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FUNCTIONAL TYPOLOGY OF STATE OFFICES AND OFFICIALS IN THE TIMURID EMPIRE

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Abstract. *This article examines the principal state offices and categories of officials that operated under Amir Timur (r. 1370–1405) and his successors, and proposes a functional typology of them. The documentary starting point is a research synthesis upon the provisioning of the Timurid army, whose evidence is compared with the Zafarnāma traditions of Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī and Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī, with the Maṭlaʿ al-saʿdayn, the Muʿizz al-ansāb, the Tuzukāt-i Tīmūrī and the Bāburnāma. This base is then enriched with findings from the wider scholarship upon Timurid government, including the work of B. F. Manz and M. E. Subtelny, entries of the Encyclopaedia Iranica, and specialist studies of the darugha, the yarghu court, the tamgha tax and the surviving Timurid documents. The offices fall into five functional clusters: fiscal; mobilizing and provincial; provisioning and specialist; security and disciplinary; and judicial. The analysis shows that Timurid government joined a Persianate fiscal bureaucracy to Turko-Mongol military and judicial institutions; that the two traditions were represented by distinct personnel, namely viziers and diwanbegis upon the one side and amirs and tavachibegis upon the other, whose relationship was cooperative yet contested; and that many offices inherited from Chinggisid practice were adapted to new tasks. The article argues that the system is best understood as a flexible, patrimonial and functionally differentiated order rather than as a uniform modern bureaucracy, and it identifies the limits imposed by a source base of narrative chronicles, a doubtful legal code and very few surviving original documents.*

Keywords: *Timurids, Amir Timur, state offices, administration, diwan, tavachi, darugha, yarghu, tamgha, military logistics, patrimonial state, Central Asia.*

INTRODUCTION

The Timurid period, which opens with the rise of Amir Timur in the second half of the fourteenth century and closes with the death of Sultan Husayn Bayqara in 1506, produced one of the most extensive political orders in the history of Central Asia and Iran. The campaigns of Timur carried his armies from the steppe of the Golden Horde to Delhi and Anatolia, yet historians have long observed that the geographical reach

of these campaigns should not be confused with the territory of stable administration (Netchev, n.d.). Conquest created the opportunity for rule; it did not by itself supply the means. A government that could summon troops from distant provinces, record and divide booty, collect taxes in newly occupied cities, feed an army and its animals, guard a moving camp and punish disobedient princes needed a body of officials whose work is only partly visible in the chronicles.

The study of state offices therefore offers a way beyond narratives that focus upon rulers and battles, for it asks how authority was converted into action. The question is more difficult than it appears, because the phrase «state office» must be used with care. The Timurid state was not a modern civil service with fixed hierarchies and written descriptions of duties. Titles could change meaning from reign to reign; one individual could be a messenger, a military organizer and an envoy in the same year; and the importance of a post often depended upon proximity to the ruler more than upon its name. Manz has characterized Timurid political life as a world of personal loyalties and negotiated cooperation between a Turko-Mongol military elite and a largely Iranian bureaucracy, in which the government did not enjoy a monopoly of force (Manz, 2007). Subtelny described the late Timurid state through the Weberian concept of the patrimonial household state, in which public functions were exercised through the personal service networks of the ruler and the amirs (Subtelny, 2007). Both approaches caution against reading medieval titles as entries in a modern organization chart.

This article takes as its documentary starting point a research synthesis upon the provisioning of the army under Amir Timur and the Timurids. That study is particularly valuable because army supply forced the state to rely upon officials from many domains at once: tavachis, dorughas, qutvals, accountants, tax collectors, tamghachis, treasurers, bakavuls, bovarchis, axtachis, yasavuls, yurtchis, qurbegis, yarguchis, guides and physicians. The synthesis also refers to the ministers and to a dual-vizier arrangement of mutual supervision. The present article compares this evidence with the narrative chronicles and with the international scholarship upon Timurid government, and it adds material upon the origin, the later history and the legal setting of each major office.

The article pursues four objectives. First, it classifies Timurid offices by function rather than by rank. Secondly, it examines the documentary basis for the responsibilities attributed to each office, separating what the sources explicitly state from what can reasonably be inferred. Thirdly, it traces the continuities with the Ilkhanid, Chaghatayid

and Golden Horde traditions as well as with the later Central Asian khanates and the Mughal Empire. Fourthly, it evaluates what the surviving evidence can and cannot establish. The central argument is that Timurid administration was functionally differentiated and often closely supervised, but that it was neither uniform nor static, and that its offices are better understood as parts of a flexible and coordinated system than as a perfected bureaucracy.

MAIN PART

The principal evidence for Timurid offices comes from the court chronicles. The Zafarnāma of Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī was written upon Timur's own instructions (UNESCO, n.d.), and the later Zafarnāma of Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī and the Maṭlaʿ al-saʿdayn of ʿAbd al-Razzāq Samarqandī continued the tradition of court-sponsored history (Nizam al-Din Shami, n.d.; Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, n.d.; Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi, n.d.). Such works record offices when their holders appear in an event: a tavachi dispatched to summon troops, a treasurer receiving payments, a yarghuchi presiding over a trial. They seldom explain the institution as a whole, and they are written to glorify the patron. The Persian and Chaghatay literary traditions also affect the vocabulary. The comparative polity dataset of Seshat notes that Persian was the language of chancery and of bureaucratic correspondence, while Chaghatay Turkic became the language of court and of literature, and that the military administration was staffed by Turkic secretaries (Seshat Global History Databank, n.d.). Offices recorded under Turkic or Mongolian names therefore frequently belong to the military and court sphere, whereas Arabic and Persian titles usually belong to the fiscal and religious sphere.

