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## **The Question of Islamophobia and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great***

### **Introduction**

The struggle between Islam and the West is not new and has been ongoing for centuries. Modern stereotypes of Islam resemble those of the past; however, these negative attitudes found today arose for very different reasons in the past. From the seventh through the mid-seventeenth century, first during the Islamic conquests and later at the time of the Ottoman expansion, "Islam was Christendom's greatest problem" (Southern 3). Because those were times in which Islamic civilization was far ahead of its Christian rival culturally, economically and politically, it thus created a Western sense of cultural inferiority that led to negative portrayals of Islam in European Literature. It is important here to distinguish between notions of Orientalism and the traditional demeaning of Islamic religion and culture in European literature because of Islam's perceived threat to Christian identity. In this thesis I will stay away from Said's notion of Orientalism because while Orientalism as a literary discipline underlines Western prejudices towards the 'other', it attributes the inaccurate perceptions and cultural representations of the Eastern world or Oriental people in Western thought to Western strength and dominance over the Eastern world for over two thousand years. I have found this to be historically inaccurate as the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923) was an Islamic superpower that once threatened Western identity for centuries, and caused fear and hatred towards Islam. It was not until the eighteenth century that Ottoman power ceased to menace Western Europe. Both eastern empires of the Ottomans and the Persians stood as rivals that threatened the European colonial projects, that is, until their decline much later in the eighteenth century. More importantly, Orientalist works are generally related to colonization. This results in a one-sided argument and that might deny the importance of Islamophobic representation of Islamic culture to format the task of formulating an

independent approach. Thus in my thesis I will keep away from Oriental labels and adjectives—labels which in turn center around Western knowledge of the irrational, weak, regressive Eastern ‘other’.

In this thesis I will attempt to trace some examples of medieval and early modern misrepresentation of the 'Islamic Other' found in European literature, before focusing specifically on Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* and its demonization of the Islamic East and its society, culture and religion. After underlining the deeply rooted Western tradition of distorting Islam and creating an image of the 'other' that suits their needs, I will move on to compare the historical Timur with the Tamburlaine Marlowe presented on stage. Finally, I will compare and contrast the conception of Islamic representation or what has come to be known as Islamophobia in modern Western society with Islamophobia in the early modern period represented by Marlowe and his society.

#### 1. Anti-Islamic Bigotry in European Culture:

In this chapter, I will examine examples of negative portrayals of Islam found in the periods starting from the Christian Crusades until the start of the early modern period in England specifically focusing on Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* as a representative of his Elizabethan era. Marlowe, like many of his contemporaries, debased the image of the Muslim rivals (the Ottoman Muslims) in an attempt to build Eurocentric self-confidence in the face of a more powerful and more culturally sophisticated enemy.

The misrepresentation of the Islamic religion is in fact not new, for Islam has witnessed distortions of its values and concepts since the seventh century, meaning since the emergence of this monotheistic religion in Arabia under Prophet Muhammad's flag. It was not until the seventeenth century, however, that the term 'Islam' was formally introduced into European languages. Historically Europeans had used the demeaning term 'Muhammadan' to refer to the religion of the Prophet Muhammad. Most often Christian writers referred to Muslims by

using ethnic terms such as Arabs, Turks, Moors, Saracens and so on. The word 'Islam' only appeared for the first time in English in 1613 and in French in 1687: "The use of the proper Arabic term denotes a new consciousness on the part of Europeans, although the older, inaccurate, and disrespectful designation 'Mohammedanism' was replaced only very slowly" (Frassetto and Blanks 14).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Islam as "the religion of the Muslims, a monotheistic faith regarded as revealed through Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah, from the Arabic word 'Islam' meaning 'submission' from 'aslama' 'submit' (to God)". This terminological shift points to the changing geopolitical shape of the Islamic world. When no longer posing a political threat to the West we find that finally Muslims were recognized as plain Muslims only.

In the twenty-first century we find that no religion is looked upon with such ignorance and suspicion in Western eyes as the Islamic religion: "Across Europe and North America, whatever is fearful, whatever is foreign, whatever is alien and unsafe is being tagged with the label 'Islam'" (Aslan xiv). This phenomenon is partly in response to recent global tragedies caused by extremists who use the language of Islam to justify horrific acts of mass violence. This has caused much damage to the Islamic image to the point of distortion thus causing the Islamic religion to be synonymous with terror and making it the modern scapegoat upon which people can thrust their fears and anxiety, "Despite the fact that politically, economically and culturally there has not been a separate Muslim world for more than 200 years" (Ernst 3). The global financial crisis combined with larger concerns over immigration in addition to the increasingly borderless modern world, have resulted in anti-Muslim sentiments and negative reception of Islam.

This was not always the case; Islam historically posed a vivid threat to all of Europe because of its cultural, military and political development. Before the emergence of the

modern European imperial project, the power and strength of the Ottoman Empire that stretched across all Europe caused fear, hatred and grudging respect. In other words, it caused what is known today as Islamophobia.

Examples of this fear of the Islamic 'other' in literary history are many; I will focus in my given examples primarily on the works of Elizabethan playwrights in general and Christopher Marlowe in particular. Taking a closer look at Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* I will attempt to underline the emergence of what we call Islamophobia in his plays. I will attempt a study of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, not as a historical account of the establishment of Timur's empire in the East, rather as a lively witness of European roots of modern Islamophobia in its earliest forms. The power of the Ottoman Empire was not to be taken lightly, and it was the fear of Islam that formed European public opinion. Marlowe like many other writers of his time tried to build a Eurocentric nationalism through his negative depiction of Muslims.

## 2. The Medieval Era:

Looking back at history we find the ink-drawn representation of prophet Mohamed in the European Dark Ages as an evil tyrant with a curved sword in one hand and the Quran in another hand (Daniel 134). Cruz explains:

There existed a range of attitudes towards Islam in medieval Europe mixing popular and learned views, intermingling the realistic with the marvelous and the legendary ... from the murderous to the empathic" (Cruz 56). Throughout the medieval period, some of the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad were reversed and turned into defects because of Christian hostility towards Islam. The most basic line of attack was Muhammad himself "who was variously portrayed as an epileptic, a magician, the Beast of the Apocalypse, lascivious, ambitious, money-grubbing, and ready to war and rob (Frassetto and Blanks 66).

In romantic epics, such as the French Epic *Chanson de Roland* or *Song of Roland* (composed around the twelfth c.) that narrates Charlemagne's campaign against Saracens in Spain, Muhammad is constantly portrayed as a heathen idol who is worshipped like the

Greek gods and the Saracens (Muslims) are misrepresented as worshipping a trinity composed of Muhammed, Termagant and Apollo (Garcia 311). Other European accounts of the prophet's life claim Muhammad was a renegade of the Catholic Church who decided to start his own false religion. Such views are expressed in William Langland's influential poem *Vision of Piers Plowman* (1392) which depicts "Makometh" as a "Cristene man" who might even have "ben a pope" but in his frustrated ambition perverted the scripture and "in mysbileve men and women brought" (Schmidt 397-408). This image of Muhammad as an unprincipled Christian underlines his depiction in Dante's *Inferno* and bears witness to the misrepresentation of Islam in the European culture, in which Dante portrays Muslims as barbarous heretics who follow the schismatic Muhammad in eternal hell. In Canto 28 of the *Inferno* Dante meets with the prophet Muhammed and his cousin Ali in the eighth circle of hell where sinners are punished for fraud, and Dante describes what he sees as the following:

And with his hands he spread  
His chest and said: See how I spilt myself!? See now how maimed Mohammed is!  
And he who walks and weeps before me is Ali  
Whose face is opened wide from chin to forelock. (canto 28: 31-36)

The Protestant leader Martin Luther depicted Muhammad in negative light claiming him to be "the devil's son," and it was typical for Christians to label Muhammad as the Antichrist during the Christian crusades. In *Table Talk*, Luther is quoted saying:

Antichrist is at the same time the Pope and the Turk. A living creature consists of body and soul. The spirit of Antichrist is the Pope, his flesh the Turk. One attacks the Church physically, the other spiritually. (Luther 151)

The traditional doctrine that Muhammad was illiterate, which to the Muslims was proof of the divine origin of the scripture he transmitted, indicated to Christians that he must have been a fraud. Also, when challenged by the pagan Meccans to produce miracles, Muhammad had answered that the Quran was his only miracle. While the Muslims viewed this as proof of the spirituality of his mission, Christian antagonists considered this evidence that he was not a prophet (Ernst 14). For Christians, the celibacy and nonviolent approach of Jesus are

generally seen as indispensable characteristics of true spirituality. Christian critics of Muhammad generally describe him as motivated by a combination of political ambition and sensual lust, hardly what one expects in a prophet. In the work of *Doctrino Jacobi nuper baptizati* (which appeared in 634 only two years after the prophet's death) a character named Justus says about Muhammed "He is deceiving. For do prophets come with sword and chariot. (Y)ou will discover nothing true from the said prophet except human bloodshed" (Kaegi 86-87). Muslims approach this issue from an entirely different perspective. For Muslims, the prophet Muhammad leads his people by example and demonstrates in his person how life should be lived in the world. Since life on this earth will always be subject to conflict, it is essential to have an example of the best ethical conduct of war and a religious model of procreation. Therefore, to Muslims, the emphasis on Jesus' celibacy and nonviolence seem to be a completely unrealistic model that no one can follow (Ernest 14). Although one can also find instances in the New Testament where Jesus also uses violent language—"Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt.10:34).

