

- Mongols left behind a trail of blood & gruesome massacre wherever their advance was resisted - they lived in the territories they occupied & gave birth to a fusion of cultures.
- Mahmud of Ghazni's invasions of India at the close of the tenth century, followed some hundred years later by the Ghorian invasions are examples of vast nomadic movements

#### GEOGRAPHY OF CENTRAL ASIA

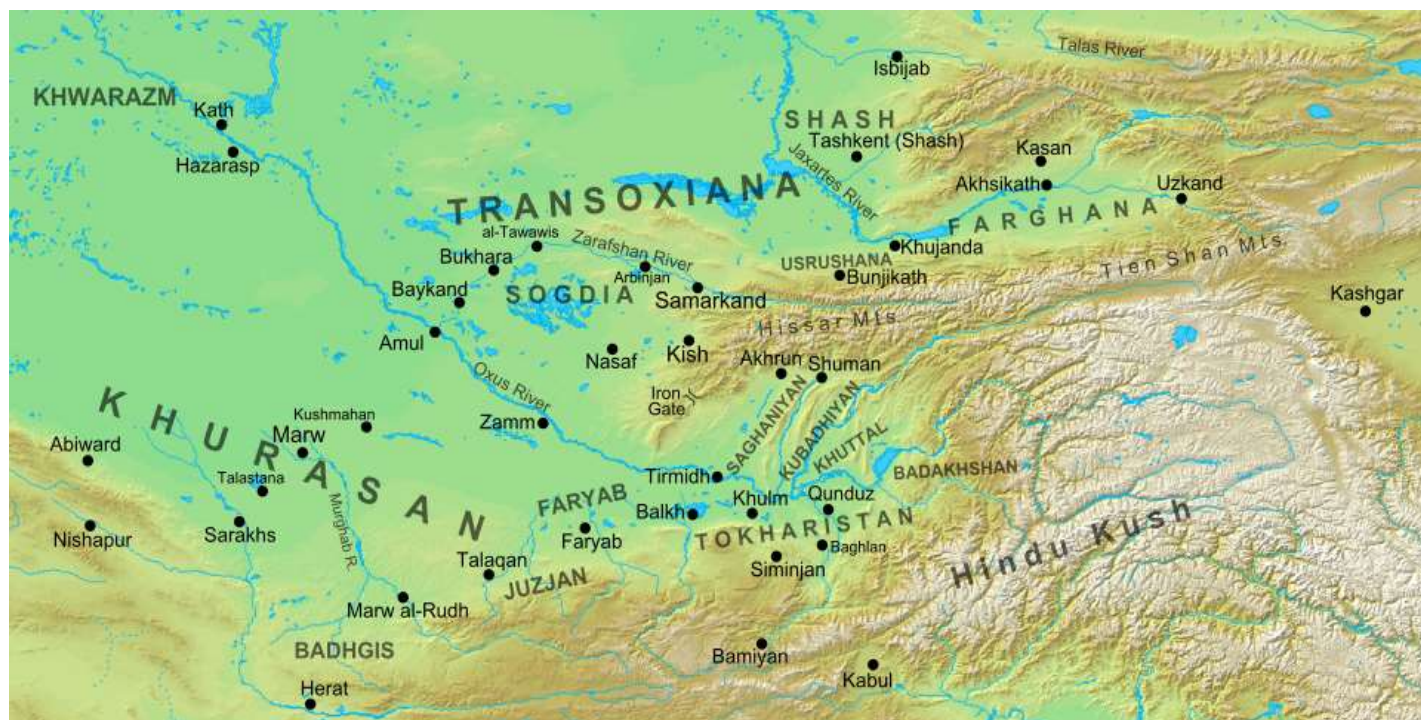
- 'Central Asia' is a geographical term that refers to the huge & varied territory bounded in the South by an immense chain of mountains of which the Himalayas form a part.
- Its northern limits may be roughly placed around the Ural mountains; the western along the Aral & Caspian Seas; & the eastern somewhere between the lakes Balkhash & Baikal, perhaps around river Irtysh.
- Turkestan covers a very large portion of the territories in Central Asia. Its population is prominently Turkic.
- In historical context, the term 'Turkestan' is an ethnonym: signifies an ethnic territory as well as a human community.



- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan all these countries are currently part of central Asia
- It looks like an extraordinary mosaic of mountains, deserts, oases, steppes & river valleys.
- The foothills & the valleys contain oases, i.e. fertile islands of cultivation surrounded by deserts
- Beyond the deserts are the Eurasian steppes- those limitless expanses of arid & patchy vegetation.
- Towards the north & east the Steppes once again disappear into the great Siberian desert.
- The steppes have been crucial in determining the course of, history of Central Asia and indeed of the world.
- For, atleast, a few thousand years the steppe environment could support only one kind of life - the nomadic as opposed to sedentary.
- The oases, by contrast, were the rallying points of settled existence.
- The history of civilized communities in Central Asia goes back to a few thousand years at least.
- Periods of peace, intermittently ruptured by barbarians churning on the periphery, led to the extension of immigration works & agriculture.
- With the growth of trade & handicrafts, urbanisation emerged.
- The oases were thus real counterpoints to the preponderance of deserts & steppes.
- Central Asia could emerge as the centre piece in a commercial highway connecting the civilizations of India, China, Mesopotamia, & Europe.

#### MICRO-REGIONS OF CENTRAL ASIA





### TRANSOXIANA

- Land across the Oxus
- The region carved out by the rivers Oxus & Jaxartes ( the Amu Darya & the Syr Darya respectively)
- Both flow into the inland Aral Sea & are the two most important rivers of Central Asia.
- The Arabs, who conquered Transoxiana in the eighth century (A.D.), called it Mawarannahr, literally meaning "that which is beyond the river".

### SOGDIANA

- Along the middle of the Oxus-Jaxartes basin flows the Zarafshan river, after whose ancient name Soghd, the region came to be called Sogdiana.
- The two most famous towns of Central Asia, Samarkand & Bukhara,(Uzbek) are located within this tract

### KHWARIZM

- To the south of the Aral Sea, around the fertile delta of the Oxus, is the region known as Khwarizm ( Khiva). Here, as early as the seventh or sixth century(B.C.), a large centralised state came into existence which lasted a few centuries.
- At the end of the first century A.D., Khwarizm became part of the vast Kushan empire which straddled the Hindu Kush & included the whole of North India within its fold.
- Cultural contacts between India & Central Asia were greatly strengthened as a consequence.
- Khwarizm region is modern day Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan .

### KHURASAN

- To the west of Transoxiana begins the region of Khurasan.
- As a landlocked region it has no access' to the sea
- Its rivers peter out into lakes & swamps. But around its oases excellent pastures abound.
- These attracted nomads to descend into its valleys from across the steep mountains into Central Asia from the Eurasian steppes.
- Northeastern Iran, southern Turkmenistan, and northern Afghanistan.
- From the Amu Darya (Oxus River) westward to the Caspian Sea & , along the south, from the fringes of the central Iranian deserts eastward to the mountains of central Afghanistan.



### PASTORAL NOMADISM

- The Turks & Mongols were the product of deserts & steppes that encircle Central Asia in a massive area, extending north & east of Transoxiana.
- They descended from the mass of nomads who roamed in the area of the Altai mountains, south of Lake Baikal-regions that are now part of outer Mongolia.
- They had a primitive mobile civilization based on tribal organization & ownership of herds of cattle, sheep and horses.
- In addition, the tribes often possessed camels, mules and asses.
- The animals supplied most of the essential needs of the nomad in

the way of food, clothing & shelter.

- Milk & flesh gave them nourishment. The hide of animals was used as clothing, and also to make tents, yurts, in which he lived.
- Pastoral nomadism was governed by one great drive - the search for grazing lands. This kept the nomads constantly on the move
- In the absence of agriculture & fixed habitation, the 'nomads attachment to land was minimal, lasting only as long as it yielded fodder for the animals.
- When the tribes camped, each tent or household was allotted a piece of land for its exclusive use. Once exhausted, the tribes migrated in search of new pastures.
- Mobility, thus, was central to nomadic society, and the horse its most outstanding asset.
- In consequence, among the Mongols, no offence was greater than stealing a horse. It invited execution.
- Horsemanship combined with skill in archery made the nomads a formidable fighting force.
- The Mongols brought the art to perfection in the thirteenth century.
- Galloping at full speed, they could rain arrows in every direction-forward, rear, and sideways-with deadly accuracy.
- The steppe environment witnessed the conflicts over grazing lands, gradually magnified into large-scale bloody battles.
- Pastoralism had one serious drawback unlike agriculture, it produced no durable reserves.
- Its products were rapidly consumed. So, nomadic urge was not only to acquire more & better lands but also products of agrarian communities
- Pastoralism by its very nature veered to a 'mixed economy' – secured by trade & alliance or by aggression.

