CHAPTER 1

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The region called as Asiya-i-Wusta or Asiya-i-Miyana in the Persian sources and Sredni Azii in Russian is supposed to be one of the oldest centres of civilization. The place had been variously defined in different geographical sources due to its fluctuating borders after every medieval war. Nevertheless the region, popularly known as "Heart of Asia" or Inner Asia was given the name "Transoxiana" or Mavaraunnahr (beyond the river) by the Arab conquerors in the eight century. Broadly speaking, larger areas (e.g. Mongolia, China, Northern India, Western Asian region) whereas Inner Asia was the land lying between river Amu and river Syr called in Arabic language as Jihun and Sihun. Lying approximately between 35° and 55° and located in Eurasian landmass the Caspian Sea extend from the west to the boarder of western China in the east. To the north lies Russia and Dasht-i-Qipchaq and to the south are Iran, Afghanistan, Kashghar, Khotan and India. It occupies a vast territory consisting of the five Republics of erstwhile Soviet Union and now independent states-Qazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Qirghistan. It has been surmised that in actual meaning the term 'Soviet Central Asia' applies only to the four of the above-mentioned five republics and
not to Qazakhstan, which has no doubt cultural and ethnic affinities but has different geographical features. During the period of Czar it was known Stepnoi Karai (steppe region). It should, however be noted that Qazaqs formed a part of the Uzbeg people as late as fourteenth century when the division occurred and the two terms Qaraunah and Jetah were applied to the two newly emerged political and ethnic groups, a description of which is available in Haidar Dughlat's Tarikh-i-Rashidi. Central Asia occupies an area of 1542200 square miles (399440) square kilo meters). The central Asian countries range in size from Qazakhstan with the area of 1049200 square miles to Tajikistan at 55300 square miles. In the early 1990s Uzbekistan had more than twenty million people, the largest population, followed by Qazakhstan, Tajikistan, Qirghistan and Tukmenistan. Population density throughout the region varies widely from an average of almost from 120 person per square mile (46 person per square kilometre). In Uzbekistan to 20 persons per square mile in Turkmenistan and only 16 persons per square mile in Qazakhstan.

Soviet geographers have divided central Asian regions into four sub regions. These are: the steppe, constituted by northern Qazakhstan known as Tsellini Krai (virgin lands region); the semi-desert consisting roughly of the rest of...
Qazakhstan. The desert region reaching the Persian frontier in the west and Chinese frontier in the east; the mountain region of which the main features are the Pamirs and the Tian shan. The physical geography of Central Asia is quite varied as it had vast expanses of steppe grasslands in the north; deserts as vast as Aq Qum Qara Qum and Ha darvesh with their brackish and salty water and thorny bush and semi deserts on flat, wide plains in the west and central areas; piedmont platforms.

Central Asia is bounded on the east and south by a number of high mountain ranges like Ala Tan and Qara Tan mountain ranges. The mountain ranges include Kopet-Dagh of northern Iran; the Hindukush of Afghanistan; the Pamirs, occupying most of Tajikistan to the south; and the Tien Shan extending eastward into China. The mountain ranges in southern and south-eastern borders, act as a barrier blocking moisture flowing north across India and Pakistan from the Indian Ocean.

The desert land covers approximately sixty percent territory of Central Asia. The main deserts are the Qaraqorum (black sand), which covers most of the territory of Turkmenistan, and the Qizilqum (red sand) occupies most of western Uzbekistan. Generally the desert areas are not suitable for regular cultivation, the margins of the Amu
Darya and Syr Darya region that bring water from the high mountain borderlands, however yielded enough not only to support its own population but also to attract foreign invaders.