### 3. The Fall of Constantinople

Ever since the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529, or perhaps the even earlier Fall of Constantinople in 1452 the Ottoman Muslims were looked at with fear and viewed as a superpower threatening to overwhelm all of Europe. By this time, the establishment of the printing press allowed more accessibility to the European public to the Ottoman 'Other' through broadsheets, pamphlets and books which ultimately led to a bigoted European shaping of Islam and the notion of 'Turkishness' on both a real and fictional scale: "Not a single play about the Muslim Levant and North Africa that appeared in the Elizabethan, Jacobean, or Caroline periods showed the Muslim in a morally heroic and favorable light; not a single reference in eschatological exegesis spared the 'Mahumetans' from destruction either

by war or conversion" (Matar 14). The many published reports of the Ottoman advance combined with tales of travelers who had visited the Muslim world succeeded in presenting the Turkish Muslims as barbarous, cowardly and lustful. Indeed, the creation of stereotypes of the 'other' became an important part of European culture. These Renaissance attitudes were carried into the modern world despite the fact that Islam became somewhat better understood. The Muslim figures that appear in western literature bear little or no resemblance to the historical Muslims of the period. This is best described by Edward Said: "we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate" (Said 71).

Also works that appeared in the sixteenth century intended for the Christian public on trade, finance and life within the Ottoman Empire contained much distortion, such as Joannes Boemus's *the Fardle of Facions* (1555) – that included an historical survey of both the Ottomans and 'Mahomet':

At this daie in Asia the lesse, the Armenians, Arabians, Persians, Siria(n)s, Assirians, and Meades in Aphrique, the Egipcions, Numidians, Libiens, and Moores. In Europe, the whole cou(n)trie of Grecia, Misia, Thracia, and all Turquie throwing awaie Christe, are become the followers and worshippers of Mahomet and his erroneus doctrine (6-7).

This multinational character caused much fear and alarm on behalf of Christian Europeans because of the growing numbers of peoples the Islamic world contained within its poles. It also denotes how powerful and cosmopolitan the Turks were becoming. Also, we can see "Turkes" are defined by their adherence to "Mahomet" which indicates to the Europeans deceitfulness.

#### 4. 'the Turke': sixteenth century Anglo-Ottoman relations and the stage

In terms of English literature alone, the sixteenth century and onwards marked a high point in the production of different sorts of texts containing portrayals of 'the Turke' and the



Ottoman Empire which became a metaphor for Muslims and Islam. Indeed, upon looking at literature alone we find a vast quantity of the stereotypical portrayal of the Turk, "Some three thousand five hundred titles were printed in the sixteenth century alone" (Levy 13). The large volume of works made available for the new reading public of the Renaissance presented the Eastern peril in terms inconceivable in the Middle Ages: "The Turk became a more immediate threat owing not alone to his geographical proximity, but as the result of the technological revolution in printing" (Schwoebel 166). These works reveal much about Western ideas of the orient and reflect the complexity of the cross-cultural contact between East and West.

During the sixteenth century Ottoman Empire power stretched to the heart of Europe and thus caused a continuous engagement between the Christian European states and the Islamic Ottoman Empire. However, England at that time was a world still an infant in its colonial achievements. As the historian Nabil Matar pointed out "Britain did not enjoy military or industrial power over Islamic countries. Rather the Muslim had a power of self-representation which English writers knew they had either to confront or to engage" (Matar 12). It also must be pointed out that the emergence of an early modern England witnessed its own fear of being marginalized by Spain, Portugal and France, the leading powers of Europe. These European powers were establishing their first colonies in the New World and in turn had anxieties of being colonized by the Ottoman Empire. Thus the many images of Islam that were produced in the early modern period reflect the West's inferiority complex as reinforced by the Ottoman Turks. These images do not identify with reality; however, it may coincide with the reality of those who made them.

In the sixteenth century, "the growing number of texts made available for a growing number of readers kept the Turks before the eyes of the public in a way that would have been impossible at the time of the Crusades" (Blanks 35). In other words, an important role was

played by writers who poured into their publishing issues of the day and tales of the Ottoman advance. The great variety of material that survives in the learned literature indeed mix the images of the Eastern Muslims with exotic, perilous yet romantic elements most often from the author's own fancy.

Taking a closer look at the many works of that century's playwrights and authors is essential to a better understanding of what the Islamic 'other' meant to the English public of that time. How the Islamic world was presented on stage reflected the cultural and political atmosphere of that era. It also reflects the depth of the relationships between the Ottoman world and England of that era. The mere fact that the Islamic 'other' was regularly portrayed and presented (and misrepresented) in the works of writers of that era bears witness to the significance of the Islamic 'Other' in the English imagination:

Fictional and semi-fictional campaigns as these are indicative of the lengths to which Christian writers were prepared to go in attempting to provoke action on the part of the major Christian rulers and, perhaps more importantly, to counter more pessimistic assessments of Ottoman military power and territorial expansion. (Dimmock 63)

This can be seen basically as an indicator of how powerful the Ottoman expansion was. More importantly it highlights the European awareness of this growing Muslim threat which they were compelled to confront.

#### 5. Examples of Elizabethan bigotry

Stereotypes of what the non-Christian 'other' constituted is found in the works of many Elizabethan dramatists such as Shakespeare's *Othello*, who as a Christian convert cannot defy his true 'barbaric' nature and ends up destroying himself and his pure Christian wife Desdemona in the process. Othello the Moor is constantly referred to as "the Moor" (i.i.57), "Barbary horse" (i.i.119), "Black ram"(i.i.97), "thick lips" (i.i.66) in order to embody the Oriental 'other' who stands as a figure opposing Christendom. Othello becomes an emblematic figure that represents the Western stereotyping of the Islamic other.

Also, another good example of early Elizabethan bigotry is Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* whose protagonist is a greedy and vile Jew who stops at nothing to inflict pain and loss upon others. The plot unwinds on the island of Malta with the struggle between Catholic Spain and the Ottoman Empire. Undoubtedly Marlowe again portrays the Turks as invaders who plan to turn Christians into galley slaves. Also, the Turkish slave Ithamore stupidly follows his evil Jewish master Barabas in executing his plans of evil destruction.

Although it is a fact that the Jews were expelled from England in 1290 during the reign of Edward 1, and consequently not many Englishmen actually met or interacted with Jewish people; however, the words 'Jew' or 'Turk' came to be synonyms for anyone suspected of greed or disloyalty, and this is also reflected on the Elizabethan stage (Honan 41).

Another important example of the Oriental stereotype in literature is John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) which depicts the Western image of tyrannical Oriental rule. In *Paradise Lost* evil hails from the East and Satan is presented as a Sultan who has come to defy God, Christ and humanity. Satan is described giving the fallen angels commands to rise from the lake of fire and regroup: "Their great Sultan waving to direct/ Their course and fill all the plain" (1.348-50). Also, the Satan and his followers are described as Saracen warriors, and the capital of hell, Pandemonium, is compared to cities from the orient: "Not Babylon/ Nor great Alcairo such magnificence/ Equaled in all their glories, to enshrine/ Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat/Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove for wealth and luxury" (1.717-22).

Numerous other examples are found in works of the writers of that time like Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene* (1594) in which his hero, Arthur, fights and defeats an Islamic 'Souldan' who is portrayed as a pagan tyrant who violates the chivalric code of hospitality and treacherously destroys virtue. The Souldan is an embodiment of "Lawlesse

power and tortuous wrong" (5.8.51). This Souldan, like all Muslim rulers, was portrayed as a tyrant with unjust power. The Souldan rides to battle in:

A charred (chariot) hye,  
 With yron wheeles and hookes arm'd dreadfully,  
 And drawn of cruel steeds, which he had fed  
 With flesh of men, whom through fell tyranny  
 He slaughtered had, and ere they were halfe ded,  
 Their bodies to his beasts for provender did spred (5.8.28).

Many other Western narratives depict the Muslims in Mediterranean settings such as Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West* which deals with the ship adventures of a group of Englishmen in Barbary, and Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion, or the Lascivious Queen* with the protagonist Eleazar representing the entire Moroccan Muslim race. All these works confirm the Islamic stereotype as a violent and cruel people. These early modern writers all had something in common: portraying what was known as the Islamic 'Turk' or the non-Christian as demonic, unruly, forever-damned, and casted-out. Dramatists infused their works with this distorted image of Islam. The representation of Islam in Medieval and Renaissance Europe bears little resemblance to the actual Islamic religion and culture. The perceived threat of Islam to Christian identity produced the radical distortion of what Islam really was.

## Chapter One:

### Renaissance Islamophobic Responses to the Rise of the Ottoman Empire.

The ongoing engagement between Elizabethan England and the Ottoman Empire demonstrates the crucial position of the Islamic Other at the heart of English cultural life.

Dimmock explains:

In terms of English literature alone, the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth-century also marks a high point in the production of texts of all kinds relating to the Ottoman Empire and a point at which the portrayal of the 'turke' on stage had "achieved an articulacy and a variety that would perhaps be repeated, but would not be superseded. (Dimmock 6)

The 'turke' had become an ideological and political metaphor for the Anglo-Ottoman cultural anxieties and challenges that threatened the very identity of European Christendom and led consequently to the rise of European nationalism and patriotism.

The continuing English encounters with Muslims or the Ottoman Turks led to an ongoing stereotyping of the perceived Ottoman threat or the Muslim Other more generally:

"Continuing English encounters with Muslims, both imagined and actual, multiplied and complicated notions of the 'turke' that had been contested from their very inception"

(Dimmock 10).

