present; in doing this, the development of the genre of travel-writing with specific reference to Central Asia is also traced. In chapter one, it is argued that the travel as a way of life was an integral part of the cultures of Central Asia. A brief history of travellers from the outside world, from earliest times to the present is outlined. Upto the age of Imperialism, most travel to Central Asia was occasioned by mercantilism. The Silk Route, which spread in a criss-cross network of roads all over Central Asia connected all the major oasis towns. On this route, the silk and spices and other exotica for which the Orient was known made their way to the West; great caravan-groups travelled back and forth ceaselessly for many centuries.

With the beginning of Imperialism, Central Asia became what Rudyard Kipling has termed "Great Game" territory. Two of the most powerful empires of that time, the British and the Russian, were each trying to gain a foothold in this remote and inaccessible area. Historians are still debating whether the Great Game agenda was the conquest of Central Asia or British defence of India, their prize colony, from Tsarist Imperialism. In chapter two, the dynamics of the Great Game, and its
impact upon the nature of travel (and travel-writing) in Central Asia are analysed. Travel in this region became more of a political game, with scientific exploration and ethnographic surveys being harnessed to the Imperialist cause. Both Russia and Britain were intensely concerned with the need to obtain some clear scientific knowledge of the terrain, and the peoples of that area, whom they had to subjugate.

The archaeological exploration of Central Asia’s ancient civilisations came about as an off-shoot of the imperialistic impulse. Chapter three consists of a brief history of the archaeological findings by Europeans in Central Asia, and an analysis of how these discoveries led to a deeper knowledge of the region’s rich cultural past. Chapter four details the processes by which Central Asia came to be absorbed into the Soviet empire, and the effects of Communism on the various ethnicities of Central Asia and their traditional ways of life which centred around seasonal migration and the practice of Islam.

The study also attempts to trace the development of the genre of travel-writing with specific reference to Central Asia. The complicity of travel-writing with the forces of Imperialism in the representation of
Central Asia to the outside world is established. The genre has always had a complex relationship with the situations in which it arose; from the individual spiritual quest of Huien-Tsiang the Chinese pilgrim in the 7th century, and the romanticized tales of the 13th century Venetian merchant Marco Polo, the genre came to mean, in the heyday of Imperialism “a discourse designed to describe and interpret for its readers a geographical area together with its natural attributes and its human society and culture.” (Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing 53. Hereafter CCTW.)

Chapter five consists of an analysis of travel-writings on Central Asia, mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries, since this time-period was synonymous with Imperialism and colonialism, both of which had such deep implications for travel and travel-writing with reference to Central Asia. Some of the different forms which developed and came to be included under the genre of travel-writing are represented by the texts chosen for analysis in this section. While most of the countries of the world have been extensively researched and written about, as grist to the tourist mill, Central Asia has always been too remote and inaccessible to form part of this trajectory.
This study takes a close look at a mysterious land, with its diverse peoples and civilisations, through a mode of writing that reflects an innate part of its culture that has endured till today.

Works Cited

Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing.
Edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs.
CHAPTER I

What is Central Asia?

The term "Central Asia" poses a host of problems with regard to definition. This is partly because of the immensity of the landmass in question, of its varied topography (ranging from deserts to snowcapped mountain peaks to river valleys and plateaux), and the fact that it has had different geographical boundaries at various periods of its history. The use of the term "Central Asia" in scientific and other kinds of literature has had a long history of its own. Initially, it was synonymous with "High Asia", as seen in European literature on Asian history, geography and in travel stories to indicate the central regions of the continent with no reference to the geographical boundaries of the area concerned. It was only in the first half of the nineteenth century, that Alexander von Humboldt (a well-known German geographer and traveller) first attempted to define the boundaries of Central Asia. In his major work Asie Centrale published in Paris in 1843, he proposed to include in Central Asia a vast area lying between $5^0$ S of latitude $44.5^0$ N, which he considered to be the middle parallel of the entire Asian mainland; with the plateau of Ustyurt and Greater Khingan mountains serving as the western and eastern limits,
respectively. Since not all scholars agreed with Humboldt's theory, in 1862 Nicolay Khanykoff (Russian Orientalist and explorer of Central Asia) put forth a broader definition of Central Asia, in which were included the entire region of eastern Iran and Afghanistan. In the next two decades, the concept of Central Asia and its geographical limits came to be thoroughly reexamined, by another German geographer by name Ferdinand Richtthofen.

