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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Study of the Position and Role of Women in the Family during the Timurid Period (771-913 AH)

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Abstract

The family, as the oldest social institution, has been shaped by fundamental human needs and has undergone numerous transformations throughout history. The Timurid period, with its unique socio-cultural characteristics, provides an important context for studying the evolution of family systems and the status of women within them. This research combines historical analysis with the structuralism theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss to examine the state of the family institution and the position of women in Timurid families, addressing the question of how transformations in the family system have altered the status and roles of women as wives, mothers, and daughters. The research employs a qualitative and historical-analytical methodology, gathering data through the study of historical written sources, documents, literary texts, travelogues, and ethical books. The data are analyzed within the framework of structuralist concepts, including opposing pairs (such as male/female, power/submission). The findings indicate that the Timurid family system was primarily extended, patriarchal, and patrilineal, with polygamous marriages being common among affluent classes. Despite the dominance of patriarchy, women played a significant role in many households as internal managers, actively participating in family affairs and maintaining social relationships. This study presents a structural analysis demonstrating that transformations in the Timurid family system, while preserving traditional frameworks, have created a noteworthy redefinition of women's statuses in the roles of wives, mothers, and daughters, leading to both new constraints and opportunities for women to fulfill their roles.

Keywords: Extended family, Iranian women, Timurids, maternal role, wifely role, structuralism, social history.

1. Introduction

The family is one of the oldest and smallest social institutions of humanity, shaped by biological needs and the social nature of human beings. Through the bond of marriage, women and men establish a legitimate social connection, committing to form a shared life for an unspecified duration while taking on the subsequent responsibilities. Within this framework, fathers,

mothers, and elders bear the duty of supporting and educating their children and younger family members (Giddens, 1997: 424; Cohen, 1999: 127). A historical examination of family systems reveals that multiple types of family structures have evolved over time, with the status and roles of women in this vital institution varying based on social, cultural, and historical conditions. In traditional historiography, the focus has primarily been on political events and the roles of men, often overlooking the status and contributions of women in social and familial transformations. This oversight has led to a scarcity of primary sources and analytical studies regarding women and family in Iranian history, particularly in various historical periods. However, with the evolution of research methodologies, the emergence of fields such as women's history and gender studies, and the application of interdisciplinary approaches like social history, sociology, and anthropology, more comprehensive and in-depth examinations of the roles and positions of women have become possible. Consulting diverse sources such as literary texts, biographical collections, encyclopedias, ethical books, and historical documents has helped to partially fill this gap and provided a credible framework for reevaluating the position of women in the family institution.

Choosing the Timurid period as the timeframe for this research is of great significance due to its unique social and cultural characteristics and structural features. This era witnessed significant transformations in family structures and the roles of women as key members, including roles such as wives, mothers, wet nurses, and daughters. Focusing on this period facilitates a deeper understanding of how historical, social, and cultural factors have influenced the evolution of women's status within the family and redefined their roles.

The necessity of this study emphasizes several aspects: first, the lack of comprehensive analytical and theoretical research regarding the family institution and the status of women during the Timurid period, particularly with reliance on modern theoretical frameworks; second, the importance of understanding the dynamic structural mechanisms of the family as the primary framework for the transmission of culture, values, and social norms; and third, the role of women as active agents in this framework, who, in addition to performing traditional roles, have significantly influenced family management and the maintenance of social networks. Thus, the structural analysis of the Timurid family, based on structuralist theory, provides an opportunity to examine and recognize the complex mechanisms of sexual interactions, power, and roles within the family, scientifically clarifying the contributions of women to social and cultural reproduction processes.

In this research, utilizing a structuralist approach, the structure and characteristics of the family during the Timurid period, particularly the position of women in various roles, have been thoroughly investigated. The findings of this study not only aid in a better understanding of the historical family in Iran but may also influence the comprehension of how the roles of women evolved in subsequent historical periods.

2. Literature Review

Studies related to the family and the role of women in the social history of Iran have long been a focus of attention; however, research specifically centered on the Timurid period is relatively limited. Most existing studies emphasize the political and social dimensions of court women. For instance, the book Women of the Timurid Era by Leila Mohammadi explores the political activities and, to some extent, the cultural endeavors of court women.

Several theses examine the status of women during the Timurid period, including:

"The Status of Women in the Timurid Era" by Mansoureh Mohagheghian

"Political, Cultural, and Economic Functions of Court Women in the Timurid Era" by Sara Shams

"Women of the Timurid Family and Their Activities" by Hadi Zabihi

"The Role of Ladies in the Political Structure and Economic and Cultural Transformations of the Timurid Era" by Maryam Ghoodarz- Morad.

