troops to the sword, until the mosques and streets were filled with dead, and Aleppo stank with corpses. This continued from the early forenoon of Saturday until the middle of Tuesday, I Rabi' 14 [November 2]. In the meantime the citadel was being subjected to the closest siege and attack, for Tamerlane's armies had mined its walls in a number of places and filled up its moat, so that it was all but captured. . . . The robbery, enslavement, and murder continued in Aleppo daily; trees were cut down, houses were ruined, and mosques were burned. The stench of corpses filled Aleppo and the environs; bodies lay on the ground, overspreading it like a carpet—one could step nowhere without finding dead bodies under his feet. Tamerlane constructed out of the heads of Muslims a number of pulpits about ten cubits in height and twenty in circumference; the human heads which they contained were counted and found to be more than 20,000; the structures were built with the heads protruding and seen by every passer-by.

Tamerlane remained in Aleppo for a month, then departed; he left the city "fallen on its roofs," empty of its inhabitants and every human being, reduced to ruins; the muezzin's call and the prayer services were no longer heard; there was nought there but a desert waste darkened by fire, a lonely solitude where only the owl and the vulture took refuge. . . . The report of the capture of Aleppo by Tamerlane and his siege of the citadel arrived at Cairo, but it was not believed, and the bearer of the news was arrested and imprisoned awaiting future punishment on the charge of falsification. . . .

[After the surrender of Damascus in March 1401, Tamerlane] seized Ibn Muflih and his companions and forced them to write down the names of all the quarters, squares, and streets of Damascus; when they had done so and given the lists to him, he distributed them among his emirs, dividing the city among them. The emirs entered the city with their mamluks and attendants, and each emir settled in his allotted section and then summoned its inhabitants and demanded money of them. At that time there came upon the people of Damascus afflictions beyond description: they were subjected to all sorts of tortures; they were bastinadoed, crushed in presses, scorched in flames, and suspended head down; their nostrils were stopped with rags full of fine dust which they inhaled each time they took a breath so that they almost died. When near to death, a man would be given a respite to recover, then the tortures of all kinds would be repeated, so that the sufferer would envy a companion who had perished under his tortures and would say: "Would that I might die and be at rest from my pain."

And in the meanwhile all his women and daughters and sons were divided among the companions of that emir, and while under torture he

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would see his wife and daughter ravished and his son defiled; as he cried out in the pain of his torture the boy and girl would cry out in the suffering of their violation. All this took place without any concealment, in broad daylight and in the presence of crowds of people. Indeed, the people of Damascus witnessed tortures of kinds that had never been heard of before. For example, they would take a man and tie a rope around his head, and twist it until it would sink into his flesh; they would put a rope around a man's shoulders, and twist it with a stick until they were torn from their sockets; they would bind another victim's thumbs behind him, then throw him on his back, pour powdered ashes in his nostrils to make him little by little confess what he possessed; when he had given up all, he would still not be believed, but the torture would be repeated until he died; and then his body would be further mutilated in the thought that he might be only feigning death, And some would tie their victim by his thumbs to the roof of the house, kindle a fire under him and keep him thus a long time; if by chance he fell in the flames, he would be dragged out and thrown on the ground till he revived, then he would be thus suspended a second time.

These trials and tortures of the people of Damascus continued for nineteen days, the last being Tuesday, Rajab 28, 803 [March 14, 1401] There perished, during this period of torture and hunger, human beings whose number God (Who is exalted) alone knows. When Tamerlane's emirs knew that nothing was left in the city they went to him, and he asked them: "Have you any more concern with Damascus?" And when they said "No," he granted the city to the followers of the emirs, who entered it on foot on Monday, Rajab 30, with swords drawn from their sheaths. They stole whatever they could lay their hands on, household furniture, etc., took captive all the women of the city, and drove before them, bound with ropes, the men and boys, leaving only the children less than five years old. They then set fire to the dwellings, palaces, and mosques, and as it was a day of high winds the fire spread throughout the city, and the flames almost mounted to the clouds. The fire continued burning for three days and three nights, the last of which was Friday.

