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CHAPTER 11

TIMURIDS AND
 TURCOMANS
 TRANSITION AND FLOWERING
 IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

ALI ANOOSHAHR

THE winter of 1405 was a desperately cold one. The layer of ice on the River Oxus (now the Amu Darya in Uzbekistan) was so thick that even after digging over four feet down the scouts still did not reach water. A massive army of warriors crossed over, led by their seventy-year-old commander and king, Timur (Tamerlane), who had conquered or plundered all the lands between India and the Balkans and who had also set off the greatest artistic flowering in Western Asia to date. He was beginning a jihad against China. On Wednesday night, the eleventh of February, Timur drank excessively at a night gathering and ended up with a fever. He died the following Wednesday, February 18, 1405. For the next hundred years, his empire disintegrated into smaller units held and fought over by his sons and descendants, none of whom could dominate the others. This was an all-too-common pattern that had characterized politics in the region for the past five hundred years.

Almost a century after Timur's death, a twelve-year-old boy by the name of Isma'il rode out of Ardabil (in today's northwestern Iran) and began his rapid capture of the lands between the Tigris and Afghanistan. His family, the Safavids, had been the leaders of a religious shrine who had gradually entered politics and championed Twelver Shi'ism. Apparently, some of Isma'il's core followers believed him to an apocalyptic figure. They reportedly did not wear armor in battle because they thought his charisma protected them. They won an astonishing series of victories

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Timurlular

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Türkmenler

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