As indicated by their titles, these works predominantly focus on the political actions of a few noblewomen, discussing their involvement in various political domains while neglecting to address their social status or the roles women played within family dynamics.

Another notable article, "The Role of Women as Patrons in Expanding Architecture in the Timurid and Safavid Periods," by Dr. Mahnaz Shayestefar, exclusively discusses the contributions of Timurid women to architecture.

Additionally, in the article Women in Timurid Dynastic Politics by Beatrice Forbes Manz, included in Women in Iran from the Rise of Islam to 1800, the author briefly examines the role of women in the political relationships of the Timurid dynasty (University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2003, pp. 122-139).

The study The Role of Women in Timurid Political Conflicts focuses on the activities of court women during the political transformations of the Timurid period.

The article titled Political Marriages: From the Arrival of the Timurids to the Emergence of the Safavids (Causes and Consequences) by Boroumand et al. discusses the phenomenon of political marriages during the Timurid era and the Turkmens, primarily centered around the acquisition of greater political and economic benefits, despite doctrinal and political differences.

None of these articles make any reference to women's roles in family functions. Consequently, this research aims to bridge the existing gap regarding the multifaceted roles of women during the Timurid era by integrating a structuralist theoretical approach with relevant historical studies, providing a more accurate depiction of their status within both family and society.

3. Conceptual Framework

Structuralism is a philosophical school of thought that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century within the domains of philosophy and human sciences, exerting significant influence across various disciplines. This paradigm first developed in France during the 1950s and gained increased prominence among researchers and academics in Europe and North America over the following two decades. Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theories are often regarded as the genesis of this school. Subsequently, structuralism extended beyond linguistics and was applied in numerous fields. As a theoretical approach, structuralism argues that social realities should be studied through underlying, organized structures that lie beyond the surface appearance of phenomena. These structures consist of a system of interrelated elements that shape the meaning and functioning of the entire social system (Javaheri, 2001: 110). Claude Lévi-Strauss (November 28, 1908 – October 30, 2009), a French ethnologist and anthropologist, was a prominent modern theorist of anthropology who introduced influential ideas across key aspects of the discipline. He gained recognition for his structuralist theory and his distinctive methodological approach in supporting this perspective within anthropology. His most notable studies include examinations of "the basic structures of kinship" and "myth structures," along with developing significant theories in these areas (Boris Wiseman, Levi-Strauss for Beginners, 2000: 9). From Lévi-Strauss's perspective, a structure possesses four key properties: Firstly, it operates as a kind of system or apparatus in which any change in a component triggers changes in other components; secondly, any structure can be seen as an exemplar of a broader class of similar structures; thirdly, based on these properties, it can be predicted how the entire structure will respond if one or more elements are altered; and fourthly, the function of the structure must be apparent in all its perceptible and observable manifestations (ibid., pp. 331–332). He posited that structures are essentially the connections between elements, originating from the unconscious (Fernando, 2010: 17), and are distinct from social norms and social relations. According to Lévi-Strauss, a structure is a product of social relations but exists higher than the collection of these relations (Lévi-Strauss, 1958: 334–336). The underlying principle of Lévi-Strauss's theory compares kinship systems with language. One of Ferdinand de Saussure's central ideas is that phonemes (sound units) are not significant individually; rather, it is the relation between them that holds importance, with each phoneme fulfilling a role that differentiates it from others. Lévi-Strauss applied this idea to kinship systems, emphasizing that relationships in kinship networks must be prioritized similarly. Another analogy between language and kinship is that, just as words are exchanged in language, people—particularly women—are exchanged within social communities. Kinship systems, like linguistic systems, are shaped gradually by the subconscious mind. In geographically and culturally distant societies, kinship forms, marriage rules, and interpersonal behaviors among certain family members demonstrate that these phenomena originate from underlying, universal yet hidden laws. Lévi-Strauss states: "Kinship phenomena are of a linguistic nature" (1958, p. 47; Strauss-Lévi). Family and kinship have historically attracted the attention of social scientists

and scholars. In patriarchal tribes where the father's authority is dominant, the relationship between father and son is primarily based on respect and courtesy. In his works, particularly in Structure of Kinship Ties, Lévi-Strauss demonstrates that these systems transcend simple biological frameworks and adhere to universal structural rules. For instance, the concept of "the exchange of daughters" functions as a contractual social custom that helps solidify social alliances (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). According to him, marriage bonds between groups resemble a traditional form of gift exchange, with women being the most important gift exchanged. Therefore, the primary role of kinship systems is to regulate and ensure the continuity of female exchange among groups. When women are at the center of reciprocal exchange, it is because the biological perpetuation of the social group depends on women.