#### TIUKIU EMPIRE

- The first contact between civilization & Turkish nomads dates back to the mid-sixth century when a vast nomad empire, extending from the borders of China to Byzantium, came into existence.
- The empire, known as the Tiukiu empire, was really a confederacy of twenty-two tribes of a people then called the Toghuz-Oghuz.
- It lasted for close to two hundred years later came to be partitioned & repartitioned between its constituent tribes & other newly arrived Turkic nomads
- Stray elements of the Oghuz tribe had already found their way into the upper Oxus lands a couple of centuries earlier.
- Gradual weakening of the Oghuz ethnic identity as tribes either broke away from the larger confederacy or new ones were incorporated into it, after being defeated.
- The contact between the Turks & settled people took two major forms: (i) military conflict, & (ii) commercial transactions.
- The natural instinct of the nomads was to conduct raids into settled areas south of the Oxus.
- During the sixth century the Sassanids, who ruled Iraq & Persia, tried to protect the Transoxiana region from such tribal raids.
- In the eighth century the Arabs penetrated Transoxiana & displacing a large Turkish population east of the Jaxartes, the Arabs laid out fortified walls & rabats (frontier-posts) along the frontier, manned by a military guard system.
- On either side, Muslim & Turkish, the frontier bristled with colonies of guards.
- On the Muslim side, they were called ghazis, i.e. men whose business it was to defend the faith against infidel hordes.
- Though belonging to hostile camps, both groups nonetheless "came to live the same kind of borderline existence, adopting each other's weapons, tactics and ways of life and gradually forming a common military frontier society, more similar to each other than to the societies -from which they came and which they defended."
- Internal disturbances had often prompted Transoxianean leaders to enlist Turkish mercenaries as a counterbalancing force.
- The centre of a nomad empire has always attracted merchants because of the ready market it provided for products of the settlements.
- In the case of the Tiukiu empire, the attraction was more pronounced because it lay across the great Silk Road, the premier channel of international commerce.
- The bulk of these materials was of everyday use, like lather, hides, tallow, wax, and honey. It also included luxuries like furs.
- Then there was the regular traffic in slaves- also procured from the steppes.
- Tenth century accounts refer to numerous settlements of the Turks in the lower Syr Darya region where inhabitants were nomads & pastoralists as well as agriculturists.
- The dihqans & merchants made increasing use of Turkish mercenaries as the coercive arm for guarding & extending their patrimony.
- Turkish earned place in influential military administration - they were active commercially & also settlers.

- The hardy steppe background made the Turk a warrior. With training and discipline they could be made into a first rate machine.
- Availability of slave market & Turks were in slaves : Transoxiana surrounded by slave markets – slaves captured from Central Asian steppes
- Under the Umayyads (A.D. 661-750) recruitment to the military was almost totally confined to the Arabs.
- The replacement of the Umayyads by the Abbasids in A.D. 750 as undermined the Arab monopoly of the army especially in the decades after the Caliphate-of Harun Al Rashid (d. 809 A.D.).
- The civil wars among the sons & successor of this last Caliph shook the foundations of the Abbasid empire.
- The Caliph Mutassim (A.D. 833-842) was the first to surround himself with a large body of Turkish slaves & make it the base of his troops.
- Turkish soldiery was kept away from the indigenous population and could only marry women of the same origin: Thus Mutassim created a sort of military class, whose role was to protect the Caliph & the regime.
- But failure of this policy because of the feudal involvement of Turks lead to weakening of Abbasids
- With the weakening of the Abbasid Caliphs their control over Islamic world became nominal & limited just to issue farmans to confirm their authority.
- It gave way to the emergence of a number of small independent kingdoms during the 10th century the Jahirids, the Safavids, the Buwayhids, Qarakhanids and the Samanids.
- Alaptagin, the Samanid governor & slave of the Turkish origin, established an independent kingdom at Ghazni.
- The Ghaznavid kingdom became prominent under Mahmud Ghamavi (A.D. 998-1030).
- Mahmud claimed to have traced his descent from Iranian mythical hero Afrasiyab.
- This process Islamised & Persianised the Turks completely.
- Mahmud - also made regular inroads in India. As a result, Punjab became part of the Ghamavid Empire.
- Mahmud's death was followed by the emergence of the mighty Seljuks. They soon overran Iran, Syria & Transoxiana.
- These developments gave a great jolt to the power of the Ghaznavids which became confined to Ghazna & parts of Punjab only.
- During the twelfth century, the Seljuq power was destroyed by a group of Turkish tribes.
- The vacuum created by the Seljuks led to the rise of the Khwarezmian in Iran & the Ghorid power in north-west Afghanistan.
- Under such circumstances it was not possible for the Ghurids to expand at the cost of the Khwarezmian power.