In his major work *China*, after having analysed all definitions of Central Asia and finding them unsatisfactory, he proposed that Central Asia be divided into two types of natural region, 'Central' and 'Peripheral'. His definition therefore meant all the regions of Inner Asia characterized by their hydrographical system (i.e. having no flow of water to the open sea), and the boundaries were to be the Altai Mountains in the north, Tibet in the south, Pamirs in the west and the Khingan mountain range in the east. In Russian scientific literature of the late nineteenth century, the problem of "Central Asia" was extensively discussed by Ivan Mushketov (a prominent geologist and traveller) in his work *Turkestan*. While differing from Richtthofen on the geographical limits of inner Asia, he himself suggested that 'Inner Asia' indicated all the land-locked regions of
Asian mainland having no flow of water into open sea and possessing the features of Khan-Khai (Dani I:478). The work Turkestan, while summing up the almost century-old discussion of the problem, did not help to conclude the controversy. Different travellers to the region, by virtue of their individual cultural backgrounds and the purpose of their travel, have given various accounts of Central Asia's proportions. The Meeting of Experts on the preparation of the History of Civilizations of Central Asia, (held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, Oct. 1978) submitted a Final Report which reads that the area in question covers territories lying at present within the boundaries of Afghanistan, the western part of China, northern India, north-eastern Iran, Mongolia, Pakistan and the Central Asian republics of the USSR (Dani I: 480). Keeping in mind that these geographical boundaries are not rigid, I have adopted the above definition for the purpose of my study, since it covers all the travelogues that I intend to analyse. (See Map 1, Harmatta 2: 2).

While it is difficult to convey the richness of culture and the varied civilizations of Central Asia within the scope of this study, major political and economic milestones are mentioned since they altered whole ways of life, especially travel. Given the strategic importance of Central Asia with
reference to location in world trade, travelling itself became a mode of existence that offers us a glimpse into the innermost recesses of this enormous land and the dynamics thereof. The advance of Alexander the Great into Central Asia (after he defeated the Achaemenids around 331 B.C.) is an important landmark in the turbulent history of Central Asian civilizations. While all Central Asia opposed Alexander and resisted him at every stage, his campaign marched inexorably on, forcing nomad populations into sedentary civilizations and transforming trade and travel patterns that had existed for centuries. Under his rule, the civilizations of Central Asia underwent a fundamental change by a progressive syncretism between Zoroastrianism, Greek religion and Buddhism, which formed the basis of civilization of Central Asia upto the Arab conquest.

A major role in the development of international trade during this time was played by the Silk Route, which was the main trans-Asian caravan route linking China, India and Central Asia with the countries of the Mediterranean from 2 B.C. onwards. It owed its name to the fact that the main commodity bought and sold was Chinese silk. It was not one single road as the name seems to suggest, but rather a whole complex network of trade routes, which coursed through different oasis towns and
metropoles in Central Asia. It began at Chang-an (the capital of China at
that time) and ran westward along the edge of the Gobi Desert, passing
through Lan-Chou to Tun-huang, where it divided into two, one branch
going north and the other south. For political reasons and also because of
climatic changes, the network of towns altered and the direction of the
routes shifted too. The northern road led to Lake Issyk-Kul and then
westward along with northern shores of the Caspian sea, the Caucasus and
the Black sea to Asia Minor and Byzantium. A middle road crossed the
Turfan Depression and the northern rim of the Tarim basin towards
Ferghana Valley, Samarkand, Bukhara and Merv and then ran through
Iran to the eastern Mediterranean. The southern road ran from the area of
Lop-Nor through Khotan and Wakhan to Tokharistan, Bamiyan,
northwestern India and hence by the sea route across the Indian Ocean to
the Mediterranean (See Map 2 Harmatta 2 : 502-3 ). With the creation of
the Silk Route, favourable conditions arose for an unprecedented increase
in commercial and cultural activity. Chinese silk was the most important
merchandise, its value exceeding that of other goods, and it brought a
substantial income to both local rulers and to residents of the oasis states.
Large quantities of Chinese silk were exported on the backs of the patient
Bactrian camels by Sogdian merchants to the West. (Litvinsky, 3:291).
Other articles of trade moving along the Silk Route included jade from Khotan, turquoise from Iran, lapis-lazuli from Afghanistan, tortoiseshell and ivory from India, coral and pearls from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, gold and silverware from Sasanian Persia, glassware from the eastern Mediterranean and bronze mirrors, tricoloured pottery and lacquerware from China. Other exotica, such as embroidered robes, tapestry, armour, swords, harness with gorgeous decorations and metal work were also traded along the Silk Route. The Silk Route contributed to the exchange not only of goods, but also of people, works of literature, works of art, ideas and concepts (Litvinsky, 3:292). Travelling, individually or in the great caravan-groups became a way of life and an intrinsic part of Central Asian culture because of the emergence of the Silk Route and the trade it generated. Thus, travel-writing offers a useful medium through which different perceptions of Central Asia can be viewed. It is the purpose of this study to arrive at a mosaic of Central Asia as seen through a sampling of travel-writing ranging from the 7th Century to the late 20th Century.