The Tuzukāt-i Tīmūrī, usually translated as the Institutes of Timur, is the only text that purports to describe Timurid government from the point of view of the ruler himself, and it has therefore been quoted widely. It must nevertheless be used with caution. The entry of the Encyclopaedia Iranica upon Abū Ṭālib Ḥusaynī, the Mughal scholar who gave Shah Jahan a Persian version in 1637 and 1638, notes that the authenticity of the work is questioned because the Chaghatay original that he claimed to have discovered in Yemen is no longer in existence, and that some scholars believe the existence of the original was claimed in order to support a Persian compilation; the same entry notes the continuing popularity of the work and the remote possibility of vindication

through a future discovery (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.). The Persian manuscript upon which Stewart's English translation of the related Malfūẓāt was based is described in the Fihrist catalogue of the Royal Asiatic Society, whose entry labels the Institutes and the Memoirs as spurious. The Institutes themselves became known in Europe through the Oxford edition of White of 1783 with the English translation of Davy (Davy, 1783; Stewart, 1830). A prudent method therefore treats statements from the Tuzukāt as evidence for the way the Timurid state was imagined in the Mughal milieu of the seventeenth century, and as possible evidence for Timurid practice only when they are independently confirmed by the chronicles. The same caution applies to the claim that the Mughal offices of the ʿāriḍ, the dīwān and the mushrif had counterparts in the ordinances of Timur (Tripathi, 1956), because the comparison may in part be circular, the later text having been compiled in a Mughal context.

The difficulty of the narrative sources is aggravated by the scarcity of originals. In a study of the official documents of the Timurid period, Amirkhani found that only nine original documents were previously known, and added two further documents of Sultan Husayn Bayqara in the Afghan National Archives; the author concludes that, because of this scarcity, much concerning the structure of administration and bureaucracy remains unsaid, although the surviving records do reflect a distinctive arrangement of the relations among the ruler, the prince and the Mongol khan (Amirkhani, n.d.). Seal practice provides a small but telling example of the interplay of traditions. The Encyclopaedia Iranica notes that the Timurids continued much of the Mongol sealing tradition but employed the red seal, the āl tamghā, only upon solemn occasions, and moved towards the practice later used by the Turkmen dynasties and the early Safavids, in which the documents of the ruler bore only a Persian-style authorization seal (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.). Even the material format of Timurid documents thus reflects a hybrid administrative culture.

Three bodies of literature shape the present analysis. The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane of Manz and her Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran analyse how government functioned through the relations among princes, Turko-Mongol military figures, Iranian viziers and bureaucrats, and religious leaders (Manz, 1989; Manz, 2007). Timurids in Transition of Subtelny examines how a nomadic empire built upon Turko-Mongol concepts of social organization and plunder adapted to the sedentary

society of Khorasan, and describes the introduction of Persian bureaucratic modes under Sultan Husayn Bayqara (Subtelny, 2007). Finally, a series of specialist articles, many published in Iranian journals, treat individual institutions: the darugha (Sabouri et al., 2015:41-78), the yarghu court (Journal of History of Islam and Iran, 2015:139-158; Kubo, 2016), the relations between viziers and amirs (Journal of History and Culture, n.d.) and the tamgha tax (Pochekaev, 2014:77-95). Uzbek scholarship has also begun to treat the taxation system of the period of Amir Temur as a distinct topic.

The article applies four qualitative historical methods. Source criticism reads each reference according to its genre, its patron and its narrative setting. Functional classification groups offices by the work attributed to them, so that overlapping titles may be compared. Comparative institutional analysis traces each office back to Ilkhanid, Chaghatayid or Golden Horde precedents and forward to the later khanates, treating continuity of title as evidence of transmission and not as proof of identical practice. Cautious inference distinguishes explicit statements, for example a named official performing a recorded task upon a given occasion, from interpretations built from several connected cases. The article does not collate manuscript variants or independently verify each edition; the page references to the medieval chronicles follow the provisioning study from which they are taken, and the enrichment from the wider literature is drawn from the published scholarship and the reference works listed at the end.

Timur was not a descendant of Chinggis Khan. To compensate, he reinforced his legitimacy through marriage into the Chaghatayid royal house and adopted the title Gūrgān, that is royal son-in-law, and he kept to the modest title of amir while ruling in the name of a Chinggisid puppet khan, who was sometimes kept at Samarkand and more often in the army (Netchev, n.d.; Markham, 1859). This arrangement shows that the Timurid political vocabulary was still bound to the Mongol imperial tradition, a point developed in studies of the way the Timurids viewed their own Mongol identity (Lee, n.d.). At the same time the Timurids ruled territories with ancient agrarian economies, learned Persian bureaucrats and Islamic law. The regime thus combined Turko-Mongol military and dynastic traditions with Persian administrative and court culture, a combination noted in the summary accounts of the dynasty and in the scholarly literature (Netchev, n.d.; Subtelny, 2007).