#### MONGOLS

- In the early decades of the thirteenth century Asia & Europe experienced a new wave of nomad conquerors from the east, an invasion more formidable & devastating than any other known to history before. These new invaders were the Mongols
- By the close of the thirteenth century, the Mongol empire covered a vast portion of the known world: China, Manchuria, Korea, North Vietnam, Tibet, Turkestan, Afghanistan, Iran, Mesopotamia, Southern Russia & Siberia.
- Before rising to world dominion, the Mongols were dwellers of the steppe region, north of China & east of Lake Baikal.
- To their east lived a kindred people, the Tartars, presumably Mongoloid Turks, who lent the name-of 'Tartars' to the Mongols in European literature in conjunction with Tartarus, the Greek word for hell.
- To the west of the Mongols lived the Keraits & Naimans, once again people of Turkish origin and speech.
- All these people were in different stages of development
- The sudden rise of Mongols to power appears to fall in line with an old pattern characteristic of the steppes.
- Long term struggles of hordes of different tribes thrown up outstanding leaders

#### STEPPE ARISTOCRACY

- Chengiz Khan born in 1160s - he was called as Temuchin - struggled bitterly for three decades in steppe region - emerged as eminent leader of mongols
- During this time he developed his skill both as a warrior and a canny tactician who excelled in dividing & circumventing his enemies.
- The nucleus of Genghis Khan's army & his imperial govt, came from corps of carefully selected guards (bahadur).
- Units of the Mongol army were put under command of generals drawn from bahadurs.
- Military mobilisation reached its peak under Chengiz Khan
- Using a well-established nomadic tradition, he enrolled all adult males into mingghan, literally "units of ten thousand"
- The mingghan divided into smaller units of ten and hundred.
- Ten mingghans constituted a tuman and these were deployed for large scale operations
- Each of these units was placed under the command of a general whose worth had been personally tested by Chengiz Khan
- Administrative control & military mobilisation were parts of a single mechanism.



- The first military efforts of Chengiz Khan were devoted to bringing the pastoral tribes of the eastern steppes under his sway.
- Temuchin now ruled over an immense confederacy of Mongol, Turkic & Manchurian tribes.
- He was the head of all their kubitka (tents) and his family held the conquered/hordes in patrimony
- At a kurultai (assembly of nomad chiefs) held in 1206, Temuchin was declared "Qaghan of all Mongolia" & received the title of Chengiz Khan.
- Till A.D. 1211, they breached the Great Wall of China and laid hold of Peking.
- Soon after, they occupied Transoxiana & Khurasan which formed the dominions of the Khwarizm Shah
- Mongol siege-craft used battering rams, flame-emitting machines (using naphtha), mangonels or catapults (manjaniq)
- Bukhara & Samarkand fell in 1220 in the midst of fearful carnage.
- It had taken the Mongols just about three years, 1219-22, to complete the annexation of Transoxiana & Khurasan.
- Two years after, returning to Mongolia in 1225, Chengiz Khan died.
- By then the whole of northern China had been annexed.
- The empire was divided among his sons.
- Ogedei, his third son, was declared the Great Khan in 1229.
- The second son, Chaghtai, received Turkestan, & Tolui, the youngest, got the Mongolian homeland.
- Hulagu, one of the successors of Genghis Khan, attacked Baghdad in A.D. 1258. The city was the capital of the Abbasids.
- According to a conservative estimate some 800,000 were savagely murdered. The Abbasid Caliphate himself met an end.
- Four empires crystalised out of the Mongol conquests:
  1. The Golden Horde ruled the Volga steppe & southern Russia
  2. Ilkhans controlled Afghanistan & Iran
  3. Chaghtai empire controlled mostly the Central Asia
  4. The Kublai Khan ruled over China & neighbouring territories – These emphasis lasted well into the 15th century.



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