The perceived threat of Islam to the European Christendom produced distortions and fabrications of what Islam really was. In this chapter I will approach both parts of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* as a representation of Islam and Muslims in early modern English drama. Marlowe humiliated the Turks and romanticized the histories of other Islamic dynasties like Timur's who ruled in the territories east of Ottoman Empire in Persia and Central Asia. The Ottoman Sultan Bajazeth is defeated by Tamburlaine, who in turn becomes a supernatural agent of divine retribution: a sign that no king, however mighty, is safe from fortune's blows.

Set in the "East" (Pt I, I.i.43) both parts of his plays inevitably reflect how English society perceived the Ottomans and Islam or put more simply, the roots of prejudice towards the East. The East Marlowe invoked reflects the deeply rooted Western tradition of portraying a barbaric and uncivilized Islamic East, and more importantly implies the cultural competition between the West and East that took place in past centuries.

1. "*All Barbary is unpeopled for thy sake*" (Pt II, i.iii, 149)

By the sixteenth century, the story of the barbaric Eastern emperor Timur the Lame (1336-1405), who rose into power and managed to subdue the Persian crown and then succeeded in taking over large parts of Asia, became quite famous in England. This Tartar conqueror terrorized the lands he and his army put to the sword. This caused the distant lands of the Islam as Marlowe puts it to become, "unpeopled" under the will of Tamburlaine's fierce conquests. Although the historical Tamburlaine never reached Africa, Marlowe has Tamburlaine subdue the entire world and dies regretting having no place left to conquer on his map. By the sixteenth century, Tamburlaine became a heavenly signal of God's concern for Christendom, a monstrous warrior who foretold the final doom of the Turks.

In fact, when Marlowe chose to present Tamburlaine to his audience he depended to an extent "upon a familiarity (of his audience) with the subject matter" (Dimmock 136). Marlowe's genius lies not in the story itself, however in the *manner* the story is told. It is "the first play to mix blank verse effectively with speech rhythms, to break it up with dactylic feet and to give it lightness, flexibility, and a haunting power" (Honan 169). Marlowe's play rose to magnificence because of its tonal effects and its depiction of the barbarity of the 'other'. The Orient was experienced through stereotypes that, in turn, shaped the language, perception and form of the encounter between Europe and Islam. Throughout *Tamburlaine*, oriental figures, settings and ideologies are distorted via the barbaric Tamburlaine who rises from a shepherd-thief into a power thirsty conqueror who stops at no limits. Tamburlaine

depopulates entire regions, burns entire cities, drags a chariot pulled by defeated princes and even kills his own son in cold blood. Tamburlaine continues to perpetuate his barbaric psyche in hope of turning his two remaining sons into blood-thirsty conquerors.

Marlowe succeeded in presenting an image of the Orient that pleased his audience. Having Tamburlaine, the "scourge of God and terror of the world" confront and win over the Ottoman Emperor Bajazeth in such a barbaric manner that is also revolting and inhumane, won Marlowe the success he desired. Marlowe "presented to his Elizabethan audience a picture of the East they desired to see, an Orient filled with treachery, cruelty and false doctrine, an Orient that was destroyed by its rulers" (Oueijan 17).

## 2. Tamburlaine as the "Scourge of God"

From the very start of the plays we are greeted with a description of Tamburlaine's bloodiness and barbaric actions towards the people he subdued. The 1590 title page reads:

Tamburlaine the Great, who, from a Scythian shepherd, by his rare and wonderful conquests became a most puissant and mighty monarch, and for his tyranny and terror in war was termed the scourge of God.

Of course the "scourge of God" was directed at the Ottoman infidels (Muslims) who were regarded by Europe as this "great plague and ruine of whole Christendome" (Dimmock 5). Tamburlaine became a heavenly signal of "providential intervention" (Thomas and Tydeman 73) because Tamburlaine distracted the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I (1347-1403) away from his "dreadful siege of the famous Grecian Constantinople" (Pt I, III.i. 4-5). The word 'scourge' is very interesting as a word that carries a double-sidedness that can be applied to both Christendom and Islam, because as it is defined in *OED* as having its origin in Middle English: shortening of Old French *escorge* (n), *escorgier* (v), from Latin *ex-*'thoroughly'+ *corrigia* 'thong, whip'. As a noun the word 'scourge' is defined as 1) *historical*: A whip used as an instrument of punishment. 2) A person or thing that causes great trouble or suffering.

In other words, Tamburlaine is a person who inflicts much suffering on Muslims who have gone astray in their faith and believing. More importantly, it seems as if Christianity as a faith was in need of a divine 'scourge' that would execute revenge on their enemies.

### 3. The Ottoman Bayazid as a Representative of Muslims:

"What faith can they (the Turkes) keepe that haue no faith?"

The first part of the play is centered around Tamburlaine's conquests and humiliation of Bajazeth/ Bayazid the Ottoman Sultan who is presented as arrogant and lacking dignity "From his first appearance Bajazeth is portrayed as pompous, tyrannical and prone to flattery" (Brown 44-45). In Act three of play 1 Bajazeth is presented conversing with kings of Arabia "in great pomp", the king of Argier addresses Bajazeth and says:

They say he is the king of Persia;  
But if he dare attempt to stir your siege,  
'Twere requiste he should be ten times more,  
For all flesh quakes at your magnificence  
Bajazeth: True, Argier, and tremble at my looks. (Pt1. iii.i. 45-48)

In *Tamburlaine* Bajazeth becomes the embodiment of Islam who declares his "sacred" eminence (Pt I, III.iii.268) as "Mahomet's kinsman" (Pt I, III.i.54). This also could be read in reference to what the Islamic caliphates historically claimed as their divine right to rule the Ummah (or Muslim community) because they were kinsmen to their prophet *ahl al-bayt* or the "People of the House (of the Prophet)".

Marlowe follows in the footsteps of his contemporaries in his misrepresentation of the Islamic religion, like Robert Greene who presents Mahomet as an illusionist that speaks from a brazen head in *Alphonsus of Arragon*. Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bunguy* (ca.1589) further presents the talking brass head as a symbol of dangerous knowledge and necromancy. Marlowe draws his Islamic concepts from John Foxe's *Acts and Monumentes* (1563) popularly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, a book of Protestant history, which was the first English edition of an eschatological work that refers to the Ottoman 'threat' and centered



mainly upon "the turkes extreame cruelty and turranny" (10). In Foxe's account of the historical Bajazeth, the Ottoman Sultan, is characterized as "a cruel tyrant and a persecutor of Christians" (Brown 47). Foxe illustrates the role of "these wicked Turkes which allows this scourge of God for our sinnes, and corrupt doctrine to gain ground" (710).

Because Islam was considered to be a false faith (in contrast to Christianity) the demonic "turke" was the representative of this false doctrine that began to spread in parts of Christendom. This concept of associating the Ottoman Empire with Islam is highlighted in the scene in which Tamburlaine describes Mahomet crying and shedding his tears "For hot consumption of his country's pride" (Pt II, IV.i. 196-197).

Islam is introduced into the play upon Bajazeth's entrance in Act III, scene I by Bajazeth's swearing to "holy Mahomet" (Pt I, III.i.54). Marlowe tends to attack Islam through depicting Islam as heresy and the prophet Muhammad as an imposter. He follows the deeply rooted tradition of treating Islam as a form of an Oriental idolatrous paganism.

Marlowe's Tamburlaine (although the historical Timur was in fact a Muslim) quickly becomes a superhuman and a politically useful figure, an Oriental conqueror who comes as a divine answer to Europe's Turkish troubles. He finds no difficulty at all in winning the Persian crown and then winning followers to his side, the only true opponent he faces is the Emperor of the Turks, an unworthy emperor whose tyrannies and cruelties result in little sympathy after he is defeated in battle. Such unsympathetic views are also expressed in Foxe's work who considered Tamburlaine's humiliating treatment of Bajazeth in captivity as "The just ha(n)d of God upo(n) a cruell persecutor" (Brown 43). From the very beginning it appeared as though Tamburlaine was acting on behalf of a Christian God closely paralleling Foxe's descriptions of the Ottoman Muslims and "theyr wicked procedynges, their cruell tyranny, and bloudye victories, the ruine and subuersion of so many Christen Churches, with

the horrible murders and captiuite of infinite Christians" (710). Marlowe's Tamburlaine announces himself in the following lines:

I that am termed the scourge and wrath of God,  
The only fear and terror of the world,  
Will first subdue the Turk and then enlarge  
Those Christian captives which you keep as slaves. (Pt I, III.iii.45-47)

These lines are fused with contemporary anxieties about the Christian slaves in the lands of Barbary which were described by Englishmen who experienced the "cruel pirates of Argier" (Webbe 56). Such tales appeared in the vernacular like the anonymous *Informacion for pylgrymes unto the holy londe* (1500) and Edward Webbe in his *The Rare and most wonderfull things Edw. Webbe an English borne, hath seene and passed in his troublesome trauiles* (1592). Marlowe has "the scourge and wrath of God" confirm his destiny to "subdue the Turk" before freeing the Christian slaves who are strikingly contrasted with Tamburlaine's Muslim captives whom he treats inhumanly by having them lead his chariot-like animals.

#### 4. The Anglo-Ottoman Alliance:

While the English writers were attacking the Turk, their Queen was signing treaties with the Turkish Sultan. By 1588 England, under Queen Elizabeth I's reign (1533-1603) the Ottomans were allies with the English although most English writers chose to ignore the growing association between England and her ally, the "circumcised Turks" (Pt I, III.i.8).