Tamerlane (may God curse him) departed from Damascus on Saturday Sha'ban 3 [March 19, 1401], having been there 80 days. The whole city had burned, the roofs of the Umayyad Mosque had fallen in because of the fire, its gates were gone, and the marble cracked—nothing was left standing but the walls. Of the other mosques of the city, its palaces, caravanseries, and baths, nothing remained but wasted ruins and empty traces; only a vast number of young children were left there, who died, or were destined to die, of hunger.

Source: Ibn Taghri Birdi. *The Invasion of Syria by Tamerlane*. Available online. URL: <http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/taghri1.htm>. Accessed April 12, 2007.

Then Timur turned his attention to Syria, sacking [Aleppo](#),^[77] and [Damascus](#).^[78] The city's inhabitants were massacred, except for the artisans, who were deported to Samarkand. Timur cited the killing of [Hasan ibn Ali](#) by the Umayyad caliph [Muawiyah I](#) and the killing of [Husayn ibn Ali](#) by [Yazid I](#) as the reason for his massacre of the inhabitants of Damascus.

During Timur's invasion of Syria in the Sack of Aleppo , [Ibn Taghribirdi](#) wrote that Timur's Tatar soldiers committed mass rape on the native women of Aleppo, massacring their children and forcing the brothers and fathers of the women to watch the gang rapes which took place in the mosques.^[79] Ibn Taghribirdi said the Tatars killed all children while tying the women with ropes in [Aleppo's Great mosque](#) after the children and women tried to take refuge in the mosque.

Tatar soldiers openly raped gentlewomen and virgins in public in both the small mosques and the Great Mosque. The brothers and fathers of the women were being tortured while forced to watch their female relatives get raped. The corpses in the streets and mosques resulted in stink permeating Aleppo. The women were kept naked while being gang raped repeatedly by different men.^{[80][81][82][83]} [Ibn Arabshah](#) witnessed the slaughters and rapes Timur's Tatar soldiers carried out.^[84] Timur's soldiers also committed mass rape against the women of [Damascus](#) during the Siege of Damascus and tortured the people of the city by burning them, using bastinados and crushing them in wine presses. Children died of starvation. Timur carried out these rapes and atrocities in Syria against his own Muslim co-religionists. Muslim leaders viewed him as an enemy of Islam for his rape of Damascus. 600 years after these sacks and rapes, some of the descendants of rape from Timur's Turco-Mongol soldiers still live in these cities and show Mongol facial features and it is regarded as extremely insulting and humiliating to call another child Timur in the cities he sacked and conjure up feelings of anger and tears. The term "Tamerlane's bastards" is used as an insult against Damascenes today.

^[85] One Syrian orthodox Christian from Aleppo, John Yoseph insulted Damascenes by saying the "bastards of Timur the Lame" lived in Damascus in an interview with August Thiry.^[86] The term "Arab and Turkish blood is one blood across history" which was used to promote Turkey

Syria relations unintentionally conjures up memories of the Turkic Timur's sexual violence in Syria with the name "Tamerlane's bastards" being used as an insult against Syrians.^[87] Timur also committed massacres in Baghdad with pyramids made out of skulls of 90-,000 victims in Baghdad.^{[88][89]} Damascus had capitulated without a battle to Timur in December 1400 since the Mamluk Sultan who led his army from Egypt only fought minor skirmishes before fleeing back to Cairo with the Sultan claiming he needed to stop a rival from taking power. The people of Damascus sent Ibn Khaldun and other notables and scholars to plead with Timur as he demanded tribute from them and the names of all streets, squares and quarters of the city. After this, Timur's soldiers burned Damascus and engaged in an orgy of rape and plunder for 3 days in the city in March 1401 after he already sacked Hama and Aleppo. Timur's soldiers mass rapes against the women of Damascus are recalled today by the fact that Damascene Syrians are called "Timur" as an insult. Damascus was humiliation not just by the rapes and slaughter but also by the fact that Damascus surrendered to Timur without a fight unlike Aleppo which resisted futilely before being sacked by Timur's army. After 600 years Syrian rebels compared Assad to Timur during the Syrian Civil War and Syrian historians also compared Israel and the United States to Timur as foreign invaders and recall the their ancestors sufferings under Timur.^{[90][91]}