The relationship between these two worlds changed over time. Under Timur, personal authority and the military household were the glue of the polity, and his

death at Otrar in 1405, while he was preparing an expedition against Ming China, was followed by succession struggles and by the division of the empire among the Timurid princes (Netchev, n.d.). Shahrukh, who reigned from 1405 to 1447, consolidated the eastern half and ruled from Herat, and the study of Manz upon his reign demonstrates that government depended upon cooperation with the local elites rather than upon coercion alone (Manz, 2007). The analysis of Subtelny upon the later period under Sultan Husayn, who reigned from 1469 to 1506, shows an even stronger turn towards Persian bureaucratic administration and towards an economy founded upon agriculture and pious endowments, even while the Timurid household retained its Turko-Mongol identity (Subtelny, 2007). A study of Timurid offices must therefore avoid projecting the conditions of one reign upon another: a title attested under Timur may have lost or gained functions by the time of Sultan Husayn, and the sources do not always allow the change to be dated.

At the apex stood the ruler, whose commands were carried out by a network of princes, amirs, ministers, provincial administrators, court officials and specialists. The princes of the dynasty held provinces and armies, and the highest amirs formed the military backbone of the regime. In practice, as the provisioning study demonstrates, governance required coordination across at least four domains: collecting resources, assembling and moving troops, maintaining the court and the camp, and enforcing discipline. The distinction between civil and military functions was never absolute. A darugha might administer a city and also organize transport for the army; a tavachi might summon troops, carry messages and arrange hunts. Such overlap should not be read as disorder: in a mobile polity the usefulness of an official lay precisely in the ability to operate across settings.

The entry of the Encyclopaedia Iranica upon the diwanbegi provides an important framework for the whole subject. It explains that the diwanbegi was the highest officer of the Timurid chief diwan, the dīwān-i aʿlā, which dealt with finance and justice; that he was responsible for sealing decrees; and that he was especially concerned with raising tax revenue. According to the same entry, Timurid administration was organized in two main branches, one headed by the tavachibegis, who were military inspectors, and the other by the diwanbegis; together these two groups made up the grand amirs, who bore the title ulugh beg, and the chiefs of both branches were called amīr al-umarāʾ, which explains why Timurid sources sometimes report two amīr al-umarāʾ serving a single

ruler. The office of the diwanbegi is attested already under Timur, whereas the earliest mention of the institutionalized office of the tavachibegi, also called dīwān-i tavachi, dīwān-i lashkar or turk dīwānī, dates from after the reign of Shahrukh. Other names for the chief diwan included dīwān-i mulk wa māl, dīwān-i māl and sart dīwānī, the last of which reflects the ethnic colouring of the institution, since sart designated the sedentary Iranian population (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.).

This framework clarifies the position of the tavachi in the provisioning study. The tavachis sent to summon troops in 1386, or told to assemble forces for inspection, were functionaries of the kind that later became organized in a military diwan under a tavachibegi. The evidence therefore suggests a development from a flexible ad hoc function under Timur to a more formal department in the fifteenth century. The point is not that the earlier tavachis lacked authority, but that the departmental institution known from the later sources cannot be assumed for the 1380s; this is an inference, and it should be tested against further source analysis.

The institution of the diwan has a long pre-history. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica the first diwan appeared under the caliph ʿUmar I, who reigned from 634 to 644, as a register of warriors entitled to pensions from the spoils of conquest, and in later usage the term came to mean a government bureau and a finance department; in Iran it long designated the central government in general (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). A parallel military institution, the dīwān-i ʿarḍ or army review office, is attested in the Saffarid, Buyid and Saljuq periods, in which the ʿāriḍ supervised pay, muster and equipment (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.). Recent research upon the Ilkhanid period argues that after the Mongol conquest the functions of the old army office were redistributed among military commanders and administrative and financial officials such as the ulugh bitikchi, and that it never fully recovered (Yarmohammadi & Khosrobeigi, 2017:47-68). The Timurid division between a military-inspection branch and a finance branch appears to continue this layered inheritance, in which Islamic, Persian and Mongol institutions were joined without being fully merged.

Research upon the relations between viziers and amirs in the Timurid period emphasizes that the amirs were mostly Turko-Mongol and the viziers mostly Iranian, that civil and military affairs were not clearly separated, and that these conditions encouraged persistent competition between the two groups (Journal of History and Culture, n.d.). The long vizierate of Khwāja Ghiyāth al-Dīn Pīr Aḥmad Khwāfī, who

headed the financial administration of Shahrukh from 1417 to 1447, is a notable case of a bureaucrat who held his position against the amirs. The Encyclopaedia Iranica credits him with introducing professional practices into the Timurid diwan, such as the specialized accounting script siyāq and the keeping of financial ledgers (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.). The fortunes of his son Majd al-Dīn Khwāfī illustrate the opposite danger: under Sultan Husayn Bayqara he rose to dominate finance, but concerted pressure from the amirs and from other privileged members of the administration forced his dismissal in 1490 from all posts except that of parvānachī, and he was then tried by the Turko-Mongol yarghu court of investigation. The article of the Encyclopaedia Iranica evaluates his conduct as an attack upon the foundations of the Timurid patrimonial state; this assessment is a modern judgment, but the narrative of dismissal and trial shows how the tension between the bureaucratic and the military elites could be settled through judicial procedure.