Structuralism Structuralism pertains to the analysis of how elements constituting a whole (such as the family) are organized, asserting that understanding any individual element is only possible through its position within the overall structure (Saussure, 1916). Within the context of the family, these elements include gender roles, myths, power relations, and cultural norms that define the position of women. Saussure believed that cultural structures—such as the family, regarded as the primary and fundamental unit of social organization—are systems of relationships formed based on systematic rules and specific constraints, such as marriage laws, the distribution of gender roles, and degrees of kinship (Carsten, 2000). These rules regulate behaviors and relationships on a group level (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). According to this perspective, the family is not merely a biological unit but a social structure with its own set of rules and relations. These, in conjunction with cultural factors, determine the roles and positions of family members, creating a symbolic and practical system through the division of roles among father, mother, spouse, children, and others that organizes social interactions (Fortes, 1983). In other words, this system comprises an implicit code of "taboos and social directives" governing interactions among family members and relatives (Goody, 1973). Within this framework, the position of women in the Timurid era family is not viewed solely as a product of individual will or superficial restrictions. Instead, it results from complex, unwritten patterns and social-cultural structures that have been intricately and implicitly developed. Lévi-Strauss, amid numerous possible kinship relations, narrows his focus to a limited set of reciprocal pairings—namely, sister/brother, wife/husband, father/son, mother/daughter. Kinship structures are defined by four elements: brother, sister, father, and son, with always at least one negative and one positive relation. For kinship systems to exist, three types of familial relationships—consanguineous, affinal, and descent-based—must be present. Lévi-Strauss emphasizes that kinship, built upon binary structures such as man/woman, manages these conflicts and relationships in a way that maintains the structural balance and stability of the family. This structuralist perspective indicates that the role of women extends beyond biological functions and is reinforced through symbolic and functional patterns within the family (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). In this research, the theory of structuralism serves as a fundamental approach to

understanding the position of women. Instead of perceiving women as passive agents in history, this framework enables the analysis of social and cultural structures that shape women's roles and statuses within Timurid families. For example, the class, religious, and cultural structures of the Timurid period established norms and rules for women that varied across different social strata. This study, employing such an analytical framework, seeks to deconstruct these structures and examine their influence on women's social standing. Overall, this approach allows the researcher to revisit the position of women in Timurid families as embedded within a systemic set of social and cultural norms—beyond individual agency—highlighting how these structures either sustained or transformed family dynamics. As a result, the study provides not only a detailed and systematic portrayal of the historical family structure but also offers profound insights into the cultural and social roles of women within it.

4. **Research Methods**

This research employs a qualitative and historical-analytical approach. Data collection was carried out through the study of primary sources—including historical texts, documents, travel accounts, literary works, biographical dictionaries (tazkerehes), encyclopedias, and ethical treatises pertinent to the Timurid period—as well as secondary sources such as scholarly articles, monographs, and historical research. Data analysis was conducted within a framework grounded in structuralist concepts, notably examining binary oppositions (e.g., man/woman, power/submission) with the aim of exploring underlying patterns and hidden relationships present in the historical sources.

The primary analytical tools employed were content analysis and interpretive hermeneutics, emphasizing the identification of cultural schemas, social roles, and perceptions woven into the texts. The analytical process was based on the assumptions of structuralism, which facilitated the elucidation of latent relations and structural patterns. For a more thorough analysis, particular focus was placed on understanding the connections among cultural components, structural factors, and the role of women within family structures during the Timurid era (771–913 AH). This approach ultimately aimed to evaluate women's roles and statuses through the lens of the period's cultural, social, and historical frameworks.

This methodological approach enabled a deeper comprehension and systematic depiction of the implicit structures governing family relationships and social dynamics. The findings provide a scholarly, analytical perspective on the underlying social constructs influencing women's roles during the Timurid period. The ultimate outcome is a clear articulation of women's roles within a structural context, grounded in meticulous source analysis and precise interpretation of relational patterns.

5. **Family structure During the Timurid period**

In Iran, throughout different historical periods—most notably during the Timurid era—the family functioned as a fundamental social institution. Due to its intrinsic characteristics, the family played a significant role in shaping individuals' daily lives, as well as in the formation of social and cultural identities. Its influence was evident in both the everyday practices of communities and the broader processes of socialization and cultural heritage transmission.

The structure of the family in the Timurid period, under the influence of culture and social traditions, had basic characteristics in terms of the breadth of family dimensions (extensive or core), center of gravity of power (patriarchal, egalitarian or matriarchal), marriage type (monogamy and polygamy), social norm of choosing a spouse (endogamy or exogamy), origin and relationship (patrilineal or maternal ancestry). In the Timurid period, families were typically extended and patriarchal, comprising parents and children living together in one household. As described in historical sources: "A household consists of five components: the head of the household, the mistress, children, servants, and sustenance… The relation of the house to its head is akin to the relation of a kingdom to its king… It is incumbent upon the head of the household to manage and organize all affairs, both great and small" (Tarikh-e Shahy-e Qarakhataiyan, 1957: 59). Given that daughters would leave their parental home after marriage, extended families were often patrilocal in nature.

