

Læseprøve

Uzbekistan with the Louvre of the Desert

Chapter 1

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan - is officially called the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan lies between latitudes 46° and 37° N and longitudes 56° and 74° E and borders five countries: Kazakhstan to the North; Kyrgyzstan to the Northeast; Tadjikistan to the Southeast, Afghanistan to the South; and Turkmenistan to the Southwest. It is 1.425 kilometers from West to East and 930 kilometers from North to south.



Map of Uzbekistan – Wikipedia

The country is one of the largest states in Central Asia and the 56th largest country in the world.

The country lies between two rivers Syr Darya and Amu Darya and none of them lead to the sea. Syr Darya runs mainly to the Aral Sea and the water from Amu Darya is used to water the cottons fields, earlier it also ran to the Aral Sea.

Less than 10% of its territory is intensively cultivated irrigated land in river valleys and oases. The rest is the vast desert Kyzyl Kum or the red desert which is the 16th largest desert in the world.

Uzbekistan is officially a democratic, secular, constitutional republic, comprising 12 provinces, one autonomous republic, and one capital city. It has a president with the name of Islam Karimov.

The country's official language is Uzbek, a Turkish language written in the Latin alphabet and spoken natively by approximately 85% of the population, although many people still speak Russian.

Uzbek constitute 81% of the population, followed by Russians (5,4%), Tajiks (4,0%), Kazakhs (3%) and others (6,5%).

The highest point in Uzbekistan is the Khazret Sultan, which is elevated 4,643 meters (15,233 ft.) above sea level. It is located on the border between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in Surkhandarya Province and in the Uzbek part of the Gissar Range.

The lowest part is Sariqarnish Kuli - 15 m (- 48,75 ft.) below sea level. It is a lake between Khiva and Bukhara, where approximately the northwest quarter of the lake belongs to Uzbekistan and the rest to Turkmenistan.

During the Soviet Era they devised a plan where Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan provided water from the two rivers to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the summer and these three countries provided Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with oil and gas during the winter in return. But this system collapsed after the collapse of the USSR.

Because of environmental neglect during the Soviet Union's period in the country it throws Uzbekistan into grave environmental crises.

The use of chemicals, diversion of huge amounts of irrigation water from the two rivers that feed the region, and the chronical lack of water treatment plants are

among the factors that have caused health and environmental problems on an enormous scale.

The climate in the Republic of Uzbekistan is continental, with little precipitation about 100-200 millimeters annually (3.9–7.9 inches). The average summer temperature is about 40° C (/104° F) while the average winter low temperature is around - 23 °C (- 9 °F).

Chapter 2

The Aral Sea

When Uzbekistan was a part of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government decided in the early 1960s that the two rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya that fed the Aral Sea should irrigate the desert in an attempt to grow rice, melons, cereals and cotton.

The rivers were used primarily for irrigation but in the 1940s they constructed several artificial canals that should expand the arable land.

Unfortunately the canals were poorly built so the water leaked and never reached the fields.

The Soviet planned that cotton should become a major export. They called cotton for “the white gold”.

They temporarily succeeded, because Uzbekistan was the world’s largest exporter of cotton in 1988.

In the 1960s the Aral Sea was the world’s fourth largest lake, but it began to shrink, because between 20 and 60 Km³ of the water each year were going to the land instead of the sea.

From 1961 to 1970 the level of the Aral Sea fell at an average of 20 cm (7.9 in) a year. In the 1970s the average rate nearly tripled and by the 1980 it continued to drop, now with 80 – 90 cm (31-35 in) a year.

At the same time the fishermen warned about the situation but nobody listened.

The rate of water usage for irrigation increased to the double between 1960 and 2000, and the cotton production nearly doubled in the same period.

In 1960 the sea surface was 68.000 km² (26.000 sq. mi) and by 1998 it had dropped to 29.019 km² (11,076 sq. mi).

During the same period its salinity increased from about 10 g/l to about 45 g/l.



The Khwarazm oasis on a satellite image from 2009 Wikipedia

When the water in the Aral Sea continues to shrink it splits up in two seas. The smallest was the North Aral Sea and the largest the South Aral Sea.