For the study of offices the lesson is that a title cannot be separated from the group that held it. The vizier represented the Persianate principle of recordkeeping, of regular taxation and of professional expertise; the amir represented the military household and the steppe tradition of service and reward. The offices discussed below are best understood as the working instruments of these two principles and of their uneasy partnership.

Viziers occupied the centre of fiscal life. The provisioning study stresses their role in regulating expenditure, in recording disbursements and in allocating funds for the pay of the soldiers and for other military needs, and it presents a two-vizier arrangement as a means of mutual control. This should be read as the interpretation of that study rather than as proof that one arrangement operated in every reign. The idea of divided financial supervision nonetheless has wide support in the tradition. A seventeenth-century summary of the Institutes, reproduced in the biographical chapter of the edition of Clavijo by Markham, describes four viziers with separate duties: the first for agriculture, revenue, duties, commerce and police; the second for the pay of the troops, provisions and the strength of the army; the third for the property of absentees and of the dead and for the return of inheritance to lawful heirs; and the fourth for the receipts and expenditure of the household of the ruler (Markham, 1859). Because of the doubts concerning the Tuzukāt, this scheme is best regarded as an ideal pattern of

functional separation and not as a verified table of ministries, yet it accords with the general principle of the division of financial authority visible in the chronicles.

The fiscal importance of the ministers lay in connecting revenue with the priorities of the state. A campaign demanded money, animals, food, equipment, gifts and the upkeep of the household of the ruler. Without accounting, the resources obtained through taxation or conquest could be dissipated or diverted. Specialized accounting methods such as siyāq and the compilation of ledgers under Pīr Aḥmad Khwāfī illustrate how fiscal control could become increasingly technical in the fifteenth century (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.).

Muhosibs recorded the valuables and resources taken upon campaign. In the passage quoted from Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī in the provisioning study, the arrival of Amir Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn with gifts and spoils is followed by a period of accounting reported to have lasted three days (Nizam al-Din Shami, n.d.). Booty was therefore not accepted informally but counted, classified and reported to the central authority. Accounting also served as an instrument of audit. According to the biography of ʿImād al-Dīn Maḥmūd Junābādī, after he was appointed financial accountant of Balkh in 1443 Shahrukh learned that funds were being misappropriated by officials in the city and secretly selected him to investigate the situation. Although the details require further verification, the episode agrees with the picture of supervision that emerges from the provisioning study and shows that the ruler could use trusted financial officials to check the conduct of provincial agents.

Muhassils were tax collectors. The provisioning study describes them collecting payments within a city while amirs or supervising commanders waited outside, which suggests a practical division between the authority directing an operation and the staff carrying out collection. The same study interprets rules attributed to the Tuzukāt-i Tīmūrī as restricting amirs and commanders from demanding levies beyond the established kharāj, naming sāvarī, qūnālghā and shīlān as additional exactions whose abuse was to be restrained (Tuzukāt-i Tīmūrī, n.d.). Recent Uzbek scholarship upon the Timurid tax system lists the principal levies as kharāj, that is the land tax, ʿushr, that is the tithe, zakāt, customs duties and tamghā. Whether the limits upon exaction were enforced uniformly is an open question, but the sources present regulated extraction as an element of legitimate rule, which is consistent with the Mongol and Islamic traditions that urged rulers to distinguish lawful taxes from arbitrary demands.

The tamghachi was the official in charge of the tamghā, a levy upon commerce, and the history of the term is revealing. According to the standard summaries the tamghā was originally an abstract mark of ownership used by the Eurasian nomads to brand livestock; among the Mongols it became an administrative stamp upon official documents and, in the later phases of the empire, a seal placed upon taxed goods and by extension a tax upon trade in cities and along the trade routes (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.). Pochekaev shows that the tamghā spread throughout the successor states of the Mongol empire, including the Golden Horde, the Ilkhanate and Central Asia under the Timurids, and that even dynasties which presented themselves as rivals of the Chinggisids kept it; his study also documents the opposition of the Muslim jurists to the tax and the efforts of rulers to retain a profitable levy without alienating the clergy (Pochekaev, 2014:77-95). The entry of the Encyclopaedia Iranica upon bāj adds that under the Jalayirids and the Timurids this word could designate both the road tax and taxation in general, and that in the later fiscal law derived from the Aq Qoyunlu the bāj-i tamghā was a tax upon goods bought and sold in a city, as distinct from the customs upon goods in transit (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.).

The provisioning study cites the appointment of Naṣrullāh Tamghachi to collect a payment described as māl-i amān after the capture of Ayasliq by Timur in 1402. This example places the tamghachi within the fiscal administration of a newly conquered city and links the commercial levy with the terms of surrender. The scope of the office may have varied, but the combination of a Mongol-era tax with an official bearing a Turkic title is characteristic of the Timurid fiscal vocabulary.

The khazanchi, or treasurer, received and safeguarded the wealth of the state and released resources under authorized orders. The provisioning study cites a passage in which payments collected by the fiscal officials and by the diwan were delivered to the treasurer. The sequence is significant: collection, formal transfer, custody and expenditure are distinguished as separate steps. Taken together, viziers, accountants, tax collectors, tamghachis and treasurers illustrate the stages of financial administration, namely policy and supervision, collection, recording, custody and allocation. The sources support the conclusion that fiscal tasks were divided among different officials; they do not prove that these divisions always corresponded to separate departments.