Polygamy was a common form of marriage, and evidence of it can be found in literary texts.[1] Polygamy was common and accepted. In nomadic life, the power of each family and tribe was determined by the number of its members, so each man had multiple wives depending on his economic status. Timurid women were categorized into two main groups based on their rank and position: the first group comprised legally married wives, referred to as *āghāyan* and *khwātīn* (plural of *khātūn*) (for example, see: *Shāmī*, vol. 1, p. 152). The second group were common-law, informal wives and respected concubines who, although ranked after married women in terms of importance, enjoyed all the benefits of family life for their children. These women were, in the terminology of the time, called *sarari* (plural of * sariyya *), *qumayan* (plural of *qoma* or *quma*), or *dukhtaran-e-khaneh* (house girls) (Khandmir, 1983: Vol. 3, p. 542).

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[1] When discussing the upbringing of women and their virtue or vice, Saadi recommends for men to remarry:
"Renew the woman, my friend—each new spring,
For the Persian calendar cannot suffice with the old."
"Anyone you see caught in the trap of a woman,
Do not mock Saadi or cast blame upon him." (Saadi, 1389: 163)
The poetry of Aref Ardabili also indicates that having multiple wives was common in the past and was carried out with relative ease. Apparently, age compatibility was not necessarily observed in these marriages:
"It is not fitting for me to think of these people,
In their company, I have thought of nothing else this evening."
"I bought many virgin brides,
And I have enjoyed seeing their beauty."
"It is not fitting for me to grieve over this age,
To marry in such a manner."
"Making a stranger happy with loneliness,
Marrying him in such a way, a groom." (Ardabili, ibid., 79)

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Among the women, the first wife and her children enjoyed greater prestige, respect, and rights than others. The mother's lineage was also very important in this matter. For example, Malik Khanum and Tumān Āghā, wives of Timur, and Khan-zadeh, Timur's daughter-in-law, were of significant importance and held prominent positions due to their family lineage, playing a strong role in various affairs (Yazdi, Vol. 1, pp. 21, 22, 155, 180–188; Samarqandi, 1993: Vol. 2, p. 480; Khandmir, 1983: Vol. 2, p. 113). Marriages were both exogamous and endogamous. Timur himself had multiple wives. This helped increase the influence and power of his family and maintain political and economic relations with various families (Khandmir, 1983: Vol. 3, pp. 451-542). After his victory in Transoxiana, Timur chose the title of Gurkan, which means "son-in-law" in order to gain legitimacy by marrying some daughters or wives of conquered rulers and emirs, sometimes Mongols (Ibn Arabshah, 1977: 8). These marriages were also to maintain his power.

Family relations and kinship were very important, and family ties were considered a crucial factor in maintaining power and stability. (Hafez-e Abru, 2002: Vol. 1, 743). Strong ties between clans and relatives were highly valued. Accordingly, endogamous marriages also occurred among the descendants of Timur (Yazdi, vol. 2, p. 434; Samarkandi, vol. 2, pp. 445 and 470; Natanzī, 2004:p 315).

6. **Marriage**.
Because the main axis of the formation of the family is marriage, before explaining the importance and position of women in the roles of spouse, motherhood and childhood, the issue of marriage is explained.

Marriage and the formation of family within the Timurid society were governed by specific customs and regulations. These included practices related to bride selection, the matchmaking ceremony, contributions for the dowry, and the wedding celebration. The following discussion summarizes some of these traditional practices as recorded in primary historical sources Timur consistently encouraged his sons and male descendants to marry [multiple times]. His primary goal in doing so was to create a new group of loyal followers on which he could rely in administering the various territories he conquered. This issue was so important to Timur that he himself ordered the preparations for the wedding and the marriage ceremony. It is mentioned in the Zafarnameh that although Timur was constantly at war to conquer all the lands and did not stay in one place, he put a lot of emphasis on marriage and providing the grounds for it. (Yazdi, vol. 2,pp 1256-1257).

Families played a key role in choosing spouses for their children, taking into account economic and social benefits. The type of marriage ceremony and the raising of children had a great influence on the formation of family identity. The marriage ceremonies during the Timurid period were conducted with grandeur and opulence, and were considered an important

occasion for preserving family and social relations. For the wedding ceremonies, the Zoroastrian priests and astrologers were obliged to determine the best hours and time (Yazdi, vol. 1, pp438-445).