The different works produced during that period that dealt with the "turke" were entirely silent on the alliance-matter, although we can find some exceptions amongst Marlowe's contemporaries, the most striking being Thomas Nelson's *The Blessed State of England* (1591) who urges Queen Elizabeth to work toward "the Turkes conuersion" (Nelson 60). Anglo-Ottoman relations were drawn together because of a common enemy, Spain, and later paved way for a booming trade between the subjects of Queen Elizabeth and Sultan Murad III. New overseas trading companies, such as the Merchant Adventurers, and import-export

companies, such as the Muscovy companies, were set in the Mediterranean and Near East: "Material like English cloth went to the Levant market and tin, steel, and lead were shipped directly to Ottoman Turks" (Honan 173). *Tamburlaine* presents us with a variety of Oriental material and objects that were traded by these companies, which were mentioned in Callapine's reference to "Turkey carpets...cloth of arras...A hundred bassoes, clothed in crimson silk... on Barbarian steeds" and "a golden canopy/ Enchased with precious stones" (Pt II, I. ii. 43-49) and also trading locations are mentioned in Tamburlaine's reference to Christian merchants that with "Russian stems", "Plough up huge furrows in the Caspian Sea" (Pt I, I. ii. 194-195).

##### 5. Marlowe and his Society

In both parts of *Tamburlaine the Great* Marlowe used anachronistic references to veil contemporary political and mercantile happenings of his time. Using oriental settings and characters Marlowe has the freedom to poke fun at his own society and its ideologies. For instance, the way Marlowe uses a critical tone to depict Christian practices and beliefs such as the ringing of bells, Tamburlaine ridicules the Christians by declaring: "Now will the Christian miscreants be glad/ Ringing with joy their superstitious bells" (Pt I, III.iii. 236-237). He also criticizes the way that the Christians care "so little for their Prophet, Christ" (Pt II, II.ii.35). By referring to Christ as a "prophet", Marlowe may be paralleling Christ to the Muslim prophet Muhammad and simultaneously comparing and contrasting the Muslims' devotion to their prophet as opposed to the Christians' slight regard to their Christ. It was because of Christian negligence or maybe even Christian sin that God had sent the Turks. Tamburlaine is casted as a scourge of weak and sinful nations, whatever their religion. Thus a key point could be made in having Tamburlaine avenge the Christian nation. Tamburlaine becomes a form of Christian hope in the face of a stronger enemy and ultimately "The scourge and wrath of God, The only fear and terror of the world" (Pt I, III.iii.44-45).

## 6. Marlowe's Portrayal of Religion

Nowhere in *Tamburlaine* does Marlowe differentiate between Protestant and Catholic Christian faiths. In fact, when Tamburlaine attempts to dare "God out of heaven" (as accused by Robert Greene in his epistle for *Perimedes the Blacksmith*) we, the audience, are uncertain of whose God is he trying to provoke. At times we find Tamburlaine swearing by "mighty Jove" (Pt I, II.vii.17) and at other times he swears by "sacred Mahomet" (Pt II, I.iii.109), yet after he kills his son Calyphas because of his cowardice he declares that he is sending him to "Jove's" (Pt II, IV.i.110) "mighty friend Mahomet" (Pt II, IV. i123) thus shifting and combining gods as he moves along. The phrase "daring God out of Heaven" that was later used to describe Marlowe's atheistic attitude refers to the last act of the second part of *Tamburlaine* in which he insolently dares Mahomet to drop down and work a miracle.

Marlowe was living in a time of great religious controversy and continuous conflict between the Catholic and Protestant churches. When Queen Elizabeth assumed the throne in 1558 she marginalized the dominant Roman Catholic Church of her sister Queen Mary I, making England officially Protestant. The Muslim Ottomans were encouraged to view Queen Elizabeth as an enemy of idolatry, meaning a direct enemy of Catholic Spain and the Pope in Rome. "After the Ottoman-Venetian war of 1570-1573, which figures incidentally in the background in *Othello*, support for Protestantism became a tenet of Ottoman policy" (Honan 173).

Marlowe marks both parts of his plays with the religious uncertainty prevalent in Elizabethan England. After the defeat of the faithless Turk in part I, we find part II presenting oppositions between the "turke" and Christians (embodied by Sigismond the King of Hungary) and Orcanes, the Muslim king of Natolia. However, this does not mean that Marlowe presented Christianity in a favorable light. The Christians broke a treaty pledged in Christ's name, and we find Orcanes, the devout Muslim, proclaiming:

Such deceit in Christians  
 Or treason in the fleshly heart of man  
 Whose shape is figure of the highest God. (Pt II. ii. 36-38)

Marlowe highlights the hypocritical infidelity of the Christians by using anachronistic references to the treaty of Varna in 1444 and Sigismond's betrayal of John Huss, a religious reformer whom Protestants consider a forerunner of their movement, and Jerome of Prague. They are a "treacherous army" (Pt II. ii.25) of these "Traitors, villains, damned Christians" (Pt II, II. 29). Marlowe doesn't pass over an opportunity to exhibit the moral weakness of Christians.

More importantly, Tamburlaine at times appears more Christian than Muslim. Throughout the events of the plays: "Tamburlaine identified himself with the Christian cause" (Ibrahim 43) such as when Tamburlaine expresses concern for the Christian slaves, yet he still displays none of the Christian concepts of repentance and catharsis before his death. It's true that Tamburlaine does die in the end, yet "There is certainly nothing of divine retribution in the death of Tamburlaine" (Ribner 47). As a result, the audience finds themselves to be at loss to place Tamburlaine in a particular religious system. More than one critic therefore found the play "morally ambiguous" (Burton 139). In my opinion Marlowe intentionally overflows *Tamburlaine the Great* with a sense of religious ambiguity in an attempt to have his audience decipher for themselves a religious-moral code that suits their conscience. Nowhere throughout his plays does Marlowe give a clear-cut judgment of what is right or wrong; he leaves that interpretation to his audience.

7. Islamic Distortion in the plays: "Go with us to Tamburlaine, and thou shalt see a man greater than Mahomet" (Pt II, III.iv.45-46).

Marlowe presents to his audience what they wanted to see, a falsification of the Islamic religion and a demeaning of its concepts: "The use of false evidence to attack Islam was all but universal" (Daniel 267). Western views of Islam depended upon ignorant ideas that were

continuations of medieval Christian hatred and blind prejudice against Islam. Marlowe consulted a wide range of material concerning Islam, particularly for the composition of part II in which Tamburlaine is molded into a god-defying figure who breaches all religious systems (including Christianity, although Marlowe uses the guise of attacking Islam on the surface).

Examples of this falsification are many throughout the plays, for instance when Orcanes describes the prophet's tomb in the Grand Mosque of Mecca, he states that his body hung in a coffin on the roof of the holy Kaaba between the earth and sky:

By sacred Mahomet, the friend of God,  
Whose holy Alcoran remains with us,  
Whose glorious body, when he left the world,  
Closed in a coffin, mounted up the air  
And hung on stately Mecca's temple roof. (Pt II, I.i 137-141)

Marlowe presents Muslims as pagans who worship Mahomet; this is stated by Tamburlaine who says: "In vain, I see men worship Mahomet" (Pt II. V.i 171). As a fact idolatry is a prohibited practice in the Islamic culture and Muhammed is not treated as a divine figure. The prophet Mahomet becomes an unworthy god worshipped by defiant followers. Marlowe also has his Muslim characters openly blaspheming the name of the Prophet. Examples are many such as when Bajazeth curses the prophet saying: "Mahomet, O sleepy Mahomet!" (Pt I, III.iii.270) or when his wife Queen Zabina (perhaps the first Ottoman woman on the Elizabethan stage) shouts out: "O cursed Mahomet" (Pt I, III.iii.270) eventually she declares: "there (is) left no Mahomet, no God" (Pt I, V.i.239). Also while waiting for Tamburlaine to return from battle, princess Zenocrate shockingly claims that even:

If Mahomet should come from heaven and swear  
My royal lord is slain or conquered,  
Yet should he not persuade me otherwise  
But that he lives and will be conqueror. (Pt I, III.iii.208-211)

So once again Marlowe attacks Islam by presenting shaky and weak Muslims who easily abandon and abuse their religion at times of distress.

Perhaps the anti-Islamic resolution reaches its proximity in the Quran –burning scene, achieving Marlowe's Tamburlaine fame as “the Qur'an Burner” (Al-Olaqi 177). In this famous scene Tamburlaine refutes Islam (which at this point is interchangeable with the Turks). Here we find Tamburlaine challenging all moral codes of religions (embodied by Islam) through the daring burning of the holy Quran and other "superstitious books" (Pt II, V.i 171-172):

In vain, I see, men worship Mahomet:  
My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell,  
Slew all his priests, his kinsmen, and his friends,  
And yet I live untouched by Mahomet.  
There is a God full of revenging wrath,  
From the thunder and lightning breaks,  
Whose scourge I am, and him I will obey.  
So Casane, fling them in the fire. (Pt II, V.i.177-184)

As Putt asserts: "In the context, the destruction of the Quran is hardly a pledge of allegiance to the Christian God" (Putt 42). Marlowe may have been implicitly referring to the burning of Luther's work in 1521 and of William Tyndale's *New Testament* in 1526 at St. Paul's Cathedral (Dimmock 157). Once again Marlowe veils contemporary events by using Islamophobic symbols (in this case the burning of the holy Quran) in order to present a bigger picture. Questions formulate of whether Marlowe intended to demean the Islamic faith in general or whether he was pointing to the acts of burning of all holy books as acts of violations that deserve divine retribution. These questions will remain ambiguous and left to the audiences' own moral conclusions.