The tavachi is among the most prominent offices in the material. According to the account of the Zafarnāma of Yazdī given in the provisioning study, tavachis were sent

to the provinces to summon troops in preparation for the three-year campaign of 1386 (Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, n.d.). A similar passage attributed to the Maṭlaʿ al-saʿdayn describes orders for tavachi amirs to call troops for inspection and to ensure that the forces from the surrounding districts gathered at a given place and time (Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi, n.d.). The sources point to at least three core tasks: mobilizing personnel, coordinating assembly and facilitating inspection. The provisioning study also shows tavachis serving as messengers and envoys, organizing hunts, guiding campaigns, arranging camps and construction, supervising the distribution of spoils and organizing courtly celebrations. The name, which derives from Mongol administrative vocabulary, belongs to the group of offices that the Timurids inherited from the Chinggisid world; and, as noted above, in the fifteenth century the term also became attached to the head of a military diwan, the tavachibegi (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.).

The importance of the office lies in the nature of mobilization. Troops had to be identified, summoned, assembled, inspected and moved, and delays or incomplete attendance could undermine a campaign before it began. Tavachis connected central intent with provincial execution and made military manpower visible and manageable.

The darugha, according to the provisioning study, was a governor or administrator of a province, a city or a district, often installed first in newly conquered territory, whose duties included mobilizing carts, camels, horses, food and weapons for the army. The most thorough specialist study of the office, founded upon Persian sources from the reigns of Timur, Shahrukh, Abū Saʿīd and Sultan Husayn Bayqara, concludes that darugha was often used as a synonym for governor, that the post belonged to the Timurid bureaucratic hierarchy at a level below the princes of the dynasty, and that dorughas were responsible for public order, welfare and security, participated in campaigns and took part in construction and agricultural activities (Sabouri et al., 2015:41-78). The Mongol origins of the office are the subject of a recent debate: Berger argues that the darughachin and the basqaqs of the early Mongol empire, in the case of Iran and the Caucasus before the Ilkhanate, were primarily military figures, since the Mongols initially transposed a military mode of governing to conquered sedentary territory instead of using native administrators, and that they should not be defined hastily as civilian governors (Berger, 2023:183-199).

Read together, these studies explain the combination of tasks in the provisioning study. A darugha who organized transport for an army was exercising a military-

administrative function that had belonged to the post from its Mongol beginnings. The Timurid darugha may be seen as a point at which the originally military function of governing conquered land was blended with the duties of a settled administrator. In newly conquered areas the appointment of a darugha also signalled the establishment of political control, the collection of revenue and the organization of resources for the forces of the ruler.

Yurtchis chose or determined the sites of camps and of seasonal quarters. The provisioning study cites an account of the campaign of Timur in Georgia in which yurtchis were ordered to find a suitable wintering place; they selected a pasture area and reported their recommendation, after which the ruler arranged the positions of the princes and the begs. The study also discusses the qajirchi or qacharchi, a guide assigned to a commander, as in the campaign of 1391 against Tokhtamysh Khan, when a guide was appointed for each beg. The interpretation of the role of the guide given in that study, covering route selection, knowledge of water and grazing, the avoidance of danger and efficient movement, is partly an analytical deduction from the chronicle, but it is plausible for a mobile army. Both offices show that military planning depended upon local geographical knowledge, since a campaign required a route, a place to rest, access to water and forage, and a camp organized in accordance with rank and unit.

The qutwal, a fortress commander or commandant, protected the army and the royal camp. According to the provisioning study, the Tuzukāt-i Tīmūrī states that separate qutwals were appointed for the army and for the ordu, charged with guarding the camp, maintaining security and collecting dues from the market participants around it, and that they were responsible when the property of a member of the camp was stolen (Tuzukāt-i Tīmūrī, n.d.). Even allowing for the doubts concerning the source, the description fits the logic of a large moving camp, which was effectively a temporary city with stores, animals, merchants, servants and soldiers. The qutwal therefore stood at the intersection of security, market regulation and internal order.

Bakavuls supervised the serving and the distribution of food and, in some accounts, tasted the dishes before they were presented to the ruler. The provisioning study cites a passage from the Zafarnāma of Yazdī describing a large feast at which the bakavuls were unable to distribute all the food quickly enough, an episode which reveals the scale of the organizational problem (Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, n.d.). Bovarchis were cooks who prepared food for the soldiers and for other members of the army, and the

study draws the useful distinction that bakavuls supervised or organized distribution while bovarchis prepared meals.

The entry of the Encyclopaedia Iranica upon the bokāvol confirms the Mongol background of both terms. The word was used from the Ilkhanid period for a royal food taster or, later and more commonly, for a military commissariat officer. The Secret History of the Mongols does not use it, but it does record that Chinggis Khan appointed court overseers of food, called bāvurchī, at the assembly of 1206. In the reign of Ögedei the bokāvols distributed the game from the great royal hunt among the princes and the amirs. The entry also records a cautionary episode: the misconduct of commissariat officials, who accepted bribes and neglected their duties, was one of the reasons for the reform of Ghazan Khan of 1303 and 1304, in which he granted iqṭāʿ assignments to his soldiers after a system of provision drafts had broken down (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.). The history of this office shows that army supply was an administrative problem upon which the Mongol successor states already had substantial experience, and that it was a recurring field of corruption, which helps to explain the Timurid attention to accounting and supervision.