Typically, a mediator was appointed as a liaison for the courtship. In this regard, family lineage and status have been very important. The person who was assigned as a liaison was of great importance (Shami, 1984: 95; 169-170). In the poem of Farhadnameh, Aref Ardabili informs the reader of the level of culture, rituals and social customs, including the courtship customs of his time (Ardabili, 2529 SH: 52).

In the book Anis al-Nas, criteria for selecting a virtuous wife include chastity, piety, kindness, loyalty to her husband, tactfulness, virginity, domestic skills, obedience, and frugality. These are presented as positive qualities for women, and men are advised to consider these attributes when choosing a spouse (Shuja, 1995: p. 218).

The age of marriage, especially for girls, was low, and children were betrothed from childhood, and disobedience of the father was considered undesirable. Marriage with a relative was also of greater importance. For example, Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim Sajjasi, in his book Fara'id al-Suluk, while telling a story about a quarrel between two brothers, explains that the reason for proposing to his cousin at a young age was to ward off the desire of strangers to marry her (Sajāsi, 1989: 243). It can be inferred from Saadi sages that in the matter of marriage, age is also not considered at certain times (Sa'di, 1963: pp 153, 157). The girl went with the dowry to the husband's house, the position of the family has been very influential in the quality of it and promises were made before the contract, so that there would be no problems afterwards. The story of Sajasi in this context also illustrates this (Sajāsi, 188). Jāmī, in his Haft Aurang, also refers to the fact that the father made every effort to prepare the dowry for his daughter (Jāmī, 1999: p. 481).

The purpose of forming a family was to bear children, secure future labor, and, consequently, to raise children and ensure the continuity of generations. In his Akhlaq-e-Nasiri, Ṭūsī mentions that the purpose of family formation is childbearing, along with the care, education, and upbringing of children (Ṭūsī, 1990: pp. 230–227).

7. Position and Role of Individuals in the Family

The Timurid families in Iran, culturally and socially, first acted in accordance with their past norms and customs in the motherland and maintained their family structure and organization and then, since they got acquainted with the culture and customs of the Iranian family and converted to Islam, among the Timurids, we can witness the spread of Iranian-Islamic laws and customs along with Turkish-Mongolian customs.

Gender roles were clearly defined. Men were responsible for providing livelihoods, working outside the home, and making major economic and social decisions, and they were usually also active in political and military affairs. While women were mostly involved in domestic affairs, raising children, and managing the household. Despite the power of patriarchy, women in many families played an active role in managing family affairs. After the father and especially in the absence of the father, the mother had the greatest influence on other members, including the children. The subsequent discussion outlines references from sources concerning the roles and responsibilities of family members.

7-1. The Position and Role of the Father

During this period, we also witness the sovereignty and leadership of the father in the family. He enjoys such value, respect, and credibility among the other members of the family that the non-implementation of his orders and words and the non-observance of his instructions would result in reproach in this world and the hereafter. Thus, most children must follow the father's path, and attention to the father's will was obligatory (Sajāsi, 1989:160-162).

The account of Clavijo during Timur's journey to Soltaniyeh affirms the father's status and the respect he commanded within the family: "When news of Miran Shah's devastation reached Timur, he immediately went to see him. When Miran Shah heard that his father had arrived in Sultaniyeh, he hung a rope around his neck and went to his father, begging for forgiveness. Relatives and elders intervened for Miranshah. However, Timur removed him from the position of regent and appointed his son Abu Bakr Mirza as his successor. However, he asked his grandfather to forgive his father and restore him to his former position. Timur then gave this position to Miranshah's other son, Khalil Sultan. Abu Bakr Mirza treated his father Miranshah with the utmost respect and lived with his father"(Clavijo, 1995: 172).

7-2. The Position and Role of the Wife (Woman)

The main activities of women in Iranian society have been mostly limited to working at home, raising children, and sometimes participating in affairs outside the home. And further, he mentions the characteristics of a suitable wife as intelligence, modesty, chastity, compassion, piety, obedience, fertility, brevity, etc. (Tusi, 1990: 207-205).

In general, based on the information available in the sources, it can be concluded that the relationship of women of this class was summed up in sacrifice and service to their family members. During this period, the home environment was the most important area for women's activities. The woman had to do the chores of all family members.

The Turks placed special importance on the status of women, and this importance stems from the tribal nature of these governments. Ibn Battuta writes about the status of women among

the Turks: 'What was particularly surprising in these lands was the respect they had for their women' (Ibn Battuta, 1982: 361).