Tamburlaine exceeds the limits of man and is turned into a demigod whose thirst for power is insatiable; in short Tamburlaine succeeds in becoming the "arch-monarch of the world" (Pt II, IV.i. 151). As Tamburlaine has the holy books burn, he continues the defiance of Mahomet:

Now, Mahomet, if thou have any power,  
 Come down thyself and work a miracle.  
 Thou are not worthy to be worshipped  
 That suffers flames of fire to burn the writ  
 Wherein the sum of thy religion rests. (Pt II, V.i. 185-190)

The mortality of the holy Quran and its subsequent burning at the hands of Tamburlaine with no hope of revenge from the "Turkish swords" (Pt II, V.ii.15) reflect the position of the Turks in English eyes during the 1580s and 1590s.

After Tamburlaine's boasting about the way he has burnt the holy book and his violations against the Ottoman Empire he declares: "Millions of Turks perish by Tamburlaine, Kingdoms made waste, brave cities sacked and burnt "(Pt II, V.ii.24-26).

Hope of divine retribution appears (albeit very faintly) in the form of Callapine, Bajazeth's son, who once again is identified with Islam as his father once was. Tamburlaine claims:

And but one host is left to honor thee,  
 Aid thy obedient servant Callapine,  
 And make him, after all these overthrows,  
 To triumph over cursed Tamburlaine! (Pt II, V.ii 26-30)

Tamburlaine eventually dies; however, his death does not come in the form of divine retribution for the destruction of the Quran or the slaughter of "millions of Turks", it rather takes the form of an enigmatic statement. The arousal of Callapine as a new "Turkish" opponent suggests the continuance of the Ottoman threat, as described by the King of Amasia who exclaims:

...I see great Mahomet  
 Clothed in purple clouds, and on his head  
 A chaplet brighter than Apollo's crown,  
 Marching about the air with armed men  
 To join with you against this Tamburlaine. (Pt II, V.ii 31-35)

It seems as though in these lines, Marlowe deliberately confuses Islam with Greco-Roman imagery in an attempt to stamp his play with religious ambiguity by shifting and combining religious icons as he moves along.



To conclude, "this maintenance of the 'Turkish' threat, even after the prolonged captivity and death of Bajazeth in Part I, reflects again the significant position that the Ottoman Empire was perceived to occupy as both the major Eastern power and as the major threat to Western Europe" (Dimmock 159). Medieval traditions of insulting the Prophet and deforming Islam result in a sentiment of Western superiority over Muslims, a sentiment prevalent in Marlowe's plays.

## Chapter 2:

A Comparison between Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Timur the Tartar Conqueror.

"All Asia is in arms with Tamburlaine...

The scourge of God and terror of the world" (II. i.i. 71, I.iii 62).

The invincible conqueror that attracted European awe and fascination in the sixteenth century was in fact the historical conqueror Timur Lenk (known to Europe as Tamerlane). Tamerlane is the subject of Marlowe's plays *Tamburlaine the Great* (parts 1 and 2). These plays found great appeal among the Elizabethan public and their productions are recorded up until the Puritan prohibiting of theatre in the mid seventeenth century (Hookham 1). Marlowe diverts from the classical tradition of tragedy as being the story of the fall of a great and noble man because Marlowe's Tamburlaine is by no means a great man— although certainly a very successful one— whose "Wheel of Fortune"(1.i.ii 171) causes him to rise to stardom. In fact, the first part of the play ends with Tamburlaine's marriage, more like a comedy than a tragedy. Although the second part ends with Tamburlaine's death, his death is calm and peaceful and doesn't suit his barbaric acts.

In this chapter I will look at some of the sources from which Marlowe drew the character of Tamburlaine and underline Marlowe's originality in presenting the cumulative challenges posed by *Tamburlaine* which led to his writing "one of the most original plays in the history of the English theater" (Berek 33).

It was because of the fascination that shrouded the enigmatic historical figure of Timur that Marlowe chose him as the protagonist for one of his first written and performed plays. In short, Timur was one of the world's great conquerors in the same rank of Alexander, Napoleon, and Genghis Khan who dominated the world and successfully built their empires

as lords of the world. It is no wonder that Timur on the English stage found much appeal and popularity.

### 1. Timur the Conqueror

Timur was a Turko-Mongolian of Islamic faith, who was born in the fourteenth century and managed to subdue vast kingdoms in Asia around the year 1400. Using his cunning and wit Timur became the ruler of the largest kingdom of his time and was the founder of the Timurid dynasty. The legendary ruler Timur was known to his rivals as Tamerlane or Timur-Lenk, his name meaning "iron" in Persian, whereas Timur-Lenk meaning in English, Timur the Lame, which suggests the lameness in both his right hand and leg that (was bestowed upon him by disputed causes as a result of injuries received while sheep-stealing).

Ruy Clavijo, the envoy of the king of Castile (Henry III), who accompanied and followed Timur's court and army to Samarkand, writes in his essay a description of conqueror Timur:

Tamerlane is not in truth the proper name for this lord, who indeed is always here called Timur, as we have been wont to speak of him. In the Tartar tongue Timur Beg has the signification 'Lord of Iron' for Beg with them means Lord, and iron they call Timur. To speak of him as Tamerlane is indeed a matter of insult, being a name given him by those who are inimical to him, for Lane (in Persian Leng) means 'lamed' as indeed Timur was, of his right leg. So likewise he has lost the two lesser fingers of his right hand, cut off by a blow received long ago when as a youth he was stealing sheep by night. (Clavijo 137)

Christopher Marlowe based his plays *Tamburlaine the Great* on this legendary "scourge of humanity" with many twists of his own imagination. I aim to highlight the similarities and differences between the larger than life Tamburlaine Marlowe presented on stage and the historical Timur, the unbeatable conqueror who subdued Asia.

### 2. Birth and Origin:

Timur was born around 1336 in Kesh near Samarkand (modern day Uzbekistan). Many legends circulate about Timur's birth and youth, such as the following account: "It is also said

that when he came forth from his mother's womb his palms were found to be filled with blood; and this was understood to mean that blood would be shed by his hand" (Ibn Arabshah 3-4).

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 lordship; 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)

But the question remains: how true was Marlowe's Tamburlaine to his historical counterpart Timur? Throughout Marlowe's drama, Tamburlaine on the Elizabethan stage dwarfed the actual conqueror in his unique historical successes and limitless ambitions. Marlowe the "recklessly courageous" dramatist (Greenblatt 220) triumphs in creating a God-defying conqueror that closely mirrors his historical counterpart, albeit suffused with "anachronistic

reference to contemporary political and mercantile events and preoccupations which serve to update the material and offer a window upon contemporary concerns" (Dimmock 136).

The actual Timur suffered no military defeat and became a conqueror in a relatively short time. It was thus, for this reason, we could argue that Marlowe chose Timur as the protagonist for his plays, because this historical figure never tasted defeat. Although Marlowe uses many colors of his imagination in his portrayal of the rise and fall of Tamburlaine, yet many elements of reality can also be found in this extraordinary shepherd-turned-conqueror who Marlowe had drive a chariot drawn by defeated kings and a convoy of princes, and malevolently dragged the Ottoman Sultan Bajazet around in a cage. Marlowe leaves the judgment of Tamburlaine's character and actions to the audience. Marlowe does not in any way moralize on war in his drama. He presents us with a head-strong figure that depopulates entire cities, kills his own child, burns the holy Quran and openly defies God and yet lives unpunished until death.

### 3. Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*:

This play was written in 1587-1588 while Marlowe was still a student at Cambridge. He chose to present to his audience a new kind of heroic genre that would appeal to the sudden public demand for overseas tales and adventures in Elizabethan England. Marlowe chose a representative of his era (despite the fact that Tamburlaine was a figure set in an Oriental background); with all the surrounding zeal and religious controversy of his time (Honan 164).

Marlowe opens his play with a prologue that at once distances itself from the intended poetic and moral status quo of the Elizabethan theatre. The play begins with the following lines: "From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits". He continues his eight-lined prologue that asked spectators to hear, view and judge on their own, not offering in any way a moral lesson:

In asking spectators to hear, view, and judge as they please, Marlowe does not treat the stage as a place of moral example, proof, or beneficial demonstration,

but as a place for story and experience. He implies that drama is artful, free, unfettered, or it is nothing. The theatre cannot offer object lessons, only paradoxical interpretations of life. (Lunney 7)

Marlowe says: "View but his picture in this tragic glass, / And then applaud his fortunes as you please" (I. prologue 7-8).

Marlowe drew his construction of the fearless Tartar conqueror from a variety of sources available to students at Cambridge: Pedro Mexia (*Silva de Varia Lecion*), Petrus Perondinus (*Magni Tamerlanis Scytharum Imperatoris Bita*), Ruy Clavijo (*Embassy of Clavijo to Tamerlane*). It is unclear how he might have had access to Arabshah and Ibn Khaldun who were not available in Cambridge. According to John Bakeless: "Marlowe seems to have had access, in some unexplained way, to a group of facts about the historical Timur contained in Oriental works, none of which were translated during his lifetime" (205). It is unclear how Marlowe would have had access to Oriental sources but as Ahlam Alruwaili states in her research that Marlowe's description of Tamburlaine and his plays in general bears strong similarities to Ibn Arabshah's accounts, such as the various historical episodes reported by Arabshah and the physical features of Timur himself when his remains were exhumed in 1941(3). Ibn Arabshah remains a primary source on Timur's life and conquests because his works deal vehemently with Timur's expeditions. It might be quite possible that Marlowe used Arabshah's account of the encaging of Bayazid after the famous battle of Angora and his subsequent harsh treatment by the hands of Timur and his followers. Marlowe closely mirrors Arabshah's description of the manner in which Bayazid was demeaned and frequently humiliated, being constantly brought in and out of his cage.