The axtachi was associated with the royal stables and with the care or supervision of horses. In a system in which mounted forces and long-distance movement were central, horses were strategic assets whose condition determined speed, endurance, communication and combat capacity. The provisioning study names Amir Arghūnshāh Axtachi as a trusted figure in the circle of Timur, which indicates that the post could carry political weight as well as technical responsibility. Royal and military horses required fodder, water, handlers and equipment, and although the evidence does not describe every aspect of stable administration, it supports the conclusion that animal management was a specialized responsibility within Timurid service.

The qurbegi was a senior official overseeing weapons, armour and military equipment and a leader among the qurchis, the personnel associated with the guard and the weapons of the ruler. The provisioning study refers to the memoirs of Babur, which mention Shaykh Darvesh Kūkaldāsh as a qurbegi who accompanied the author upon military journeys and was a skilled archer (Babur, n.d.). The office thus combined supervisory status with practical martial competence. The later history of the term shows how its meaning shifted: in the Safavid period the qurchis are described in the

Encyclopaedia Iranica as one of the four principal corps of the army, the Turkmen tribal cavalry, which indicates that a word originally associated with a household guard could later denote a tribal military force (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.). Because the Timurid evidence is brief, this article treats the description of the qurbegi as an indication of the likely sphere of the office and not as a complete account of its structure.

Physicians were essential to the health of the ruler and of the army. The provisioning study quotes the Zafarnāma of Shāmī describing the summoning of Turkish and Tajik physicians to treat Timur during an illness in 1392 (Nizam al-Din Shami, n.d.). The episode concerns the ruler and cannot alone prove the existence of a uniform field medical service, but it shows that learned practitioners of different traditions could be mobilized for the court and for the campaign. The ethnic labels also suggest that medical expertise was drawn from both the Turkic and the Iranian milieus of the empire. Medical care mattered for political continuity and for military readiness, since the illness of a commander could interrupt operations.

Yasavuls are presented in the provisioning study as officers responsible for maintaining order and executing commands. A passage attributed to Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū and included in the transmission of the Zafarnāma of Shāmī shows tavachis, ayudochis and yasavul amirs arranging groups for the distribution of food at a great gathering (Hafiz-i Abru, n.d.). The office is a good example of the importance of implementation: orders from the ruler or from senior commanders needed officials able to arrange groups, direct movement and ensure that instructions were carried out. The name reflects the Mongol legal code, the yasa, and suggests an original connection with the enforcement of that code, although the sources reviewed here describe mainly practical, organizing functions.

The yarghuchi, also written yorguchi, presided over the yarghu, the Mongol court of investigation. Studies of the Ilkhanid period describe the yarghu as an exclusive Mongol tribunal formed in most areas of the Mongol empire to settle claims and disputes, mostly in cases of political and of certain economic and social crimes and often in military camps; it borrowed procedures similar to those of the Islamic courts, including testimony, written documents and confession obtained under torture, and it judged according to the yasa, with yarghuchis at its head (Journal of History of Islam

and Iran, 2015:139-158). Another study of the courts of the Ilkhanid era observes that the Mongols kept the yarghu for themselves and for non-Mongol rulers and left the Islamic courts for ordinary subjects, so that a plural judicial system emerged (Magiran, n.d.).

The Timurid period saw a continuation and an adaptation of this dualism. Kubo argues that the Mongol rulers and Timur held the yarghu court in the name of, or alongside, the maẓālim court of the Irano-Islamic tradition, in which the ruler personally hears complaints against officials; according to Kubo, although Shahrukh is said to have abolished the yarghu, it survived until the end of the dynasty, and under the successors of Timur the yarghu of the ruler was held in the same place as the maẓālim court (Kubo, 2016). The cases of Iskandar Mirza and Pīr Muḥammad Mirza given in the provisioning study, who were brought before the ruler in the ulugh diwan for disobeying orders or for failing in their duties, may be read in this setting. They do not prove equality before the law, but they show that the kin of the ruler could be summoned, questioned and punished through a formalized political and judicial procedure. The account of the Encyclopaedia Iranica of the trial of Majd al-Dīn Khwāfī by the Turko-Mongol court of investigation in the 1490s demonstrates that the yarghu could still be used against a senior bureaucrat late in the dynasty (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.).

Judicial offices were also indirectly important for administration. Revenue collection, mobilization and the distribution of resources could not function without rules and sanctions. According to the entry of the Encyclopaedia Iranica upon the diwanbegi, in the courts of the period a case that involved diwan revenue or a suit against an official of the central bureaucracy was referred to the vizier (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.). This detail confirms that the judicial and the financial spheres overlapped, and that justice was part of the system of fiscal supervision as well as an instrument of military discipline.