Consequently, in the Timurid period, women benefited from enhanced rights and privileges attributable to their tribal characteristics. For example, if a woman approached a prince and petitioned for clemency regarding her own punishment or that of her relatives, minor offenses could be forgiven; in cases of more severe crimes, the punishment was reduced by half.For example, if a woman approached a prince and petitioned for clemency regarding her own punishment or that of her relatives, minor offenses could be forgiven; in cases of more severe crimes, the punishment was reduced by half. The most important role and duty of the women of the Timur court was to give birth, raise and train princes who could later manage a part of the vast territory of Timur. Timur had a great interest in increasing the number of people in his household and always encouraged his children and descendants to marry and procreate. He would be very happy to hear the good news of the birth of one of his children or grandchildren and would give many gifts to the person who brought him such news (Shami, 199).

Women of the Timur family enjoyed greater freedom within family and social contexts compared to women in Iranian society. Specifically, women and concubines did not cover their faces in the presence of men (Ibn Arabsha, ibid., 224). Tatar women moved unveiled and freely. The concept of a harem and seclusion was not common among them, and they would sit on the saddles with their men, accompanying them on military campaigns and pilgrimages. All family matters were the responsibility of the mother. They had the right to property in the time of Timur, and the equipment and gifts that were given to them were their own. The wives of the great men had their own houses, and they gave them separate tents when they traveled. They came to the field together with the warriors, bearing children at home, participating in festivities and joys with their husbands, and if their men were defeated, the women would go into captivity like other spoils (Lamb Harold, 2015: 36-37).

The women of the Timurid court, as they were highly regarded and respected throughout their lives, their death also caused deep sorrow to the Timurid sultans and princes, and a great mourning ceremony was held for them. In the post-Timur period, Akabigam, the wife of Ulugh Beg and the daughter of Muhammad Sultan, passed away in 821 AH. He was buried in the dome of his father's schoolhouse next to him. After the death of Aka Begum, Ulugh Beg was deeply grief-stricken, and in accordance with customary rites and traditions, he distributed alms to the rightful recipients to honor the soul of the deceased (Samarqandi, Vol. 2, p. 268). Firoozeh Begum, the mother of Sultan Hussein Bayqara, died in the year 874 AH. Sultan Hussein was profoundly affected by her death, to such an extent that he abandoned his royal responsibilities and spent several days mourning continuously from dawn to dusk, performing rites of mourning to the fullest extent prescribed (Khandmir, 1362: Vol. 4, p. 139).

Despite this, we still witness a negative view of women in reports from writers during this period: "Timur's attitude towards women, who are the snares of Satan, has reached Genghis Khan" (Ibn Arabshah, 1986: 8). Similarly, in the poetry of the era's poet, Aref Ardebili, there is also a negative portrayal of women:

"Where can a man ever find fidelity in a woman?

A woman who has love for her husband did this [deed].

From the blood that was cleansed with a nail,

she stained the wedding with dye on her hands" (Ardebili, 2529 SH: 23).

7-3. The Position and Role of the Mother

In this era, despite the dominance of male authority and patriarchal family structures, the influential role of the mother within the family has become increasingly prominent. In fact, he has played a role in the family affairs after his paternal grandfather. The effects of this can be seen in the ethical books of this period. Regarding the role of the mother in the family, Shoja Shirazi considers her as the father's partner in the property and his companion in the head of the house, managing the affairs and taking care of the children. And he introduces the best women as those who are wise, religious, modest, chaste, obedient, and not barren (Shuja, 220).

It seems that as long as the mother was alive, the family's property and wealth were not divided, and all the children respected the mother. Sajāsi talks about the role of the mother in the family while narrating a story: "... After the father's death, the mother took control of the wealth and acquired precious and valuable possessions." When the rising sun shone from my nazi (son), and also the nobility cast a shadow over me, I asked you to leave my father, and for the education of the inheritance of your age, my mother came out after much strife and strife of this broken cherub, which is in this tomb. And he said, "Your father bequeathed me, that whenever my son makes this mine for food, let him run, and declare my goods and blessings." (Sajāsi,169).

Nakhjavani also considers respect for parents as one of the duties, and in observing the mood and respect, he first prioritizes the mother, then the father, and then respects others. (Hindushah Nakhjavani, 1971: 287-290).

Timur paid special attention to women, especially pregnant women. As soon as it was known that one of Timur's brides was pregnant, Immediately, people were assigned to protect the woman in order to take full care of the health of the mother and the fetus (Shami, 1984: vol. 2, 199).

The Timurid monarchs vested great reverence in their mothers. Ulugh Beg, who was appointed by Shahrukh as the governor of Samarqand, typically traveled to Herat once annually to visit his mother, Goharshad. Whenever Goharshad set out from Herat with the intention of

visiting him, he would precede her outside the city to welcome her. Upon her return, he would present her with gifts and accompany her to the banks of the Jeyhun River (Samarkandi, Vol. 2, p. 507).