The debate over the exact sources for both parts of Tamburlaine remains unsolved, although Timur the Lame was a popular figure to the Elizabethan audience and Marlowe seemed to depend "to an extent upon a familiarity with the subject matter" (Dimmock 136). Thus Marlowe's genius lies in the manner "in which the codified and accepted details of the

tale are manipulated and connected in Marlowe's two-part version that will surely reveal the play's originality" (Dimmock 136).

All of these sources established that Timur was destined to conquer the world from the very beginning of his rise to power. He was constantly referred to as the "Unconquered Lord of the Seven Climes; Sahib Qiran, Lord of the Fortunate Conjunction. Other legends circulated about Timur's destiny to rule spoke of the fiery coals that flew about at the time of his nativity" (Hookham 42).

Timur was a monster or a barbarian to some, while to others he was a heroic leader who must be followed. Although he was one of the greatest monarchs, he was cruel and oppressive, yet kind to those who served him. It seems as if this human military genius embodied in Timur, despite his physical deficiencies, had the help of the celestial stars and earthly advantages. In his famous work, *Ajaib al-maqdur fi nawa'ib Timur: The Wonders of Destiny Concerning the Calamities Wrought by Tamerlane* عجائب المقدر في نوائب تيمور, the Arab Scholar Ibn Arabshah, who had witnessed the ransacking of Damascus by Tamerlane's armies when he was only eleven and was taken back to Timur's capital as a captive, called him "a merciless slayer, a master trickster, and a very devil of malignity" (6).

Whereas Nizam al-din Shami, the Persian scholar, who wrote of Timur's victories in the famous book *Zafar-nama*, says in his account of Timur: "To everyone he was generous and courteous, except to those who did not obey him— he punished them with the utmost rigor. He loved justice, and no one who played the tyrant in his dominion went unpunished; he esteemed learning and learned men. He was utterly courageous in planning, and carrying out a plan. To those who served him, he was kind" (10). Thus, Timur's binary position was established; he was simultaneously a devil and a saint. Similar to his historical counterpart Marlowe also succeeds in presenting a character on stage that could easily be hated because

of his inhumane barbarity, yet was an endless source of fascination because of his limitless ambitions and unique individualism.

Marlowe begins his play with an anachronism that deliberately shifts the conqueror Tamburlaine out of time, by referring to him as the "Scythian Tamburlaine". This label was the classical Greeks' name for the Nomadic peoples who inhabited the plains of Scythia— from the eighth century BCE to the Second Century CE. Also, when looking at the word origin and history for Scythian (n.) in the *OED* we come across the following:

“1540s, from Latin Scythia, from Greek Skythia, name anciently given to the region along the north coast often the Black Sea, from Skythes ‘a Scythian’ said to be from an Indo-European root meaning ‘shepherd’. As an adjective from 1560s ‘Scythian’”.

This technique of pulling Tamburlaine out of his time could be seen as Marlowe's own personal attempt to represent everyman in every age, not restricted to time or space. All Tamburlaine needs is faith in his own actions and that is more than enough: "I speak it, and my words are oracles" (1.III.iii. 102).

Marlowe continues by presenting Tamburlaine as a thief and shepherd, who rises to the rank of kings, Tamburlaine says to princess Zenocrate on their first encounter: "I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove, / And yet a shepherd by my parentage" (1.2, 34-35). This was a common misconception on Marlowe's behalf, because the real Timur was the son of a chieftain of the royal Barlas clan, although it was true that he grew up in poverty and managed to gather some followers to rob local caravans and steal cattle during his youth. This thief who managed to subdue Persia by his cunning and excellent military abilities actually came from noble lineage. But Marlowe was trying to deliver the message that anyone could rise to power if only he has the required will and strength. Marlowe's "Scythian shepherd" transcends all earthly obstacles and rises even higher than the actual Timur as a persona of limitless human will and determination. Consequently, "there is no question that



*Tamburlaine* occupies a pivotal position in the development of English drama" (Dimmock 135).

More importantly, Marlowe entangles his plays with the love story of princess Zenocrate, daughter of the Sultan of Egypt, who falls in love with this shepherd-turned-conqueror who in return offers her an entire Empire in exchange for her love. Marlowe succeeds at drawing a love so fierce in its nature that upon Zenocrate's death in part two, Tamburlaine burns entire cities to the ground: "And with how many cities' sacrifice/ He celebrated her sad funeral" (Part II, prologue 6-7).

Although this coloring of events with a love story was purely out of Marlowe's imagination, Marlowe succeeds at drawing a barbaric war-driven character that yet has a soft emotional side to him by adding a love story into the shaping of Tamburlaine's character. "Zenocrate —seems to be a complete invention of Marlowe's" (Miller 262). Zenocrate could be seen as the contrast between Tamburlaine's love and hate, and she is, as one critic puts it "Marlowe's main addition to Tamburlaine's history" (Martin 23).

#### 4. Drawing Tamburlaine on Stage

When drawing the character of Tamburlaine on stage, Marlowe totally disregards the fact this conqueror was lame in his right leg and arm. In fact, the actor famous for his enacting the character of Marlowe's Tamburlaine during his time was Edward Alleyn (who later went on to play Marlowe's *Faustus* and Barabas, the hero in *The Jew of Malta*), "a tall, athletic, and golden-voiced idol with a handsome nose, splendid eyes, and dazzling skill" (Honan 164). Alleyn's portrait still remains at Dulwich College, in south London along with the ring he wore on his little finger as Tamburlaine, as does his personal seal and chalice. It seems as though Marlowe deliberately disregards this aspect of Tamburlaine's historical counterpart in order not to have Tamburlaine appear weak or disabled in any way.

Marlowe does, however, derive an important trait from the original Timur, in the shaping of his shepherd-turned-conqueror, which was the artistic and intellectual aspect of the historical Timur. Tamburlaine in the play is a persuasive poet, who is able to win enemies through using his cunning and wit. For instance, Theridamas, the general of the Persian army who was sent by the king of Persia to defeat Tamburlaine, says to him after their first encounter: "Won with thy words and conquered with thy looks, / I yield myself, my men, and horse to thee" (1. i.ii, 228-229). This refers to the historical Timur who was well known for his love of debate and knowledge. The famous fourteenth-century historian, Ibn Khaldun draws a colorful portrait of the Tatar conqueror after their meetings and interviews. This is reflected by Marlowe in the sketch of his protagonist: "He is highly intelligent and very perspicacious, addicted to debate and argumentation about what he knows and also about what he does not know" (Ibn Khaldun 382).

In the first play, Tamburlaine persuades an enemy to join his league, and defeats the clownish Mycetes, King of Persia, then overthrows the vicious Cosroe, Mycetes' own brother who was plotting against him. Tamburlaine ravishes Damascus and wins Zenocrate's hand in marriage after defeating the prince of Arabia, Zenocrate's betrothed, and crowns her Queen of Persia.

Marlowe continuously points out in his plays that Tamburlaine was driven to action because of his fortunate stars and many prophecies that proclaimed his greatness and destiny: "Hoping, misled by dreaming prophecies, / To reign in Asia and with barbarous arms/ To make himself the monarch of the East" (1.i.i, 41-43). This is reference to Marlowe's possible source Ibn Arabshah who wrote of how Timur one day confided to his trusted companions his grandmother's dream of his greatness:

She saw in sleep a vision, which she expounded as foreshadowing to her one among her sons and grandsons, who would conquer territories and bring men into subjection and be Lord of the Stars [*Sahib Qiran*] and master of the Kings of Time. And I am that man and now the fit time is at

hand and has come near. Pledge yourselves therefore to be my back, arms, flank and hands and never to desert me. They assented and promised to aid him whenever summoned and swore that they would be with him in prosperity and adversity and never against him. (Ibn Arabshah 4-5).

One thing that Marlowe could be certain of was Tamburlaine's confidence of triumph which was true of the actual Timur. All sources emphasize his love of combat and his self-confident sense of worth: "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about, / And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere/ Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome" (I. ii. 171-176).

This closely describes Tamburlaine's historical counterpart, who let it be known that he received direct revelations from the Almighty:

These not only gave divine sanction to his enterprises— he does nothing whatsoever, nor wishes to do anything, without the special commandment of God—but provided practical advantages: He says that he knows the thoughts and cogitations of men; these are revealed to him by an angel. That is why no one dares council against him, because he will know immediately. (Hookham 78)

Marlowe seems to disregard the idea of justice and punishment in his portrayal of events. Although his protagonist is swollen with hubris, he gets away unpunished. In the first part, Tamburlaine rises from a bandit to a leader of an army who was able to persuade his enemy, Theridamas, to join his league, and after defeating Mycetes, King of Persia, and overthrowing his brother Cosroe, enthrones himself as the new king of Persia, who plans to conquer the world. Obviously, Marlowe exalts human will and mocks the idea of fate, because it is man who is responsible for of his own fate.