The provisioning study emphasizes that a number of Timurid offices had antecedents in the earlier Chinggisid formations, among them the Chaghatayid ulus, the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde, and names tavachi, yurtchi, yarguchi, axtachi, bakavul and bavurchi. The additional evidence reviewed here confirms and refines the picture. The bāvurchī and the bokāvol are attested at the beginning of the Mongol empire and in the Ilkhanate (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.); the darugha and the basqaq of the early conquests are

documented by Berger (Berger, 2023:183-199); the yarghu court was a central Mongol institution (Journal of History of Islam and Iran, 2015:139-158); and the tamghā was a pillar of Mongol commercial taxation (Pochekaev, 2014:77-95). The diwan, upon the other hand, belonged to the Islamic tradition, and the financial technology of siyāq and of the ledger was Persian. Timurid administration therefore rested upon at least three layers: Chinggisid military and judicial institutions, Persian-Islamic fiscal practice, and local arrangements in the conquered territories.

Institutional continuity does not, however, mean unchanging practice. An office might keep its title while its tasks shifted, as the history of the tavachi, from itinerant mobilizer to head of a military diwan, and of the qurchi, from guard to tribal cavalry, demonstrates. The provisioning study notes that tavachis continued to appear in the Bukhara Khanate, where they could convey commands to governors or to military leaders and sometimes perform policing or investigative functions; that yasavul, bakavul and yurtchi are identified in the Emirate of Bukhara; that qutval and other military titles are mentioned in connection with the Kokand Khanate; and that yasavul and other ranks occur in Khiva. These later parallels, which rest upon the dissertations upon military affairs in those states, demonstrate the durability of the terminology of the Timurid era, but they do not prove a continuous chain of identical practices.

The Mughal empire offers a further case. A summary of research upon Mughal government notes that the dynasty carried into India the administrative compound of the Timurid world, that the central government continued Turko-Mongol and Perso-Islamic traditions adapted to Indian conditions, and that the dīwān of the Mughals became the chief financial minister with provincial dīwāns beneath him (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.; Tripathi, 1956). The comparative approach should therefore ask three questions: whether a title persisted, whether its principal tasks remained similar, and whether the political setting in which it operated changed. Such questions distinguish institutional memory from administrative continuity, and prevent the Timurid state from being described either as wholly novel or as a mere copy of the earlier Mongol systems.

The evidence permits a typology of five interdependent functional clusters, shown in Table 1. These clusters are analytical tools rather than departments that the Timurid officials themselves recognized. The table distinguishes the main documented function from the evidence upon which it rests and from the earlier or later parallels that may be identified.

Table 1. Functional typology of the principal Timurid offices

Cluster and office	Principal documented function	Main evidence	Parallels
A. Fiscal – Vizier / diwanbegi	Supervision of revenue and expenditure; sealing of decrees; chief of the diwan of finance and justice	Provisioning study; Encyclopaedia Iranica, Dīvānbegī; biographies of the Khwāfīs	Islamic diwan; Mughal diwan
A. Fiscal – Muhosib	Recording and auditing of booty and revenue	Shāmī, Zafarnāma (three-day accounting); the case of Junābādī	Persian accounting; siyāq, daftar
A. Fiscal – Muhassil	Collection of taxes in the cities	Provisioning study	Islamic fiscal practice
A. Fiscal – Tamghachi	Commercial and customs levy (tamghā); payments upon surrender (māl-i amān)	Naṣrullāh Tamghachi, Ayasliq 1402; Pochekaev, 2014	Mongol tamghā; Golden Horde, Ilkhanate
A. Fiscal – Khazanchi	Custody and release of the wealth of the state	Provisioning study	Islamic treasury tradition
B. Mobilizing and provincial – Tavachi / tavachibegi	Summoning, assembling and inspecting troops; envoy; organizer; later head of the military diwan	Yazdī (1386); Maṭlaʿ al-saʿdayn; Encyclopaedia Iranica, Dīvānbegī	Mongol office; Bukhara Khanate
B. Mobilizing and provincial – Darugha	Governor of a city or district; mobilization of transport and supplies; public order	Provisioning study; Sabouri et al., 2015	Mongol darughachi and basqaq (Berger, 2023)
B. Mobilizing and provincial – Yurtchi	Selection of camps and winter quarters	The Georgian campaign; provisioning study	Mongol; Emirate of Bukhara
B. Mobilizing and provincial – Qajirchi (guide)	Finding of routes for the commanders	The campaign of 1391 against Tokhtamysh	Steppe military practice
C. Provisioning and specialist – Bakavul / bovarchi	Supervision of the distribution of food; preparation of meals	Yazdī (the feast); Encyclopaedia Iranica, Bokāvol	Chinggis Khan 1206 (bāvurchī); Ilkhanate; Bukhara
C. Provisioning and specialist – Axtachi	Royal stables and horses	Arghūnshāh Axtachi; provisioning study	Mongol office
C. Provisioning and specialist – Qurbegi	Weapons, armour and equipment; the guard	Bāburnāma	Qurchi in the Safavid army
C. Provisioning and specialist – Physician	Treatment of the ruler and of the army	Shāmī (the illness of 1392)	Persian and Turkic medical traditions
D. Security and discipline – Qutval	Security of the camp and the fortress; market dues; liability for theft	Tuzukāt (as cited); provisioning study	Mongol, Ilkhanid, Timurid, Kokand Khanate
D. Security and discipline – Yasavul	Order, arrangement of groups, execution of commands	Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū; provisioning study	Ilkhanid, Timurid, Bukhara, Khiva
E. Judicial – Yarghuchi	Presiding over the yarghu court; trials of princes and officials	Iskandar Mirza and Pīr Muḥammad Mirza; Majd al-Dīn Khwāfī; Kubo, 2016	Ilkhanid yarghu; maẓālim court

Five findings emerge from this typology. First, fiscal administration was divided into differentiated tasks: viziers and diwanbegis supervised policy and expenditure; muhosibs recorded resources; muhassils collected taxes; tamghachis managed commercial levies; and treasurers received and guarded the wealth of the state. The development of professional accounting under Pīr Aḥmad Khwāfī and the use of trusted accountants to investigate provincial embezzlement indicate that this separation of functions made oversight possible, at least as an administrative ideal (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.).