Sultan Hossein Baiqara had a great love for his mother Firuzeh Begum and tried to serve and satisfy her in the morning and evening. This woman died in 874 A.H., a few months after her son ascended the throne. Sultan Hussein buried him in one of the best places in Herat, next to the tomb of Imam Fakhruddin Razi (d. 606 AH) and built a magnificent tomb over his tomb, which was considered one of the most beautiful buildings in Herat (Khandmir, 1966: 197).

7-4. The importance and role of the Wet Nurse

The wet nurse was a woman who helped the mother in caring for the child and sometimes took on the responsibility of breastfeeding the child. In Iranian families, it also seems that the child was entrusted to the wet nurse after birth. "... but the aspect of raising children from the time of their birth is that they should be given to righteous wet nurses, and those wet nurses should be provided with halal food so that the child's nature is not tainted with impurities, for nothing but impure can be born from the impure. And when there is cleanliness in him, they forbid eating evil. and incite him to several manners…"(Armavi, 21).

The selection of the wet nurse has been very important and is usually made from close relatives. Because she is responsible for breastfeeding and raising the children, and many customs and morals are learned from her, and she plays a significant role in the upbringing and development of the child. Shaja'i Shirazi also states that the wet nurse should not be disabled or foolish, lest the infant's disability and undesirable habits and manners be transmitted through breastfeeding. (Shaja'i, 228).

For a better understanding of the position of the wet nurse, one can also refer to the poem of Saadi:

"Was it not that this nurse, who raised this idol,

had honey in her breast milk?" (Saadi, 1385: 733).

Timur paid very special attention to the upbringing and education of children. When a newborn came into the world, he was separated from his mother and entrusted to a wet nurse. One of the most important women of the court was assigned to the protection of the infant, who was tasked with overseeing all stages of the child's early development and upbringing. These steps were carried out under the direct supervision of Sarai Malik Khanum, the first wife of Timur (Shami, Vol. 2, 199).

In the year 796 AH, when Ibrahim Sultan, the son of Shahrokh, was born, Timur entrusted the duty of caring for and protecting this grandson to his wife, Tuman Agha, who held a feast on this occasion. Then Amir Usman Abbas was appointed as atabeg, and his wife, Sadqīn

Āghā, who was a close relative of Timur, was chosen as Ibrahim Sultan's wet nurse. (Yazdi, vol. 1, 515)

"The Atabak" or the child's private tutor, in the Timurid era, began his work after the infant's infancy. He who was an experienced and seasoned individual had the duty to prepare his princely student for the positions that would be entrusted to him in the future (Shami, Vol. 2, 200).

7-5. The Position and Role of Children

In the familial structure of the Timurid period (771–913 AH), the status and function attributed to children resulted from a confluence of cultural, social, and economic interactions characteristic of that era. During this period, Timurids emphasized the cultivation of virtuous, loyal, and socially and politically capable offspring. Analysis of historical and literary sources indicates that the position of children within the family was significant not only in terms of gender-specific roles and upbringing but also in relation to their duties within social and political spheres.

Although the primary focus in this era was placed on the education of boys, there is evidence suggesting that some educational instruction was also extended to girls. According to available information, children's education typically commenced at the age of seven, initially emphasizing religious practices such as prayer (salat) and fasting, followed by instruction in other necessary subjects.

In the book Anīs al-Nās, it is stated that the duties of parents involve upbringing and education of the child after weaning, whereby they should teach Islamic laws, obligations, and recitation of the Qur'an. Following this, they should instruct the child in writing, swordsmanship, horse riding, swimming, and preparing them for gainful employment (Shuja' SHirazi, pp. 228–229).

Moreover, Armavī mentions: "...When children reach the age of seven, they should be made to pray and fast. By the age of ten, negligence towards prayer and fasting should be reproved and corrected. They should be brought up with good manners..." (Armavī, p. 220).
In another passage regarding the discipline of child education, he states:
"...The first aspect of manners: Eating etiquette—eating with those who observe proper manners. The second aspect: Education—when it is time for school, entrust the child to a virtuous teacher to learn the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), especially those related to religion and good manners. After completing schooling, the child should be taught archery, swordsmanship, and chess. The third aspect: Clothing. The fourth: Respect and reverence towards mother, father, teacher, and anyone elder or superior. The fifth: Etiquette of speech—speak little, do not initiate speech but respond appropriately to

questions. The sixth: Teach what is considered good in Sharia and societal customs, such as performing ablution, maintaining personal and garment cleanliness, performing congregational prayers, observing fasting during Ramadan, etc. The seventh: From childhood, instill the remembrance of God's truth and cultivate a sense of God's fear within the heart..." (Ibid, 221–224).