The climate of Central Asia is very dry. The summer and winter are very hot and cold respectively. At Ashqabad and Termiz the climate is sub-tropical with temperature reaching 40°Celsius. Termiz is known, as the hottest place in former Soviet Union. Winter is very severe in the desert and semi-desert regions. Here mercury reaches to -42.1°F in the west and -49.6°F in the east. Precipitation is low in the whole area with much variation in its intensity. In the semi-desert, unlike India, there is no separate season for rains, which are irregular and often scanty. Most of the rain falls in summer, while in the south of the desert region most rain falls in March. There have been years when in Tashkent no rain had fallen from the beginning of July until the end of September. The rate of evaporation and precipitation are very high and low respectively in Central Asia. The south of the Aral Sea witnesses average precipitation about 3" (75 mm) per year. At Bukhara the amount rises about 5" per year but at Tashqand the average precipitation is about 14" per year. Thus the area becomes semi-arid in winter but the hot dry desert in summer. In the east, is Farghana valley
surrounded by high mountains where precipitation is low. Most of Central Asian regions barring Qazakhstan get water either from Syr Darya or Amu Darya or its tributaries. The Amu Darya is the largest river of Central Asia. River Amu was so frozen in the winters that if Persian writers are to be believed even the cavalry caravans could passover it. The Panj or Pyandzh constitute the border between Central Asia and Afghanistan. The Zarafshan and Kashka Darya are supposed to be the main tributaries of Panj in Amu Darya, which flows, northwestward and eastward separately before draining into southern Aral sea.

The Syr Darya flows westward out of the Tian Shan, which forms Central Asia's eastern border with China to Farghana Valley encircled by mountains. From Farghana it suddenly turns on 90° towards north through the extreme southern portion of Qazakhstan and meets in the northeastern part of Aral Sea. Most of the rivers used to change their course frequently. Both Amu and Syr suddenly turned and moved another direction much to the chagrin of its inhabitants. Qarasu, though called Ab-i Rahmat was just a small river. Zarafshan River, as the name denotes was "gold scattering", which facilitated good cultivation.

Irrigated agriculture in the south and surrounding, heavy and light industrial and mining activities in the north
constitute mainly the economic activities of Central Asia. Under soviet rule Central Asia supplied cotton textile along with coal and minerals to most of the countries outside the region. Cotton was the "white gold", which attracted the cupidity of Russia to have its hold over this region. During Czarist rule and thereafter in soviet rule this sector witnessed much development. To enjoy more benefits, the remote areas were linked by railway lines, which started during czarist rule and continued in soviet period.

So far as production of industrial crop is concerned Central Asia had it in abundance. Besides, the industrial raw materials, Central Asia was rich in mineral resources like coal, iron ore, copper, lead and zinc, which are found in foothills and intermountain basin in the eastern part of Central Asia. Heavy industries mainly concentrated in north-eastern Qazakhstan and the areas are Tashqand in the foothills of the Tien Shan. The minerals especially iron and coal proved to be backbone of the economy of erstwhile Soviet Union. Oil is found in abundance in Central Asia. The extraction of oil was first organized on industrial basis at the close of nineteenth century.

The nationalities of Central Asia represent a complex mixture of various ethnic groups. There was a medley of people who trickled into Central Asia from ancient and
medieval times. Prominent among them are the Soghdians, the Sakas, the Messagets, the Qaraqalpaqs, the Uzbegs, the Tajiks, the Qazakhs, the Turkmen and the Qirghiz. These people are interrelated through old ethnic ties and had therefore a number of common features in their culture, economy and way of life though with all their common efforts and joint struggle, each groups maintain its distinct cultural traits managed to determined and further defined clearly by Soviet Government on the basis of their lingual divisions. Peoples of Central Asia lived under the rule of Uzbeg Khans for over three centuries (i.e. from sixteenth to nineteenth centuries). The Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Khoqand were heterogeneous in their composition. From Czarist rule to the establishment of Soviet power, there emerged six main national groups in Central Asia viz., the Uzbegs, the Qazakhs, the Tajiks, the Qirghiz, the Turkmen and the Qaraqalpaqs. Besides these, there were Uighurs Tatars and several others of lesser importance who were settled there later on (or already lived there) viz., the Dungars, the Koreans, the Slavs, the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians.