There has been a long history of travel in Central Asia along the Silk Route from the time of its inception. Mu Wang, a West Chou king is reputed to be the earliest Silk Road traveller. His travel account Mu tianzi
zhuan, written in 5-4 B.C. is the first known travel book on the Silk Route, and tells of his journey to the Tarim basin, the Pamirs and further into today's Iran. He appears to have returned via the southern arm of the Silk Route. This book no longer exists, and only references to it can be found in various Chinese works. Zhang Qian, (Chang Chien) a Chinese general and envoy is credited with opening the Silk Road after his mission from the Han emperor Wu-Ti to recruit the Yueh-chih people to form an alliance against the Xiongnu. His first trip (138-125 B.C.) skirted the Taklamakan desert via the northern route, passed the Pamir, then reached Ferghana, and he returned via the southern route. His second trip (119-115 B.C.) was a mission to seek alliance with the Wu-sun people, and it took him to Dun-huang, Loulan & Kucha; this mission led to the formal establishment of silk trade between Imperial China and Imperial Rome, also Persia. In the first century of the Christian era, a merchant handbook by an unknown author, who might have been an Egyptian Greek, tells about the trade routes through the Red sea and has extensive

1. Hopkirk describes him as “the father of the Silk-Road” (Foreign Devils on the Silk Road 17. Hereafter FDSR).
information about ports and goods. It appears to have been written after the discovery of how to use the monsoon winds to make the round trip to India. Among the various Chinese envoy-travellers of this period, the most notable is Fa-hsien (399-413 A.D) a Chinese monk, who imbibed and propounded the religion of Buddhism and its philosophy in Si-Yu-Ki, having travelled along the southern route through Shenshen, Dun-huang, Khotan, and then over the Himalayas to Gandhara and Peshawar, and finally to India. His journey was an arduous one, since he walked all the way; he is also the first known traveller passing through the Taklamakan desert from Woo-e to Khotan. He returned to China by the sea route. The next travel account of note is that of Hiuen-Tsiang (629-645 A.D.) the Chinese Buddhist monk, who traveled across the Tarim basin, Turfan, Kucha, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bactria, and over the Hindu Kush to India. He returned to China by the southern route and spent his remaining years translating Buddhist sutras into Chinese. His travels and life-story became legends in themselves and were even used in Chinese plays in the 16th century. References both to the pilgrim and his travel

2. As Loulan was then known (Beal, 212).
account are to be found in many travelogues of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. His work will be analysed independently at a later stage in this study.