In June 1991 Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union but as president Islam Kasimov's was sticking to the cotton policy the Aral Sea continued to shrink during the 1990s.

The government maintained a massive irrigation system, where the water was lost through evaporation before it reached the cotton.

At the same time they didn't use crop rotation and the soil was depleted because of the monoculture so they had to use lots of pesticides and fertilizers.

The runoff from the fields washed these chemicals into the shrinking sea, creating severe pollution and health problems.

By summer 2003, the South Aral Sea was vanishing faster than predicted and it was further divided into an eastern and western sea.

In 2004, the Aral Sea's surface area was only 17,160 km² (6,630 sq. mi), 25% of its original size, and the salinity had increased nearly fivefold and killed most of its natural flora and fauna.

By 2007, the area of the sea had further shrunk to 10% of its original size, and the salinity of the remains of the South Aral had increased to 100 g/l.

(The salinity of seawater is around 35 g/l.)

The South Aral continues to disappear and its drastic shrinkage has created the Aralkum, a desert on the former lake bed. The North Aral continues to decline and is now a dam.



An Aral ship is lying on the dry bottom of the former Aral Sea.

Photo Wikipedia

The desiccation and salinization of the lake have caused extensive storms of salt and dust from the dried bottom of the sea, wreaking havoc on the region's agriculture and ecosystems and on the population's health. The desertification has led to a largescale loss of plants and animal life, loss of arable land, changed climatic conditions, depleted yields on the cultivated land that re-mains, and destruction of historical and cultural monuments.

Every year, many tons of salts are carried as far as 800 kilometers away. Regional experts maintain that salt and dust storms from the Aral Sea have affected global climate change with more than 5%.

The Aral Sea disaster is the most visible indication of environmental decay, because of the Soviet's bad management. Those policies present enormous environmental challenges throughout Uzbekistan today.

You can drive to the village Muynak to see where the Aral Sea was before 1915. It is 220 km from Nukus and if you want to see the real Aral Sea you have to drive 380 km and spend a whole day where you sleep in a special tent during the night. You can only go there with a four-wheel drive.

The catastrophe of the Aral Sea is the best example of the environmental devastation in Uzbekistan, because the water from Amu Darya and Syr Darya were used as irrigation for cotton cultivation and other kinds of crops.

Today it is only Syr Darya which is passing from the north part of Uzbekistan that reaches the Aral Sea.

Chapter 3

Uzbekistan's economy

Uzbekistan's economy relies mainly on commodity production, such as cotton, gold, uranium, and natural gas.

Despite the declaration of transition to a market economy, the government continues to maintain economic controls which imports in favor of domestic "import substitution".

Chapter 4

Early history

The first people, who occupied Central Asia, were Iranian nomads who arrived from the northern grasslands of Kazakhstan in the first millennium BC.

These nomads, who spoke Iranian dialects, settled in Central Asia and began to build an extensive irrigation system along the rivers of the region.

At this time, cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand began to appear as centers of government and culture, and became extremely wealthy cities.

Transoxiana was one of the most influential and powerful Persian provinces of the antiquity.

By the fifth century BC Bactrian, Soghdia and Tokharian states dominated the region.



When China began to develop its silk trade with the West Iranian cities, they took advantage of this trade by becoming centers of the business. They used an extensive network of cities and settlements in the province of Transoxiana.

Transoxiana is the ancient name used for the portion of Central Asia. It is the region between the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya.

When the Arabs captured the region, they gave it the name Mawarannahr (Land beyond the river).

The wealth of Transoxiana was a constant magnet for invasions from the northern steppes and from China.

Multiple wars were fought between Soghdia states, the other states in Transoxiana, the Persians and the Chinese were in perpetual conflict over the region.

In 328 BC Alexander the Great conquered the region and brought it briefly under the control of his Macedonian Empire.

Chapter 5

The Muslim Arabs

Muḥammed ibn `Abd Allāh the Prophet of Islam had united Arabia into a single Muslim polity and ensured that his teachings, practices, and the Qur'an or Koran, which Muslims believe was revealed to him by God, formed the basis of Islamic religious belief.

The Arabs invaded Transoxiana in the middle of the seventh century through sporadic raids during their conquest of Persia.