##### 5. Marlowe and Religious Attitudes:

Marlowe's skeptical attitude toward all religions becomes quite evident throughout the play. After the success of *Tamburlaine the Great* that Marlowe was credited for creating the "first atheist play" by "daring God out of heaven with that atheist Tamburlaine" (Greene 81). This supposed 'atheism' in Marlowe's time arose partly from Tamburlaine's constant

ridiculing of the gods and defying their power throughout the play. It is from this undermining of religious order, be it Christianity, Islam or paganism that the rumors of Marlowe as an atheist circulated. But more specifically the way Marlowe has God turn a deaf ear to the cries of all devoted followers in the play and the fact that Marlowe exhibited the moral weakness of Christians (presented in the character of Sigismund, who breaks a treaty pledged in Christ's name, since he regards faith as purely negotiable) lead to attacks on him as a heretic.

The historical Timur was a Muslim, and often styled himself as an Islamic *ghazi*. Names such as Sword of Islam, Warrior of Faith, and so on were bestowed upon Timur. Yet, Marlowe chooses to present this Islamic conqueror in many ways a pagan who is favored by the gods and is constantly swearing by Jove, Pluto and the Furies as he makes war on Muslims. In part one, during his first appearance on stage, Tamburlaine proclaims: "And Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven/ toward the blow and shield me safe from harm" (1.i.ii, 180-181). This reflects what the great historian, Ibn Khaldun, said about the actual Timur being favored by God after observing him for a month in his camp during the siege on Syria: "He is one who is favored by Allah. The power is Allah's, and he grants it to whom he chooses" (374).

However, Marlowe exceeds these limits and has even the gods fear Tamburlaine. Marlowe has Tamburlaine defy Jove himself. Also, in the many parts of the play characters openly blaspheme the Islamic faith by demeaning Mohamed, such as, when Queen Zabina curses the prophet's name after her husband, Sultan Bajazet, is captured: "O cursed Mahomet, that makest us thus/ The slaves to Scythians rude and barbarous!" (1.Iii.iii, 270-271). In the following lines we find a successful conqueror who boasts about his own power and will that even the gods tremble at the sound of his name: "The god of war resigns his room to me, /

Meaning to make me general of the world. / Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan, / Fearing my power should pull him from his throne" (1.v.i, 449-452).

Marlowe was thus condemned by his contemporaries, such as the playwright, Thomas Kyd, and said to "jest at divine scriptures, gibe at prayers, and strive in argument to frustrate and confute what hath been spoke or writ by prophets and such holy men" (Honan 369).

Marlowe's defiance of all established religions reached its extremity in the famous scene in which Tamburlaine burns the holy Quran and openly defies Mahomet. The holy Quran is a very sacred source of Islamic religion and the prophet is also sacred to Muslims:

In vain, I see, men worship Mahomet.  
 My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell,  
 Slew all his priests, his kinsmen, and his friends,  
 And yet I live untouched by Mahomet.  
 There is a God, full of revenging wrath,  
 From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,  
 Whose scourge I am, and Him will I obey.  
 So, Casane; fling them in the fire.  
 Now, Mahomet, if thou have any power,  
 Come down thyself and work a miracle.  
 Thou are not worthy to be worshipped  
 That suffers flames of fire to burn the writ  
 Wherein the sum of thy religion rests.  
 Why send'st thou not a furious whirlwind down  
 To blow thy Alcoran up to thy throne,  
 Where men report thou sitt'st by God himself?  
 Or vengeance on the head of Tamburlaine  
 That shakes his sword against thy majesty  
 And spurns the abstracts of thy foolish laws?  
 Well, soldiers, Mahomet remains in hell;  
 He cannot hear the voice of Tamburlaine.  
 Seek out another godhead to adore—  
 The God that sits in heaven, if any god,  
 For He is God alone, and none but He. (2.1.177–200)

Marlowe's rejection of all established faiths and his deliberate demeaning of Islam is part of his attitude towards religion. These last two lines said by Tamburlaine, however, referring to the first part of the Shahada in the Islamic religion, show Marlowe's knowledge of some of the Islamic practices.

#### 6. 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).

Despite not restricting himself to historical timelines, Marlowe got an important aspect of Timur's military campaigning right– his willingness to forgive if the enemy willingly surrendered to his force, and his sheer cruelty and inhumanity if they chose not to. This is explained in Marlowe's play in this way:

The first day when he pitcheth down his tents,  
 White is their hue, and on his silver crest  
 A snowy feather spangled white he bears,  
 To signify the mildness of his mind  
 That, satiate with spoil, refuseth blood.  
 But when Aurora mounts the second time,  
 As red as scarlet is his furniture;  
 Then must his kindled wrath be quenched with blood,  
 Not sparing any that can manage arms.  
 But if these threats move not submission,  
 Black are his colors-black pavilion,  
 His spear, his shield, his horse, his armour, plumes  
 And jetty feathers menace death and hell.  
 Without respect of sex, degree, or age,  
 He razeth all his foes with fire and sword. (1. iv.i, 49-63)

Another famous scene in the play involves the Governor of Damascus who, in a vain attempt to save the city, sends four virgins to Tamburlaine, who greet him "with knees and hearts submissive we entreat/ Grace to our words and pity to our looks" (I. V.i, 50-51). This scene echoes a historical scene that actually took place in Damascus. One citizen sought the help of one of Timur's leaders, who advised him to set forth some innocent children so that Timur might pity them while passing by. Upon seeing these children Timur asks: "Who are those poor abandoned creatures?" (Arabshah 46); the same question was asked by Marlowe's Tamburlaine but in a different style: "What are the turtles frayed out of their nests?" (I.v.i 64-65). Both reactions of Timur and Tamburlaine are the same; he completely ignores their



petition and inflicts death upon the innocent: "Without a word, Timur urged his horse into them, as though he had not seen them, and likewise with his troops and army" (Arabshah 46).

Marlowe has it that the virgins are slaughtered on the spot and their "slaughtered carcasses" (I. v.i 131) hoisted up onto the city walls. Tamburlaine says: "A sight as baneful to their souls, I think, / As are Thessalian drugs or mithridate". Yet Tamburlaine continues by giving the orders: "put the rest to the sword" (I. v.i 132-134).

More importantly, in the many portrayals of the ruling kings, Marlowe continuously pokes fun at their fickleness and hereditary authority. Marlowe almost always drew kings as possessing the most unworthy characteristics. Although it was considered unorthodox to question the position of the king during his era, Marlowe doesn't miss the opportunity to poke fun at the different kings presented throughout his plays. Marlowe presents all Oriental kings other than Tamburlaine as silly, at times to reinforce the Oriental stereotype and at other times to discredit the holiness of all kings. For instance, he introduces King Mycetes at the very beginning of the play as a "fickle brain" (I. ii, 15) who brought Persia to a state of dismay. This fictional character could be based on the actual character of Ghayath al-Din, son of the Sultan of Heart, who was known for his stupidity. King Cosroe, who seeks to overthrow his brother in the play, is based on sultan Husain in his military battles against Timur. Marlowe may have come across these references of Oriental leaders through the different sources he used to make a statement about the proper use of power, which should be based on intelligence and willful leadership.

Marlowe portrays the emperor of the Turks, Ottoman Sultan Bayazid, who was historically nicknamed the Thunderbolt, as a conceited king. This Islamic Sultan was an opposing power not to be taken lightly. Many important correspondences between the actual Sultan Bayazid and Timur were exchanged between them, such as the following taken from a letter to Timur, in 1402: "To fight is our habit, to join in combat our aim, to struggle for the

faith our task. The law of waging war for the cause of Allah Almighty is our rule... Our soldiers spend their lives and wealth for Allah, that they may gain Paradise" (Sanders 173).

Marlowe portrays this as empty boasting and pokes deliberate fun by having Tamburlaine take him as a buffoon:

...Tush, Turks are full of such brags  
 And menace more than they can well perform.  
 He meet me in the field and fetch thee hence?  
 Alas, poor Turk! His fortune is too weak  
 T'encounter with the strength of Tamburlaine. (1.iii.iii, 3-7)

Another instance of the Sultan's ignorance of his own stupidity could be seen in the conversation that unfolded between him and the other subordinate kings of his kingdom. The King of Argier says to Bajazeth courteously:

All flesh quakes at your magnificence.  
 Bajazeth: True, Argier, and tremble at my looks.  
 King of Morocco: The spring is hindered by your smothering host,  
 For neither rain can fall upon the earth,  
 Nor sun reflex his virtuous beams thereon,  
 The ground is mantled with such multitudes.  
 Bajazeth: All this is true as holy Mahomet,  
 And all the trees are blasted with our breaths. (1. Iii.1, 48-53)

Tamburlaine met the mighty Ottoman Bajazet in the battle of Ankara. Bajazet lost and was held captive. Marlowe goes to the extreme of having Bayazid humiliatingly imprisoned in an iron cage, only to be let out when Tamburlaine needs to use him as a footstool. Because of constant taunting and humiliation, the king and his wife finally commit suicide by banging their heads on the iron bars of their cage. Tamburlaine won't even consider ransoming the Ottoman king. Tamburlaine proudly claims: "Not all the kings and emperors of the earth, / If they would lay their crowns before my feet, / Shall ransom him or take him from his cage" (4.2, 92-94).

This extremity in Tamburlaine's behavior towards the mighty king may also have had historical antecedents as suggested in the hostile correspondences exchanged between the two kings:

I know that this will rouse you to invade our countries: but if you should not come, may your wives be condemned to triple divorce, but if I flee from you, when you invade my countries and decline to fight with you, then may my wives be utterly condemned to that triple divorce. (Arabshah 173)

This mentioning of women was considered a grave crime and shameful offence, thus causing Timur's determination to over-throw and humiliate the Ottoman sultan. Marlowe used the example of what happened to the mighty Bayazid to make his point about the fragility of fate. Marlowe's plays celebrated social mobility and individualism and poked fun at royalty.