Several layers and deposits of ancient civilizations, which flourished in Central Asia, had left an impact upon its soil. A large number of relics have been unearthed by Soviet
archaeologists. As had already been stated Central Asia kept on changing its time of control with its fluctuating frontiers. Historical records relating to the period before the Islamic conquests are extremely scanty. Khorezm was no more a Persian province at the time of Alexander's invasion. Soghd, the area later known as Transoxiana was still under Persian ruler and gave a stiff resistance to Alexander. Alexander annexed the territory of Achaemenid state after destroying it into the Graeco-Macedonian Empire. A considerable part of Central Asia was included in the Seleucid state after the decline of Graeco-Macedonian Empire in the Third century B.C. To say that Central Asian population comprised only "Kochevikh" or nomadic people would be wrong as most of them were agriculturists. Although dwellers of deserts, they pursued mixed economy. Due to scanty rainfall, the availability of water was always a problem. Much of the water flowing from the snow on peaks also vanished through seepage and evaporation. Artificial irrigation was therefore, the prime need and from the time immemorial canals were dug out. Medieval monarchs (including warrior Kings like Timur, Shaibani Khan and Abdullah Khan) were particularly keen to provide irrigational facilities. Obruchev, Ignatiev and Berg had described such praise worthy works of medieval rulers.
From the Talas and Jambul area of Qazakhstan and from Tashik Tash in southern Uzbekistan findings of Mousterian and of even earlier periods have been discovered. Many Central Asian tribes (like the Jeitun settlement in southern Turkmenia) were already cultivators and herdsmen in the Neolithic period. Anam culture in southern Turkmenia in the 4th millennium B.C. indicates about the cultivation of land. Ancient Khorezm had a well-developed farming and cattle breeding culture. Khorezm had also an elaborate system of irrigation. The Bactrian and Soghdian too had well-developed cultures which reached to a high-level farming and urban life. At the same time we notice infighting among different powers to rule over Central Asia. Ultimately Kushanas got success in establishing its sway over Central Asia and it was the Kushana period, which witnessed the cultural and economic expansion of Asia and the fusion of Indian and Central Asian art.

Since the decline of Kushanas up to the emergence of Arabs in Central Asia and anarchy overtook the region and infighting and establishment of one powerful state after another continued to change its political scenario. It appears that no permanent empire ruled over Central Asia for a long time, because of its ethnic and linguistic overtones. It is said that owing to their great diversity, the people of Central Asia
did not accept the usurpation of power in its early stage by the Arabs but later on, as we see in the subsequent period, the Arabs who penetrated into Central Asia in the eighth century A.D. and later on the Mongols, Russians, up to Russian revolution gave various dimensions to the region within their frame work.

The Arabs entered into Central Asia under Qutaiba ibn Muslim al-Bahli, the governor of Khorasan in the beginning of eighth century A.D.\textsuperscript{20} His conquests continued until his death in 715, as he brought Khorezm, Transoxiana and Turkestan under the control of the Arabs. The Arabs got some stiff resistance from Iranian population of Transoxiana, Tokharistan and of the Turks, mainly the Turkish tribe of Semirechye. Turkish resistance was however, overcome but the national spirits of Iranians proved fruitful to give birth to the first Persian dynasty.\textsuperscript{21}

The advancement of Islam and its culture found its place in Central Asia more due to the Arab traders but not through forcible conversion as is surmised. The Arab traders by their own pattern of living presented Islam as a best means of life than as a creed. Undoubtedly, the Arab traders faced the challenges by the missionaries in popularisation of their faith. Thus the proposition made by Devendra Kaushik that there was mass scale genocide and the 'Arabs spread
Islam in Central Asia at the point of sword' has no base. It becomes clearer as Wheeler opines that in many parts of the steppe region where Arabs had not established their control, there too Islamic canon law, (Shariat) and customary law (adat) and to some extent the use of Arabic script were in practice among the people though some of them still retained Shamanistic rites and religious beliefs. It should however be remembered that the Arab impact and Arabic language could not leave a deep sealed impact upon Central Asia. In this context, the information available in Persian sources is indeed very useful. Narshakhi had described how the first construction of a mosque in Bukhara took place and how the Muslims after Friday prayers were given two dirhams each. If Haider Dughlat is to be believed the rise of the Samanids (874-999) in the ninth and tenth centuries found the unification of Iran with Central Asia making Bukhara its centre. The entire region of Mawaraunnahr (Transoxiana), Khorezm, Syr Darya region, part of Turkmenia, Iran and Afghanistan came under the way of the Samanids who played a great role in the ethnic and cultural history of the area. During this period the Tajik-Persian language became widespread and during the same period poet of fame like Rudaki and Firdausi wrote their masterpieces.
The Samanid dynasty was overthrown by the Qarakhanids in 999 A.D.\textsuperscript{24} They had established them in Samarqand and virtually controlled the whole Transoxiana until the twelfth century. The year 999 A.D. is important in the Central Asian history because it was from this very year the Turks began to maintain their hold on Central Asia until the arrival of Russians with only two gaps namely the reign of the Qarakhitai's and of the Mongols.\textsuperscript{25} The Qarakhanid rule in Transoxiana and Semirechye coincided with the rise of Ghaznavid dynasty established by Mahmud of Ghazna having its capital at Balkh. After Mahmud his successors were overthrown from Persia and northern Afghanistan by the Seljuqids, who having their capital at Merv eventually extended their domain over Anatolia, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine as well as to Khorezm and the areas along the lower course of Syr Darya. In 1140 A.D., the Qarakhanids were overthrown by the Qarakhitais who had established themselves in Transoxiana and Semirechye.\textsuperscript{26} The Qarakhitais were new ethnic elements in Central Asia. There is a controversy regarding their origin. Some say they were of mixed origin as the name denotes that they were 'Black Chinese' (Qara Khatais) others think that they were a mixture of Mongol and Chinese. Some others believe that they were probably of Mongolian origin, absorbing Chinese culture to a
much greater extent than other nomad invaders. Early in the thirteenth century, they came into conflicts with the Mongols and were quickly overrun. By the end of the thirteenth century the Qarakhitais had disappeared.