When the Arab heard that the Soghdia's and other Iranian peoples in the Central Asia were unable to defend their land against them because of lack of strong leadership, they conquered them on account of their desire to spread their new faith.

Despite brief Arab rule, Central Asia successfully retained much of its Iranian characteristic, remaining an important center of culture and trade for centuries after the adoption of the new religion.

During the height of the Abbasid Caliphate in the eighth and the ninth centuries, Central Asia and Transoxiana experienced a truly golden age. Bukhara became one of the leading centers of learning, culture, and art in the Muslim world.

The local Islamic Iranian states were the rulers of Iran and Central Asia, and the Persian language of the

region became the language of literature and government.

Chapter 6

Turkification of Transoxiana

In the ninth century the Nomads from the northern steppes flow into Central Asia. They were Turks, who lived in the great grasslands from Mongolia to the Caspian Sea.

They were mainly slave soldiers to the Samanid Dynasty and served in the army of all the states in the region.

When the Samanid's began to lose control of Transoxiana and northeastern Iran, some of these soldiers came to positions of power in the government in the region, and gradually established their own states. Then other tribes began to migrate to Transoxiana.

The Persianate Ghaznavid Empire established in the last years of the tenth century was the first of the Turkish states in the region.

The Turkish Qarakhanids followed the Ghaznavids and took Samanid capital Bukhara in 999 AD and ruled Transoxiana for the next two centuries.

Western Qarakhanid state made Samarkand as their capital.

Chapter 7

Genghis Khan

From the north came an incursion of nomads. This time the invader was Genghis Khan with his Mongol armies.

Genghis Khan (1162 – 18.08.1227) was the founder of the great Khan of the Mongol Empire that became the largest land empire during the 13th and 14th centuries.

He came to power by uniting many of the Nomadic tribes of Northeast Asia. They were members of a community of people who lived in different locations, moving from one place to another.

When he had founded the Mongol Empire and was proclaimed "Genghis Khan", he began the invasions and conquest of the great part of Eurasia.

Genghis Khan also advanced the Mongol Empire in other ways. He adopted the Uyghur script as the Mongol Empire's writing system.

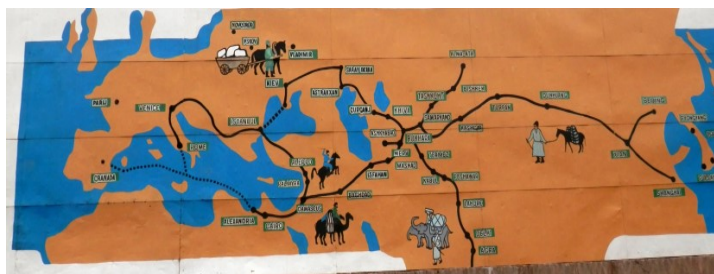
While unifying the nomadic tribes of Northeast Asia, he supported meritocracy and encouraged religious tolerance.

By the end of his life, the Mongol Empire occupied an enormous part of Central Asia and China. As a result, Genghis Khan and his empire had a fearsome reputation in local history.

Today the Mongolians regard him as the founder of Mongolia.

Genghis Khan was known for his brutality of his campaigns, but he brought the Silk Road under one cohesive political system. This brought communication

and trade from Northeast Asia into Muslim Southwest Asia and Christian Europe.



The Silk Roads

In the same centuries, the region was an important center of intellectual life and religion. The dominant religion was Zoroastrianism until the first centuries after Christ, but Buddhism, Manichaeism and Christianity had many followers.

Chapter 8

Temur Lenk

Temur Lenk (April 8, 1336 - January 19, 1405) was born in Shakhrisabz 65 km south of Samarkand in Uzbekistan.

He was the founder of the Temurid dynasty that existed for nearly 500 years.

Temur was a warlord in Central Asia and united a very large area under his control, but he also had a reputation for being a cruel tyrant in connection with his conquests.

His name was Tamerlane, which means "Temur the lame" and the name Temur means "Iron Man". He was paralyzed in his right leg, but had a powerful physique.

He considered himself a descendant of the great Mongol warlord Genghis Khan, because he was descended from the Mongol warriors who went west in connection with the strengthening of the great Mongol empire.