#### 7. The Second Part of *Tamburlaine the Great*

In the second part of *Tamburlaine the Great*, Marlowe enhances Tamburlaine's cruelty and barbarism. By the second part, Tamburlaine had risen to the ranks of prophets and gods; he is described as "a man greater than Mahomet, / In whose high looks is much more majesty/ Than from the concave superficies/ Of Jove's vast palace" (ii. iii.iv, 46-49).

Subplots are added to dramatic events such as narratives concerning Tamburlaine's three sons (one whom he murders because of his refusal to participate in war), destruction of entire cities and killing of their people, the death of Zenocrate, the defiance of religion (burning the Quran), and finally Tamburlaine's deathbed lamentations for leaving parts of the world unconquered. Tamburlaine says: "Shall I die, and this unconquered?" (Part II, V.iii.150).

The play opens with a meeting between the Ottomans and the Hungarian forces. Once again we find an anachronistic treating of historical events. Here, Marlowe is referring to the Treaty of Varna signed between the kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire (during the reign of Sultan Murad II) when the Ottomans were attacking Venice: "We came from Turkey to confirm a league, / And not to dare each other to the field. / A friendly parley might become ye both" (II. i.i, 115-117).

Several other anachronistic references are to be found in the play, such as when Orcanes, King of Natolia, alludes to filling the Danube with "slaughtered bodies of these Christians"

(ii. i.i 36). This is an implicit reference to the massacres of Parisian Protestants in 1572 on St. Bartholomew's Day, when bodies filled the Seine. Tamburlaine's order to kill every man, woman, and child at Babylon (which no longer existed by Marlowe's time) could be seen as a reflection of the fate of the Dutch town of Naarden, which was ordered to be burnt down sparing no civilians by William of Orange (Honan 181): "Techelles, drown them all, man, woman, and child/ Leave not a Babylonian in the town" (ii.v.i, 167-168). Marlowe constantly refers to contemporary incidents of his time by giving them an Oriental disguise.

*Tamburlaine* also contains many geographic inaccuracies. The character of Tamburlaine, like his historical counterpart, had his feet on the ground and his eyes and aspirations on the Eastern and Mesopotamian maps. As a student of Cambridge, Marlowe may have found a copy of the great atlas of the world compiled by Abraham Ortelius; "This copy was given in 1581 to the Cambridge's library and was available to any Master's candidate. The problem with atlases is that they expire quite quickly and this is apparent in Marlowe's geographical inaccuracies mentioned throughout the play" (Honan 171).

A good example of this inaccuracy could be found in Tamburlaine's map of Africa, in which Zanzibar appears in large type as a part of western "Afric", and the sea between Africa and South America becomes the Oceanus "Aethiopicus". Thus, in part two, when Techelles gives a report on the areas conquered during their military march he states:

To Zanzibar,  
The western part of Afric, where I viewed  
The Ethiopian sea, rivers and lakes,  
But neither man nor child in all the land. (Pt II, I.iii, 194–197)

All in all, Marlowe succeeds in presenting a psychologically and intellectually a complex character that is ever on the move, never to rest: "Always moving as, the restless spheres/  
Wills us to wear ourselves and never rest" (i. ii.vii, 25-26).

Part one ends with the hero's growing savagery, intensified through his larger than life ambitions. The second part written by Marlowe due to popular demand, explores Tamburlaine's fortunes (in part two he appears more as a demigod than human) and follows Tamburlaine's destruction of Babylon and the killing of his son Calyphas. It is only on his death bed that Tamburlaine retains his human appearance. Peter LePage concludes: "Tamburlaine [...] is only human and dies a victim of his striving against divinity" (607). The historical Timur's mausoleum still survives to this day with the inscription that reads: "This is the tomb of the Sultan of the World, Timur Gurgan".

Finally, *Tamburlaine the Great* can be summed up in this manner:

It is clear that his (Marlowe's) views of history, of society, and particularly of social violence begin to evolve in the Tamburlaine plays. Vouching for the fearless mind, the hero is withered by his own brutality, in a story which pertains to violent Europe and England as well (Honan 181).

**Conclusion:**

For centuries after the advent of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, the world of Islam was at the peak of achievement and world power. Fear of Islamic power caused much anxiety in the Christian world. But with the dawn of modernity during the course of the seventeenth century, this anxiety gradually declined. The Renaissance, the Reformation, the scientific and technological revolutions resulted in significant European leaps that left the Islamic world far behind. Eventually the main European powers engaged in military conquests of Muslim countries and succeeded in subjecting Muslims and their lands to colonial control. In other words, the formula changed, although the equation remained the same. The Western need to construct an incorrect image of Islam or of the 'other' passed unto the modern discourse of Islam. Such views are depicted by critics like Edward Said and Daniel Norman, who see the "Western canon of attitudes toward Islam as having been formed in the Middle Ages and transmitted unchanged into the modern world" (Blanks 24). That's not quite right for Said, who sometimes gestures toward old roots of antipathy towards the east, but deals mostly with post-1800 works. By intensively dealing with Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* as an example of a Western bias towards the Islamic 'other' during the early modern period, we acquire a deeper understanding of the different interpretations bestowed upon Islam. In other words, we are allowed to see how Islamophobia has evolved throughout the centuries and the reasons behind its evolution.

Westerners still depict Islam as a threat to Western civilization, yet this fear is no longer because of the Islamic threat to a Christian Europe or because of an inferiority complex vis-à-vis Islamic power. In our modern world, the Muslim military threat has been met and the danger that Islam poses is not because of its political or military status. Indeed, Eurocentric cultural superiority now shapes present modern discourse. Today Islam is sometimes portrayed as a backward and violent religion totally at odds with Western values of modernity

and democracy. Offensive and negative images of Muslims have become tropes of a culture war that started many centuries ago and which may be undone only with a strong dose of human understanding and tolerance. Unfortunately, Western propaganda projects the stereotype of the barbarous and backwards Muslim.

Looking at examples from English literary history such as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, we find similar portrayals of the Eastern Other. Depending on inaccurate information about Islam and its prophet Mohammad, Marlowe presents his audience with an essentially Islamophobic play. Tamburlaine burns the holy Quran on stage and dares Mohammed to take his revenge on him. Using derogatory verbal phrases, he continuously mocks the Muslims he encounters and triumphs over their silly Ottoman Sultan.

Beneath the surface of Marlowe's rhetoric lies an undeclared battle between Islam and the West that has been playing out since the earliest of times. This rhetoric has multiple strands of religion interwoven with culture and history. The critical tones which fueled the Christian Crusades in their holy war against the Islamic infidels are found in modern depictions of Muslims in Western media and press. Hate groups such as Stop Islamization of America (SIOA) and the Freedom Defense Initiative and the English Defence League (EDL) all presume the backwardness and the supposed barbarity of the Islamic religion thus resulting in the rising fear of and prejudiced portrayal and rejection of Islam. These distortions of Islamic values are in part because of religious extremists (like Taliban and ISIS) who use the pretense of establishing pure Islamic law in the justification of their mass violence and terror by announcing their aims as going back to the standards established by the Prophet more than 1,400 years ago along with their misunderstanding of the concept of *jihad* which is often mistranslated as 'holy war' against the evil West. These Islamist fundamentalists have caused Western media to consider all Muslims to be fundamentalists who oppose modernity and development.

The modern misunderstanding of Islam and Islamic culture has its roots going back to the medieval periods in Europe because of the perceived threat of Islam to Christian identity. Thus we find Christian Europeans used many different ways to reassure Christians of Christianity's superiority over Islam by radically distorting Islam and treating it as a "pagan idolatry, heresy, the cult of Antichrist, or a confused blend of all of these" (Tolan 171).

Despite the vast availability of more accurate information about Islamic culture and values in modern times, we still find similar misrepresentation of the Islamic 'Other' and this is what we identify as Islamophobia. This modern form of Islamophobia is basically based upon negative stereotypes of Muslims and is sometimes referred to as "Islamoprejudice".

The term 'Islamophobia' is a relatively new phrase or neologism that has entered into modern discourses in 1923 in an article in *The Journal of Theological Studies*. The Oxford English Dictionary defines Islamophobia as the "intense dislike or fear of Islam, especially as a politically force; hostility or prejudice towards Muslims".

Other scholars consider Islamophobia to be a form of racism, although the implications of this term still cause controversy. However, the term formally entered the realm of modern discourse with the official publication of Runnymede Trust's report in 1997, which dealt with Muslims in Britain. Nonetheless, I believe that the implications of what this term implies has existed in the past and still exists today in what has been labeled as Islamophobia. Recent documentaries like *Hollywood Harems* (1999, directed by Tania Kamal-Eldin), *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (by Jack Shaheen, 2006), *The Muslims Are Coming!* (2013), *Valentino's Ghost: Why We Hate Arabs* (directed by John Singh, 2015) have shed light on the rising Islamophobic sentiments of the West and underline the prejudiced stereotyping of the Islamic Other in Western culture.

It will take much effort and perseverance to convince the modern world that Islam has been turned into a scapegoat upon which people can thrust their anxieties and fears. The



modern Western attitudes toward Islam began to first emerge in earlier anti-Muslim traditions. When looking at the long history of negative portrayals of Islam, we must learn to cross-examine contemporary material that plays into this anti-Islamic bias —Such bias that can be found in the works of many eminent European and English writers of the past like Dante, Milton, Spencer, Marlowe and Shakespeare among others.

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