Secondly, military effectiveness depended upon non-combatant and semi-military officials. Tavachis organized manpower, dorughas mobilized local resources, yurtchis chose campsites, guides led movement, bakavuls and bovarchis managed food, axtachis supervised horses, qurbegis oversaw weapons and physicians provided medical expertise. Military logistics should therefore be understood as a function of the state and not merely as an informal burden placed upon soldiers and local populations. The history of the bokāvol under the Ilkhanids, in which negligent and corrupt commissariat officials contributed to an overhaul of the provisioning of the army, demonstrates that such functions were recognized as problems of state in the Mongol successor states long before Timur (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d.).

Thirdly, the dual structure of the central administration, with a Persianate fiscal branch and a Turko-Mongol military branch, was productive but unstable. It enabled specialization and mutual supervision, but it also created competition between viziers and amirs, as the careers of Pīr Aḥmad and of Majd al-Dīn Khwāfī illustrate. The emphasis of Manz upon cooperation with the local elites and the emphasis of Subtelny upon the patrimonial household together suggest that formal offices were embedded in networks of personal loyalty, and that the tenure of an official could depend as much upon political standing as upon the performance of duties (Manz, 2007; Subtelny, 2007).

Fourthly, judicial and disciplinary functions supported the whole system. Qutvals protected camps and dealt with internal security, yasavuls helped to implement commands and to maintain order, and yarguchis participated in proceedings against princes and officials who violated their obligations. The survival of the yarghu alongside the maẓālim tradition shows that the Timurids kept a distinctive Turko-Mongol judicial instrument for cases involving the elite, while the Islamic courts continued to serve ordinary subjects (Kubo, 2016; Magiran, n.d.).

Fifthly, the sources point to continuity with the earlier and the later political formations but demand caution. Shared titles across Chinggisid, Timurid and later Central Asian contexts suggest institutional inheritance and adaptation; they do not by themselves prove identical duties or an unaltered bureaucratic structure.

The source base itself shapes these conclusions. The chronicles record offices when their holders take part in campaigns, ceremonies, appointments or disputes; they rarely supply routine descriptions of duties, figures of staffing or order of rank. The principal normative source, the Tuzukāt-i Tīmūrī, is of doubtful authenticity, and the surviving original documents are very few (Amirkhani, n.d.). Consequently the study can reconstruct functions and institutional relationships more confidently than it can reconstruct the total number of offices, their ranking or the uniformity of their operation across all the Timurid territories. The dating of changes reign by reign, such as the emergence of the tavachibegi as head of a military diwan after the reign of Shahrukh, likewise remains provisional, and the conclusions of this article should be read in that light.

CONCLUSION

The offices examined in this article show that the Timurid state was sustained by more than the authority of the ruler and the command of battlefield leaders. It relied upon a large body of officials responsible for finance, taxation, mobilization, provincial administration, logistics, provisioning, stable management, weapons, security, medicine and justice. The functional typology proposed here brings these offices into a single analytical frame and shows how they intersected in the provisioning and the movement of the army.

The evidence suggests that Timurid administration was differentiated but flexible. Certain officials had recognizable fields of responsibility, yet the same title could cover several tasks, and officeholders moved between military, diplomatic, fiscal and courtly contexts. The state drew upon institutional traditions that belonged to the Chinggisid successor states, to the Persian-Islamic bureaucracy and to local practice, and it adapted offices to its own needs (Manz, 2007; Subtelny, 2007). The survival of several titles in the later Central Asian khanates, and the Mughal adoption of the Timurid administrative compound, indicate the long-term influence of this vocabulary of government (Tripathi, 1956).

At the same time the evidence must not be overstated. Court chronicles, a doubtful legal code and later syntheses do not provide a complete register of offices, and the mention of an office in one event cannot establish that its duties were the same in every province and reign. Further research should compare the manuscript versions of the Zafarnāma and of the Maṭlaʿ al-saʿdayn, examine Persian and Turkic administrative manuals and chancery texts, and analyse appointment records, fiscal documents and regional histories wherever they survive. Particular attention should be paid to the dating of institutional change between the reigns of Timur, of Shahrukh and of Sultan Husayn Bayqara.

In conclusion, the Timurid system of state offices is best understood as a network of specialized and overlapping responsibilities, held together by the authority of the ruler, by personal loyalty and by a measure of formal supervision. Its central features were resource mobilization, accounting, logistical coordination, the protection of the ruler and of the camp, the enforcement of commands, and adjudication. These offices were the practical infrastructure through which political authority was translated into administration and into military action.

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