Timur invaded [Baghdad](#) in June 1401. After the capture of the city, 20,000 of its citizens were massacred. Timur ordered that every soldier should return with at least two severed human heads to show him. When they ran out of men to kill, many warriors killed prisoners captured earlier in the campaign, and when they ran out of prisoners to kill, many resorted to beheading their own wives.^[92]

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Yusuf ibn Taghri Birdi, Tamerlane's Invasion of Syria (1400–1401) (excerpts) Yusuf ibn Taghri Birdi (1409–70) was the son of an important official of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt who became a historian and composed a history of Egypt from the time of the Muslim conquest in 641 until 1469, the year before his death. Taghri Birdi's father had been involved in government affairs at the time of Tamerlane's invasion of Syria; thus Taghri Birdi had access to eyewitness reports of the invasion and the massacres that took place at Aleppo and Damascus. Although Tamerlane (1336–1405) was not a direct descendant of Genghis Khan but married into the khan's family, he was a Mongol by birth and wanted to restore the Mongol Empire to its former size. Tamerlane was a Muslim and considered himself a warrior for the faith; however, most of his wars were conducted against other Muslims. He is estimated to have killed as many as 17 million people in the course of his conquests. Although Taghri Birdi's description of the piles of human heads left by Tamerlane's soldiers was thought at one time to be an exaggeration, later archaeologists have corroborated his report. [Capture of Aleppo, October 28–November 2, 1400] Only a short time passed before the Syrian forces turned in

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arrived at Cairo, but it was not believed, and the bearer of the news was arrested and imprisoned awaiting future punishment on the charge of falsification. . . . [After the surrender of Damascus in March 1401, Tamerlane] seized Ibn Muflih and his companions and forced them to write down the names of all the quarters, squares, and streets of Damascus; when they had done so and given the lists to him, he distributed them among his emirs, dividing the city among them. The emirs entered the city with their mamluks and attendants, and each emir settled in his allotted section and then summoned its inhabitants and demanded money of them. At that time there came upon the people of Damascus afflictions beyond description: they were subjected to all sorts of tortures; they were bastinadoed, crushed in presses, scorched in flames, and suspended head down; their nostrils were stopped with rags full of fine dust which they inhaled each time they took a breath so that they almost died. When near to death, a man would be given a respite to recover, then the tortures of all kinds would be repeated, so that the sufferer would envy a companion who had perished under his tortures and would say: "Would that I might die and be at rest from my pain." And in the meanwhile all his women and daughters and sons were divided among the companions of that emir, and while under torture he

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genocide and international justice would see his wife and daughter ravished and his son defiled; as he cried out in the pain of his torture the boy and girl would cry out in the suffering of their violation. All this took place without any concealment, in broad daylight and in the presence of crowds of people. Indeed, the people of Damascus witnessed tortures of kinds that had never been heard of before. For example, they would take a man and tie a rope around his head, and twist it until it would sink into his flesh; they would put a rope around a man's shoulders, and twist it with a stick until they were torn from their sockets; they would bind another victim's thumbs behind him, then throw him on his back, pour powdered ashes in his nostrils to make him little by little confess what he possessed; when he had given up all, he would still not be believed, but the torture would be repeated until he died; and then his body would be further mutilated in the thought that he might be only feigning death, And some would tie their victim by his thumbs to the roof of the house, kindle a fire under him and keep him thus a long time; if by chance he fell in the flames, he would be dragged out and thrown on the ground till he revived, then he would be thus suspended a second time. These trials and tortures of the people of Damascus continued for nineteen days, the last being Tuesday, Rajab 28, 803 [March 14, 1401] There perished, during this period of torture and hunger, human beings whose number God (Who is exalted) alone knows. When Tamerlane's emirs knew that nothing was left in the city they went to him, and he asked them: "Have you any more concern with Damascus?" And when they said "No," he granted the city to the followers of the emirs, who entered it on foot on Monday, Rajab 30, with swords drawn from their sheaths. They stole