A Korean monk by name Hwi Chao, who grew up in China (713-741 A.D) and travelled to India by sea, lived there for many years and visited various Buddhist kingdoms in India, Persia and Afghanistan. While returning he travelled to Kashmir, Kabul, passed the Pamirs, entered Sinkiang from Tashkurgan and skirted the Taklamakan desert from the northern side - Kucha, Turfan and Hami. His travel account provided valuable information on the Islamic and Buddhist influences among the Central Asian kingdoms during the 8th century3. His work was lost since the Tang dynasty, but an incomplete copy was miraculously discovered by the French explorer Paul Pelliot in the caves of Tunhuang in 1908. Another 8th century account of Central Asia is by a Chinese soldier, Du Hwai, (751-762 A.D.) who was imprisoned by the Arabs in the battle of Talas in 751 A.D. He somehow managed to travel to Tashkent,

3. 750-1500 A.D. saw the rise of Islam in much of Central Asia, and competing with older established faiths in this area.
Samarkand, northern Iran, Iraq and even into Syria. His work affords us a glimpse into prison life in Central Asia. Tamin ibn Bahr (821 A.D.), a Muslim traveller who left an account of his visit to the Uighur capital Kara-balghasun (in present-day Mongolia), was probably from Khorasan and sent to the East in connection with political upheavals in Transoxiana. Only an abridged version of his narrative survives, known especially from Yaqut's geographical dictionary. Ahmad Ibn Fadlan (921-922 A.D.) was sent as an ambassador from the Abbasid Caliph to the ruler of the Bulgars on the middle Volga river. The route went from Baghdad through the territories of the Samanid state and its capital Bukhara, through Khorezm and north of the Caspian Sea. The account we have of his travels is not the original report; however it is best known for its rather lurid description of a Viking funeral on the Volga; it has since inspired Michael Crichton's best-seller *Eaters of the Dead*. Yeh Lu Chu-ts'ai (1219 - 1225 A.D.), a great statesman and poet who became advisor to Genghiz Khan and his successors, travelled with him and his army to Central Asia in 1219 A.D., passing through Altai, the Ili valley, Talas, Samarkand and Bukhara. They returned via Tienshan, Urumchi, Turfan and Hami. His travel account Xi-Yue Lu (*The Travel Record to the West*) is available only in Chinese. Andrew of Longjumeau, a Dominican and papal envoy to the Mongols
travelled from Jerusalem to Tabrez in 1245 A.D. On his second trip in 1249 A.D., he went much farther to the Inner Asian dominions of the Mongols, where he arrived during the regency of Oghul Qaimish, the widow of Khan Guyug. We know of his journeys from summaries in Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora*. Between 1221 and 1248 A.D., various Chinese envoys (Wu Ku sun Chung tuan, K'iu Ch'ang Ch'un, Lichi ch'ang) traveled across Central Asia to the court of Genghiz Khan. 1248 A.D. saw Ascelinus and Simon of San Quentin, Dominican envoys of the Pope to the Mongol court traveling through Tabrez, Mosul, Aleppo, Antioch and Acre. Between 1245-1247 A.D., John of Plano Carpini and Benedict the Pole, Franciscan monks who were sent as envoys of Pope Innocent IV to Khan Batu, passed through the vicinity of the Karakorams, where they saw Guyug being proclaimed the new Khan. Their *History of the Mongols* is supposed to be one of the most perceptive and detailed accounts we have of the 13th century Mongols, and shows a surprising absence of bias, considering their Christian background. Other travellers to the Mongol court around this time (1253 - 1263 A.D.) were Franciscan missionary William of Rubruck who traversed the territory of the Golden Horde; and Hayton, the king of Little Armenia and Kirakos Gandsaketsi who visited Samarkand, Bukhara and Tabrez.
Between 1260 and 1295 A.D., there are two famous names to be recognized in the world of travel: Niccolo and Maffeo Polo, the merchant father and uncle of the legendary Marco Polo, who travelled through Golden Horde territories to Bukhara and ultimately went to Kublai Khan's court in Xanadu. The Great Khan sent them back to Europe on a mission to the Pope, by the overland route; when they returned to China in 1271 A.D., they were accompanied by the young Marco. We know of these travels mainly from Marco Polo's book. Marco Polo is easily the most famous of the Silk Route travellers; by his own account, he worked for Kublai Khan. His travels (1271 - 1295 A.D.) took him across the Pamirs and south of the Taklamakan desert. A Venetian by birth, he dictated his account to a professional writer of romances while imprisoned by the Genoese on his return. Some of the place-descriptions are clearly formulaic: for instance, on his leaving the city of Ho-chung-fu, he describes the next few days' travel thus -

