

Timur's winter quarters in relation to imperial governance and the capital region

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This paper examines the winter quarters of Timur (1336?–1405) and their significance in his governance of the regime he founded. Timur's decision to eschew seasonal migration in favor of spending his winters in palaces with permanent architectural structures, his choice of their locations and the reasons for that choice all do not conform to the traditional Turko-Mongolian nomadic lifestyle, and thus cannot be fully explained from a pastoral viewpoint.

Before founding his regime, Timur established his power based in the Khashka River basin, building his main winter quarters at his native city of Kish and at Qarshi, the latter of which was closely affiliated with the khans of Chaghatay Ulus. However, after founding his regime, he decided to establish a capital at Samarqand, which, although best suited as the location for summer quarters, was made to serve as Timur's winter quarters, in order to better concentrate on domestic political affairs. Then from the mid-1370s on, he often spent his winters in Zanjir Saray, in the suburbs of Qarshi, for the purpose of ruling in place of the last politically powerful khan of the Chaghatay Ulus. Then, after his incursions into Western Asia, which began around 1380, Timur set up Kish as a capital located between Samarqand and Qarshi, resulting in a dual capital system.

It was during 1387-88 that Timur would lose his important winter quarters as the result of the invasion of Mawarannahr by Toqtamish's army, which destroyed Zanjir Saray. From that time on, in the midst of repeated expeditions into Western Asia and the Qipchaq Steppe, the Qarabagh Plain in Northwestern Iran became favored as the location of Timur's winter quarters. Timur's rebuilding of Baylaqan and the construction of new canals was aimed

at establishing the center of western regional imperial governance in Qarabagh, and a main highway with a system of relay stations functioned to connect Northwestern Iran with Central Asia.

During his twilight years, Timur spent most of his remaining life in the Irano-Islamic garden spots (*bagh*) on the outskirts of Samarqand, where he constructed palaces to pass his winters. These *baghs* were architectural tributes to his imperial power and functioned as harems. Along with the construction of the town of Misr on the main highway between Samarqand and Kish, he provided *baghs* with palaces, pasture land, rest accommodations and way stations for travelers using the highway. It was in this way that the trunk line and its environs took on the appearance of a “capital region” for the empire.