The Mongols under Chingiz Khan destroyed the state of Khorezm Shahs during 1119-1121 A.D. A large number of Mongol troops who conquered Central Asia consisted of Qipchaq and other Turkish tribes who adopted the Mongol tribal names of Qungrat, Kiat and Manghit etc. The Mongol conquerors easily mixed in the local population and soon embraced Islam and the language of Turks.

In the fourteenth century from the Mongol tribe of Barlas there arose the great conqueror Timurlang or Temerlene (1336-1405). He established his sway not only in Central Asia but also up to Syria and China. His large-scale expeditions won him the fame and an area extending from Yelets in Russia to Kucha in Sinkiang and from Izmir (Symrina) to Delhi.27

Although Timur is a controversial figure as he had received both appreciations for his conquest, administrative genius executive and legislative efficiency and patronage of fine arts and condemnation for his ruthless treatment of the conquered, his descendants managed to establish better cordial relations with the local populace. Shahrukh became
the acknowledged ruler and Muslim monarch par excellence and his son Ulugh Beg carried the flag of his grandfather Timur. Thus a fine combination of Turko-Mongol and Perso-Islamic traditions emerged in Central Asia. The disintegration of Timurid Empire was hastened by the rise of new element the Uzbegs whom the Timurids had themselves made a party to solve their internal internecine warfare. Once the Uzbegs saw the rich potentials of Central Asia they were naturally drawn towards it and after a few skirmishes managed to conquer it in general. The Uzbegs under Shaibani Khan occupied all the Timurid possessions in Turkestan and Khorezm. Until the end of 14th century without much fighting but through a coup de grace the Qazakhs were merely part of the Uzbeg confederation, founded at the beginning of the century. By the beginning of sixteenth century the Uzbegs and Qazakhs further developed their distinct economic life. The Qazakhs remained half way through civilization, cattle breeders due to their geographical surroundings, while the Uzbegs began to be settled and adopted agriculture life. The Shaibanid dynasty came to an end with the death of Abdul Mumin in 1599 from then onwards; no firm control in the region of Central Asia is noticed for some time.
The Astarakhanids whose leader ruler Jani Beg had been driven out of Astarakhan by the Russians in mid 16th century took shelter with Iskandar Khan who gave his daughter Zuhra Begi in Marriage to the refugee king. Zuhra Begi, the real sister of Abdullah Khan gave birth of three sons namely Nazar Muhammad, Din Mohammad and Wali Muhammad and these three princes held the sceptre now when their maternal uncle Abdul Mumin was put to death. During this period anarchy prevailed in Central Asia. Independent principalities came to the fore in suburban areas while the Uzbeg tribal aristocracy seized power at the centre. Various warring tribes were busy to gain control over Bukhara and Khiva. After the Astrakhanids the Uzbeg kingdom fell into two parts at the close of eighteenth century, when the two dynasties of the Manghit and the Qungrat, having Uzbeg origin were founded. In Bukhara the house of Manghit served as Ataliq (father designate) from 1747 and succeeded the Astrakhanids in 1785. They adopted the title of Amir. In Khiva the house of Qungrat ruled as Inaq from 1763 and from 1804 as Khans. Both the dynasties ruled until 1920 when they had to quit due to popular revolution. About the same time the Begs of Farghana who ruled there since the beginning of eighteenth century formed Khanate of Khoqand. This Khanate was founded by Min dynasty.
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