"...you meet with cities and boroughs abounding in trade and industry, and quantities of beautiful trees, and gardens, and fine plains... also plenty of game of all sorts, both of beasts and birds" (Doren, 161).
The above description is so anonymous that it could be anywhere at all in the entire Central Asian landmass. Many place-descriptions and anecdotes of events are based on hearsay and not what he himself witnessed; but for all that, Polo's *Travels* is taken to be the ultimate reference-book for all travellers and travel-writing since. Travel-writing as a genre characteristically uses what has already gone before to authenticate the present - a great many travellers have referred to Polo's experiences, or else quoted from his work to legitimize their own statements. His work became so well known in Renaissance Europe that it served as a stimulus for innumerable travellers to this part of the world; in fact several of them made it their business to retrace the legendary Venetian's steps all the way from the Mediterranean coast to Xanadu, notably Clarence Dalrymple Bruce, whose *In the footsteps of Marco Polo* ... came out in 1907; and William Dalrymple, whose *In Xanadu: A Quest* appeared in 1989. For these travellers, the excitement and glamour of travel came not from the fact of travel itself, but rather from revisiting places that held a special appeal for them because Polo had either been there, or else mentioned it in his work. The *Travels* ... itself shall be discussed in other details at a later stage in this study.
Other 13th century Silk Road travellers include Nestorian monks (Rabban Bar Sauma and Markos, 1275-1288 A.D.) who travelled from Tai-tu (Kublai Khan's northern capital) to the Middle East, through Khotan and Kashgar, on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; a Franciscan missionary John of Monte Corvino (1279-1328 A.D.) who arrived in Beijing from Tabrez. At this juncture, it is important to note that this flurry of activity on the Silk Road continued despite the coming of the Mongols in the early 13th century, an important event in Central Asian history since they spelt ruin and destruction to anyone in their path. Entire cities and civilizations, mostly of Turkic Islamic stock, were laid waste and countless thousands were slaughtered. A historical novel *Genghiz Khan* by Vassili Yan recreates in fiction the coming of the cruel emperor to these unsuspecting peoples. The effects of Genghiz Khan's conquests were vastly different in impulse from those of Alexander the Great, the other important name in early Central Asian history. While Alexander sought to consolidate his power by settling various sections of his army and retinue in the newly-conquered areas, and encouraging a settled way of life in harmony with the natives, *Genghiz Khan was "a true son of the nomadic culture... and resisted the allurements of settled civilization"* (Asimov 4:253).
The fourteenth century (1316-1354 A.D.) travellers to Central Asia include some famous names: notably, Odoric of Pordenone, a Franciscan monk who sailed around southeast Asia to the east coast of China and spent several years in Beijing; his travel account became popular because he mixed sensationalism together with authentic information; and it inspired the future travel-fables of Sir John Mandeville. It was through his claims that the Western world came to know of the existence of Tibet. The next important traveller of this period is the famous Moroccan Ibn Battuta whose original intention of making the haj pilgrimage to Mecca results in his travelling across North Africa, much of Eurasia and to China. A keen interest in Muslim holy men and places predominates his travel-account, which is mainly valued for his descriptions of Anatolia, the territories and customs of the Golden Horde and Southern India. Lesser-known names include travellers such as John of Marignolli (1339-1353 A.D.) a papal legate sent to the Emperor of China, and Fransesco Balducci Pegolotti, a Florentine merchant whose travel-account speaks of the relative security of trade routes in the territories of the Mongol Empire. The beginning years of the fifteenth century saw Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo and Alfonso Paez, ambassadors of Spanish king Henry III of Castile and
Leon to Timur (Tamburlaine the Great, also spelt Tamerlane). A third envoy Gomez de Salazar, died en route. They travelled through the Mediterranean to Constantinople, Trebizond, and then to Tabrez, Balkh and Samarkand. When returning they passed through Bukhara. This account is an important source for travel on the Western part of the Silk Road; also its description of Tamerlane's Samarkand is one of the fullest available, with details of economic life, trade with India and China and Timurid buildings. Between 1413 and 1433 A.D., Ma Huan, a Muslim interpreter, accompanied the famous Ming admiral Ch'eng Ho on his fourth, sixth, and seventh expeditions to the Indian Ocean; on the first two voyages he got as far as Hormuz. During this time period, an artist called Ghiyathuddin Naqqash, who represented prince Mirza Baysunghur (son of Timurid ruler Shah Rukh) was sent as embassy to Beijing in 1419 A.D. He travelled north of Tarim Basin through Turfan, Suzhou, to Beijing and back via Kashgar to Herat and has observed various aspects of culture along the way, and especially Buddhism.