When Temur's father preferred to study instead of being a warrior it rubbed off on Temur, so he also studied and read the Koran.

Around 1360 he excelled as a military leader and participated in several campaigns in the area, among others he was the leader of the invasion of Khorasan our day's eastern Iran.

Temur's original master was murdered, and although the area was disputed by several military parties he managed through the changing power relations.

When the great conqueror of Central Asia Tughluq Temur died, Tamerlane (Temur Lenk) came to power in Samarkand 1369. He described himself as "emir", but in reality he was "khan".

From Tamerlane (Temur Lenk) came to power until his death, he was nearly always involved in wars and raids.

When he was at war with India, he came back with a lot of plunder and 90 elephants that helped to haul stone to a mosque in Samarkand.

Tamerlane fought against the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), which caused extensive damage and

carnage. As a result, he was declared an enemy of Islam.

Temur Lenk's last battle plan was to restore the Mongol rule in China since the Ming Dynasty drove out the Mongols in the latter half of the 14th century.

In late 1404 he began the restoration of the Mongolian power, but he died of illness before he reached so far.

Besides being a warlord Temur Lenk was also an art lover. His major interests lay in literature, miniature paintings and calligraphy. In Samarkand were many architectural masterpieces built under his regime.

He tried to prove that he was a descendant of the great Genghis Khan at the same time he let his sons and daughters marry the descendants of Genghis Khan. In that way the following generations could claim the Mongol heritage.

Chapter 9

Uzbek period

The Uzbek had in 1510 completed their conquest of Central Asia, which included Uzbekistan.

The most powerful state was the Khanate of Bukhara that has Bukhara as capital.

The khanate controlled Mawarannahr, our days Uzbekistan, in particular the region of Tashkent, the Fer-gana Valley in the east and northern Afghanistan.

In 1512 was established a second Uzbek state «the Khanate of Khiva» at the mouth the Amu Darya in the oasis of Khorazm.

The Khanate of Bukhara was initially led by the energetic Shaybanid Dynasty. They competed for the rich far-eastern territory of present day Iran.

The struggle with Iran also had a religious aspect because the Uzbeks were Sunni Muslims, and Iran was Shia Muslims.

At the end of the sixteenth century, the Uzbek states of Bukhara and Khorazm began to weaken because of their endless wars against each other and the Persians and the competition for the throne among the khans in power and their heirs.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Janid Dynasty replaced the Shaybanid Dynasty.

The Janid Dynasty ruled the Khanate in the 17th and 18th centuries. They were the last descendants from Genghis Khan to rule Bukhara.

Nadir Shah, the Shah of Iran conquered them in 1740. When he died in 1747, the non-Genghisid (or non-Genghis) descendants of Uzbek emir Khudayar Bi controlled the khanate through the prime ministerial position of *ataliq*.

Shah Murad formed in 1785 the family dynasty «Manghit dynasty» to rule the khanate «the Emirate of Bukhara».

The Manghits took the Islamic title of Emir instead of Khan, because he didn't descent from Genghis Khan. The Uzbek khanates became weaker, when the trade moving through the region was declining.

Europe had established ocean trade route to India and China and got around the Silk Route.

As European-dominated ocean transport expanded, at the same time the trading centers such as Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva declined.

The Uzbeks' struggle with Iran led to the cultural isolation of Central Asia from the rest of the Islamic world.

Simultaneously they struggled with the nomads from the northern steppes. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Kazakh nomads and Mongols raided the Uzbek khanates, causing widespread damage and disruption.

The Khanate of Bukhara lost the fertile Fergana region in the beginning of the 18th century and a new Uzbek khanate was formed in the southeast of Tashkent.

The first capital in Uzbekistan was Buhhara, the second one was Samarkand, and the third one was Tashkent and still is.

Chapter 10

The Russians arrive

Now followed a period where the invasions continue from Iran and the north.

Now the Russians appeared in the Central Asian, where the Russian merchants expanded into the grassland of Kazakhstan.

They built strong relations with their counterparts in Tashkent and in Khiva. This trade was not rich enough for the Russian but they were aware of the potentials of Central Asia.