whatever they could lay their hands on, household furniture, etc., took captive all the women of the city, and drove before them, bound with ropes, the men and boys, leaving only the children less than five years old. They then set fire to the dwellings, palaces, and mosques, and as it was a day of high winds the fire spread throughout the city, and the flames almost mounted to the clouds. The fire continued burning for three days and three nights, the last of which was Friday. Tamerlane (may God curse him) departed from Damascus on Saturday Sha'ban 3 [March 19, 1401], having been there 80 days. The whole city had burned, the roofs of the Umayyad Mosque had fallen in because of the fire, its gates were gone, and the marble cracked—nothing was left standing but the walls. Of the other mosques of the city, its palaces, caravanseries, and baths, nothing remained but wasted ruins and empty traces; only a vast number of young children were left there, who died, or were destined to die, of hunger. Source: Ibn Taghri Birdi. The Invasion of Syria by Tamerlane. Available online. URL: <http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/taghri1.htm>. Accessed April 12, 2007.

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<https://www.deremilitari.org/RESOURCES/SOURCES/taghri1.htm>

Only a short time passed before the Syrian forces turned in flight toward the city of Aleppo, with Tamerlane's men in hot pursuit; and a countless number of the inhabitants of Aleppo and others who were on foot perished under the horses' hoofs, for the citizens of Aleppo had gone out from the city to fight Tamerlane, even the women and boys; moreover, as they tried to enter through the city gates people crowded so closely together that they trampled upon one another; and corpses lay there man-high while crowds walked over them. The Syrian viceroys made for the Aleppo citadel and ascended to it, hordes of the inhabitants entering with them; they had previously transported to the Citadel all the property of the men of Aleppo.

Tamerlane's army had in the meanwhile immediately assaulted the city, lighted fires in it, and began to take prisoners, to plunder, and to kill. The women and children fled to the great mosque of Aleppo and to the smaller mosques, but Tamerlane's men turned to follow them, bound the women with ropes as prisoners, and put the children to the sword, killing every one of them. They committed the shameful deeds to which they were accustomed; virgins were violated without concealment; gentlewomen were outraged without any restraints of modesty; a Tatar would seize a woman and ravage her in the great mosque or one of the smaller

mosques in sight of the vast multitude of his companions and the people of the city; her father and brother and husband would see her plight and be unable to defend her because of their lack of means to do so and because they were distracted by the torture and torments which they themselves were suffering; the Tatar would then leave the women and another go to her, her body still uncovered.

They then put the populace of Aleppo and its troops to the sword, until the mosques and streets were filled with dead, and Aleppo stank with corpses. This continued from the early forenoon of Saturday until the middle of Tuesday, I Rabi' 14 [November 2]. In the meantime the citadel was being subjected to the closest siege and attack, for Tamerlane's armies had mined its walls in a number of places and filled up its moat, so that it was all but captured.

<http://dar.aucegypt.edu/bitstream/handle/10526/4782/2.docx?sequence=1>

He is similar to his forefather, Chingiz-khan, who founded the Mongol Empire in the lands of Mawaranahar, "What is beyond the River," i.e. Transoxiana, the heart of central Asia. Timur began his career as the leader of a robber band. Although not much is known about Timur's life before his rise to power in the 1360s, it must be pointed out that contrary to European beliefs, Timur's conquests were not a barbaric force that Marlowe portrayed with "the scourge and wrath of God" (Pt I, III.iii.44). On the contrary Timur's empire was a "unique combination of Turco-Mongol political and military forces that united the various Mongol tribes as one under Timur's command" (Barthold 1).

The envoy of Henry III's court, Ruy de Gonzales Clavijo, further reported on Tamerlane in this way:

Tamerlane, Lord of Samarkand, having conquered all the land of the Mongols, and India; also having conquered the Land of the Sun, which is a great lord-ship; also having conquered and reduced to obedience the land of Kharesm; also having reduced all Persia and Media, with the empire of Tabriz and the city of the Sultan; and also having conquered the Land of Silk, with the land of the Gates; and also having conquered Armenia the Less, and Erzerum, and the land of the Kurds— having conquered in battle the lord of India and taken a great part of his territory: also having destroyed the city of Damascus, and reduced the cities of Aleppo, of Babylon and Bagdad; and having overrun many other lands and lordships and won many battles, and achieved many conquests, he came against the Turk Bayazid (who is one of the greatest lords of the world) and gave him battle, conquering him and taking him prisoner. (23-24)

