



ESKANDAR SOLṬĀN

ESKANDAR SOLṬĀN b. ‘Omar Šayḳ b. Tīmūr (786-818/1384-1415), Timurid prince who ruled a succession of cities in western Persia between 805/1403 and 817/1415 but is remembered mostly for his cultural patronage. Born at Ūzgand in Farḡāna on 3 Rabī’ I 786/25 April 1384, he was the second of four sons of ‘Omar Šayḳ b. Tīmūr (754-96/1354-94), and Malekat Āḡā (767-844/1365-1440), daughter of the Chaghatay Khan, Ḳežr Ḳvāja Oḡlān (Woods, pp. 20, 23; Keshavarz, pp. 197-99; Elwell-Sutton, pp. 120-37). In the spring of 795/1393, when ‘Omar Šayḳ became governor of Fārs, Eskandar was among the family members summoned from Ūzgand to join him in Shiraz (Šāmī, II, p. 113). Shortly after the family’s arrival, ‘Omar Šayḳ and Eskandar’s older brother Pīr Moḡammad were ordered to join the Timurid army, and Eskandar was appointed nominal ruler of Fārs in his father’s absence. After ‘Omar Šayḳ was killed en route to the Timurid winter encampment on 4 Rabī’ I 796/7 January 1394, Tīmūr transferred control of Fārs to Pīr Moḡammad, whereas Eskandar and other family members accompanied ‘Omar Šayḳ’s bier to Keš for burial (Yazdī, I, pp. 473-6). Eskandar’s marriage to his cousin, Biḡīsī Solṭān, daughter of Mīrānšah b. Tīmūr and Ḳānzāda Begom, was celebrated at Kān-e Gel, outside Samarḡand, during the summer of 799/1397 (Šāmī, II, p. 136; Yazdī, I, p. 13). Shortly thereafter he and his amirs were assigned to Farḡāna from which, during the fall and winter of 802/1399-1400, they launched an unauthorized raid on Mōḡolestān. Although this expedition yielded considerable booty, it angered Moḡammad-Solṭān b. Jahāngīr, who as Tīmūr’s deputy during the latter’s absence on the “Seven-Year Campaign” arranged for those involved to be tried in Samarḡand. After a trial (*yarḡū*) there, Eskandar’s



atabeg Bonyān Tīmūr, and twenty-six members of his personal entourage were executed (Šāmī, II, pp. 156-58; Yazdī, II, pp. 159-61).

Eskandar himself was imprisoned for a year before being taken to Tīmūr's encampment to face trial (Faṣīḥ K̄vāfi, III, pp. 3, 143; Yazdī, II, p. 161; Šāmī, I, p. 213, II, pp. 169-70). This second inquiry held at Tīmūr's encampment in the fall of 804/1401 resulted in Eskandar being sentenced to the bastinado (*čūb-e yāsāq*; Šāmī, I, p. 244, II, p. 173; Yazdī, II, pp. 274-75). Subsequently Eskandar participated in his grandfather's Anatolian and Caucasian campaigns. During the winter of 806/1403-4 he was appointed ruler of the region of Hamadān and Lor-e Kūček, although he did not assume his duties until spring (Yazdī, II, pp. 399, 405-6, 416-17).

Under the system of territorial division instituted by Tīmūr and recognized by Šāhroḳ, Pīr Moḥammad and the other sons of 'Omar Šayḳ controlled much of central Persia from Hamadān to Isfahan, Shiraz, and Yazd. However, after Tīmūr's death, they had repeated conflicts with each other as well as with the rulers of Kermān, Azarbaijan, and Lorestān. The course of Eskandar's life between Tīmūr's death in 807/1405 and his own in 818/1415 epitomizes the chronic instability of this epoch; from 807/1405 to 812/1409 his life was dominated by quarrels with his elder brother, Pīr Moḥammad, whereas between 812/1409 and 818/1415 Eskandar's quest for power and independence brought him increasingly into conflict with Šāhroḳ (Ḥāfez-e'ā Abrū, I, pp. 49-59, 174-81, 217-20, 286-91).

The year 815/1412-13 marked the pinnacle of Eskandar Soltān's career. His power was recognized in Hamadān, Isfahan, Shiraz, Yazd, and Kermān, as well as in the smaller cities of this region. Leaving Shiraz under control of a subordinate, he made Isfahan his capital where he began to build a series of buildings (Thackston, pp. 240-43). Eskandar's tenure as a regional ruler was, however, brief. By 816/1413-14 his drive for independence led him into open rebellion against Šāhroḳ. He refused to join the Timurid army for a campaign against the Turkmans, minted coins in his own name, and omitted mention of Šāhroḳ in Friday sermons (*koṭba*; Ḥāfez-e'ā Abrū, I, pp. 481-83, 492-504).

In retaliation, the Timurid army besieged Eskandar at Isfahan during the summer of 816/1414 (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, I, pp. 530-36). This conflict came to a dramatic climax on 2 Jomādā I 816/31 July 1414 when Šāhroḳ's forces entered the city proper, leaving Eskandar virtually alone in a fortified stronghold. Ḥāfez-e Abrū (I, pp. 547-49) reports that after his capture Eskandar stood



dejected and mute before his uncle, who allowed his brother Rostam to blind him.

This defeat marked the end of Eskandar's independent rule, but not of his rebellion. A few months later he persuaded his brother Bāyqarā to join him in a campaign to seize Shiraz. Although Eskandar was soon captured and executed, Bāyqarā managed to seize and hold Shiraz until Ramaẓān 818/November 1415 when Šāhroḡ assembled an army around the city (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, I, pp. 530-36, II, pp. 602-5).

During the period of his rule in Yazd, Shiraz, and Isfahan, Eskandar Solṭān maintained a court with a coterie of poets, scholars, and craftsmen including the historian Moʿīn-al-Dīn Naṭanzī, the astronomers Gīāṭ-al-Dīn Kāšī and Maḥmūd Kāšī, and the poets Boshāq Aṭʿema (q.v.) and Mīr Ḥaydar whom Eskandar encouraged to write Turki verse emulating the style and content of Persian poems including *Maḡẓān al-asrār*, which is modeled on Neẓāmī's poem of this name, and *Gol o Nowrūz*, a theme used by K̄vājū Kermānī and others (Şafā, *Adabīyāt*, IV, pp. 130, 147, 244-47, 481-82; Aubin, pp. 76-78; Elwell-Sutton, pp. 119-21).

Eskandar's patronage of illuminated and illustrated manuscripts is best documented for Shiraz, although it may have begun already in Yazd and evidently continued during his final years in Isfahan. Manuscripts bearing dedications to Eskandar range in date from 813/1410 to 816/1414 and include both unillustrated poetic texts and illustrated anthologies which often combine verse and prose. Most of the calligraphers who copied his manuscripts seem to have been trained in Shiraz, but historical anecdotes also connect him with a Baghdad trained calligrapher, Maʿrūf Kaṭṭāṭ (Stchoukine, 1954, pp. 40-42, pls. 16-22; idem, 1966, pp. 99-104; Soucek, pp. 116-31; Qāẓī Aḥmad, tr. V. Minorsky, pp. 64-65).

Two distinctive characteristics of the illustrated and illuminated manuscripts produced for Eskandar Solṭān are their links to the artistic traditions of Jalayerid Baghdad and their use of decorative themes drawn from the repertoire of Chinese art. In both respects his manuscripts prefigure trends which characterize works produced for later Timurid patrons (Gray, pp. 121, 134, 136, figs. 74, 76).



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