Notably, in these traditions, gender distinctions are not explicitly discussed; the teachings and manners seem to encompass both girls and boys. Junaid Shirazi refers to a female educator in his work: "... Bibi Azīzah, daughter of Qazi Shams al-Dīn ibn Abī Bakr, was a virtuous teacher who instructed Muslim children without seeking material reward, demonstrating charity and sacrifice solely for God's sake, displaying patience and perseverance in the path of truth" (Junaid Shirazi, n.d., 214). Tusi also discusses the education of boys and girls, stating that after acquiring religious knowledge and Islamic jurisprudence, children should be instructed in ethics and both theoretical and practical wisdom. For girls, in addition to these, it was essential to teach modesty, decorum, chastity, and modesty within the household; reading and writing were generally discouraged, and instead, useful and appropriate arts for women should be taught. Upon reaching adolescence, a suitable marriage should be arranged (Tusi, 1369 AH: pp. 227–230).

In noble and ruling families, particularly within the royal and aristocratic lineages, the upbringing and social positioning of sons were primarily aimed at preparing them to assume the roles of crown prince and heir apparent, serving as custodians of familial and dynastic inheritance. Their education encompassed military training, religious instruction, literary education, and cultural cultivation, which not only ensured the perpetuation of hierarchical authority but also played an essential role in consolidating and legitimizing imperial policies and governance.

Daughters in these noble families, given the significance of familial alliances and political considerations, participated actively in processes related to marriage, strategic alliances, and state diplomacy—both domestic and foreign—indicating their strategic importance within the social and political fabric. Consequently, as previously noted, the care and formal education of children from the aristocratic and royal segments of society were entrusted to one of the reigning women, often serving as a wet nurse or guardian, who held a vital role in their overall upbringing and formative education.

From birth, royal children, following the completion of initial celebratory ceremonies, were taken from their parents under the supervision of prominent women and raised in dedicated custodial environments. For example, the maintenance and upbringing of Khalil Sultan, the son of Miranshah and Khanzada Begum(Shami, ibid., 94-95; Samarqandi, vol. 1, PP554-555) and the upbringing of Ulugh Beg, son of Shahrukh, was the responsibility of Sarai

Molk Khanum, the wife of Timur (Shami, ibid., 151). Timur entrusted the task of protecting Ibrahim Sultan, Shahrukh's other son, to his other wife, Tuman Agha (Yazdi, vol. 2, 515). In 804 A.H., Shahrukh had a son named Muhammad Jodaki, who was entrusted with his sponsorship and protection to Khanzadeh, the wife of Miranshah (Yazdi, vol. 2, 285). The prince was under the direct supervision of this woman until at least the age of 5. Ala-ud-Dawleh, the son of Baysanqor Mirza, was also raised by Shahrukh's wife, Goharshad. The daughter of Ulugh Beg Habibeh Sultan or Khanzada Begum was brought up by Goharshad (Samarqandi, vol. 2, 481). Khanzada, the wife of Miranshah, was also the mentor of Muhammad Judaki son of Mirza Shahrukh (Yazdi, vol. 2, 712).

In sum, the social positioning and educational roles assigned to the children of the Timurid elite were the outcome of a synthesis of prevailing political, cultural, and pedagogical principles, as well as the ideological imperatives of the era. This status was central to the dynastic continuity, the reinforcement of political authority, and the realization of cultural objectives, thereby reflecting the core values and social norms inherent to Timurid society.

8. Conclusion

By examining the family system during the Timurid period (AD 771-913) through a structural analysis based on Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism theory, it is evident that the status and roles of women during this era underwent significant changes, shaped within a framework of opposition and hierarchy.

The Timurid family system, which combined traditional tribal structures with political and social dynamics, primarily confined women to the roles of wives, mothers, and daughters. However, historical and social transformations created conditions under which women played a more effective role in certain domains, including cultural transmission and the stabilization of family structures.

In particular, women were recognized as agents of connection between families and tribes in their role as wives, yet political and economic decision-making power was predominantly concentrated in the hands of men. In their maternal roles, women were tasked with preserving and transmitting their unique lineage, an essential factor for family stability, although social limitations reduced their authority. In their roles as daughters, women played a crucial part in nurturing and educating the next generation, which served as an important tool for transmitting social values and norms.

The structuralist analysis, emphasizing opposing pairs such as male/female, power/submission, and center/periphery, reveals that the Timurid family system, by achieving a balance among these pairs, prompted transformations while maintaining structural stability, thereby redefining women's roles.

These findings indicate that the transformation of the family system during the Timurid period was simultaneously limiting and enabling for women's status; while male dominance was prominent, women still held a vital presence in key family roles, which indirectly influenced the continuity of culture and society.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the transformations within the Timurid family system, from the perspective of structuralism, reflect the conflict and interaction between stability and change in the roles and status of women within the family during that era.

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