The fifteenth century also saw a Russian merchant Afanasi Nikitin, from Tver, who travelled through Persia to India, and his account advises fellow Christian merchants to leave their faith behind at home and profess
Islam if they wished to prosper on the Silk Road (There is a 1958 Soviet film on his journey.). The early decades of the sixteenth century experienced Babur, the great-great-great grandson of Timur, who wrote a memorable autobiography - of his early life and struggles in Central Asia, and particularly in Afghanistan before finally settling in northern India and founding the Mughal Empire. The *Baburnama* is an account of a highly-educated Central Asian Muslim's observations of his world-the political and military struggles of his time, extensive descriptions of people, places, flora and fauna, observations on nomadic and urban lifestyles, Timurid architecture, music and literature. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Anthony Jenkinson, representative of the English Muscovy Company travelled across the Caspian Sea to Bukhara; he also went to Persia to negotiate spice trade deals. There were other English travellers in this period such as John Newberry, and Ralph Fitch (London merchants) but they did not travel in Central Asia proper; they mostly traversed parts of Mesopotamia, the Levant and Malaysia. The opening years of the seventeenth century saw Benedict Goes, the Portuguese Jesuit who joined a mission to the Mughal Emperor Akbar, via Kashgar. However he died before reaching Beijing; the remnants of his notes and letters and some oral accounts were later incorporated by a famous Jesuit
missionary Matteo Ricci into his own travel journal. Despite some inconsistencies and problems in dates, the account is a unique European travel-record of the overland trade routes in inner Asia at the beginning of the seventeenth century – the route itself is extraordinarily difficult – heading northwest into Afghanistan before going north across the Hindu Kush to the headwaters of the Amu Darya, then east to Sarikol and on to Yarkand and Kashgar before skirting the Taklamakan to the north. The account also affords details of human and natural threats to travel, political divisions of the time and other aspects of inner Asian trade. Between 1615 and 1693 A.D. there were various stray travellers of different nationalities to Central Asia on different missions – some of them are: Richard Steele and John Crowther who were British East India Company agents; they went from Agra to Isfahan via Kandahar, and their account highlights the continuing importance of the overland trade routes in avoiding the Portuguese control of Indian Ocean ports. They comment interestingly on the role of Afghan nomads along the route and emphasize the safety of travel in the Mughal period. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, a French merchant-jeweller who made six voyages to the Ottoman Empire, Safavid Persia and Mughal India between 1629-1675 A.D. also knew the overland trade routes through Persia very well, of which he has left a very precise and
detailed account. Hovhannes Joughayetsi, an Armenian merchant travelled and traded between Isfahan, Northern India and Tibet. He even spent five years in Lhasa, and his commercial ledger is a unique source of information on products, prices, trading conditions and the Armenian commercial network of the seventeenth century routes of the Safavid and Mughal empires.

According to Peter Hopkirk (an authority on Central Asia and with several books to his credit) there were two main causes for the gradual disintegration of the Silk Route. One was the sheer force of geographical forces that influenced so much of Central Asia's history: the glacier-fed streams which supplied the oasis towns along the Silk Road gradually dried up and the steadily decreasing flow of water throughout this arid land led to the abandonment of various sites. One such is Yotkan, the original site of ancient Khotan, which is today completely buried in alluvium. The other main cause of the decline and decay of life on the Silk Road was the militant advance of Islam on the largely Buddhist civilizations along the Silk Road towns. In Hopkirk's words:

"The advance of this new religion along the Silk Road spelled the death of figurative art - the portrayal of the human form - for this
was anathema to Muslims. Many statues and wall-paintings were damaged or destroyed by these iconoclasts, while temples and stupas were left to crumble and vanish beneath the sand ... Under the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) the Silk Road was finally abandoned ..." (Hopkirk, FDSR 31).