1. Marlowe and Historical References:

I will now move on from the shaping of Marlowe's Tamburlaine to the manner of mentioning historical events in *Tamburlaine the Great*. Apart from Marlowe's sentimentalism, which overflows the play, and some geographical inaccuracies (like situating the city of Damascus near the Nile in part 2) Marlowe's events do reflect some of the historical events associated with the rise of Timur, the conqueror, and the establishment of his empire in the East. For instance, in part one, Tamburlaine, after gaining the crown of Persia, similar to the historical Timur, begins to eye the neighboring forces of his enemies, the powerful Ottoman Sultan Bayazid in Turkey. Whereas in reality, Timur the conqueror attacked the Ottoman Sultan after he had already attacked the Mamluk Egyptian empire, which stretched from the Nile through Syria to Asia Minor. Timur destroyed and ravaged the Syrian cities of Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus then moved towards Baghdad and Babylon, inflicting the worst imaginable violations upon these cities before confronting the Ottoman Sultan in the historical battle of Ankara and consequently emerging victorious over Bayazid in 1401: "The piles of dead bodies reached the heights of walls, minarets of skulls were built, and the cities stank with carnage and were reduced to ruins" (Honan 227). Marlowe has it in his play that Bajazeth is conquered, and then Tamburlaine begins the ransacking of Damascus and Baghdad, with Tamburlaine's marriage to Zenocrate after the fall of Damascus. Marlowe deliberately plays with the timeline of some historical events to point out Tamburlaine's cruelty (represented in the killing of the Damascene virgins, and his ill-treatment of Bayazid after defeating him) despite his non-ceasing love for princess Zenocrate. (He offers her father, the Sultan of Syria and Egypt, more territory to rule over). Tamburlaine had the extremes of love and hatred co-existing within him. He has many contradictory characteristics which make him a complex character.

In Marlowe's plays, the characters of Usumcasane, Techelles and Theridamas are Tamburlaine's companions and helping hands throughout the events. Tamburlaine gives them lordship over different areas they help him to conquer. The historical Timur also counted on his companions (mostly kin) and divided different regions among them. They are bully warriors and accomplices, committing barbaric acts of terrorism against anyone who opposes them. Tamburlaine with the help of his men has killed "millions of Turks" in Syria and in Babylon (Part II, V.iii.24): "Men, women and children had been thrown" in Asphaltis Lake (Part II, V.i.202). The loyalty of these 'sidekicks' closely resembles the loyalty of Timur's men who defended him till the very last. Even in the final scene when Tamburlaine is on his deathbed, "he is surrounded by his faithful followers" (Hookham 302). This closely resembles the actual death of the historical Timur who was surrounded by family and friends when he was dying.

Marlowe also draws on the atrocities committed by Tamburlaine in his plays from the actual Tartar armies and their unprecedented acts of horrors in the countless cities they plundered. For instance, this is found in the Syrian account of Ibn Taghri Birdi who recalls some of the horrors committed by the Tatars when they entered Damascus in the year 1400, pillaging the city for three days:

they committed the shameful deeds to which they were accustomed: virgins were violated without concealment; gentlemen were outraged without any restraint or modesty; a Tatar would seize a woman and ravage her in the great mosque or one of the smaller mosques in sight of the vast multitude of his companions and the people of the city; her father and brother and husband would see her plight and be unable to defend her because of their lack of means to do so and because they were distracted by tortures and torments which they themselves were suffering. (147)

Another important account of the savage plundering committed by the Tatars came from Ibn Khaldun who managed to escape death from Timur's grip during the ravaging of the ancient city of Damascus by Timur's armies: "Timur had conquered Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Baalbek and ruined them all, and his soldiers had committed more shameful atrocities than had ever been heard of before" (382).

Similarly, Marlowe presents us with the plundering of Damascus after it falls into the hands of Tamburlaine. Tamburlaine declares: "Now hang our bloody colours by Damascus, / Reflexing hues of blood upon their head/ While they walk quivering on their city walls, / Half dead for fear before they feel my wrath" (I. iv.iv, 1-4).

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