By the late 17th century Imperial Russia had established trade-links with China, albeit with limited cultural exchanges. Russian penetration into Central Asia began in 1864, with the conquest of Turkestan. In 1865 Tashkent, the biggest city in Central Asia was captured and in 1867 the Government General of Turkestan was formed when the first Governor General Constantine von Kauffmann occupied Samarkand in 1868. The fabled city was one of the most important centres of Islamic culture and learning in Central Asia, besides having the unique mausoleum of Timur.

In 1873, Bukhara and Khiva accepted Russian sovereignty. David Ker, a British representative of the "Daily Telegraph" covered the 1873 Russian expedition to Khiva. He speaks of the quaint charms of the former Khanate:
"Indeed, the whole town is like an enlarged edition of the Sleeping Beauty's Palace, fenced about on every side by acres of luxuriant vegetation..." (qtd. in Ridgway, 190-191)

Though he was European, he identifies almost completely with the Tsar's imperial moves in Central Asia: as he is steered through the bazaar of Tashkent by Mourad, their native guide, he feels repulsed by the Sart appearance and general characteristics — "heavy, bloated, sensual mask ... lumpish, expressionless faces, and flabby nerveless limbs... Of them... Herodotus' bitter definition still holds good 'Many persons, but few men'. If such creatures are a fair specimen of Central Asia, it is full time for her to be purged by foreign invasion." (qtd. in Ridgway, 195).

The one positive feature he remarks in the whole territory is the food, which he and his companions consume in such quantities as to attract a crowd of watching admirers. Despite falling victim to the difficulties usual to Westerners travelling in Central Asia through dust and heat and dogs and offal and all the loathsome minutiae of a genuine Eastern town, he managed to publish his experiences in his On the Road to Khiva. In 1876, the fertile Ferghana Valley was taken over and included under the governance of Turkestan. The Turkomans, too, submitted to Russian
power, and with Gen. Skobelev's victory at Geok-Tepe in 1881, the region of Transcaspia was formed and in 1897 was incorporated in Turkestan. Russia's occupation of the oasis of Merv in 1884 brought her uncomfortably near the outposts of British India in Afghanistan, leading to a crisis in Anglo-Russian relations in 1885 (Wittram, *Russia and Europe* 93-94).

With the gradual taking-over of Central Asia by Tsarist Russia, the role of Russian travellers in the exploration of Central Asia assumed importance. From 1870 onwards several Russian expeditions were mounted to Central Asia, notably: G.N.Potanin (1884-86), whose investigations were set out in his work *The Tangut-Tibetan Outskirts of China*; the Grum-Grzhimaylo brothers (1886-90), V.A. Obruchev (1893-94), M.V. Pevtsov (1889-90) and V.I. Roborovsky (1893-95). The travels of the most distinguished among these, Nikolai Prejevalsky (1876-1885), won him world renown (Shaumian, *Tibet: The Great Game and Tsarist Russia* 17).

The Great Game in Central Asian history led to more intensive travelling in this region than ever before. To realize this, we have to go
back to the beginnings of this phenomenon in the early 19th century. The phrase was coined by a British officer, Captain Arthur Conolly and immortalized by Kipling in *Kim* to refer to this struggle in Central Asia for political ascendancy between Britain and Russia for the ultimate prize of India. Peter the Great had toyed with the idea of adding India to his dominions, but his plans never really took off. Neither did those of Catherine the Great. But by the middle of the nineteenth century, as one by one of the ancient caravan towns and former Silk Road khanates fell to the Russians, it began to be feared that the whole of Central Asia was going to succumb to Tsarist power. The British, who at this point had India as one of their prime colonial possessions, began to fear that their hold on it would be contested and that it would finally be wrested from their grasp. As the gap between the two front lines gradually narrowed, the Great Game intensified, and led to innumerable adventurers making their way to Central Asia, where three empires met - Russia, Britain and China. Those who returned alive and told their tales have contributed hugely to a mass of writing known as Great Game literature. It consists of both retold stories of men and matters, as well as first-hand accounts by the players of the Game themselves. According to Peter Hopkirk, most of the players in "this tournament of shadows" (as one of the Tsar's ministers
put it) were professionals like Indian army officers or political agents sent by their British superiors in Calcutta to gather intelligence of every sort (Hopkirk, *The Great Game* 5). Others were amateur travellers of independent means, who entered the Great Game to see if its ever-changing dynamics could be exploited for self-gain. Some of these adventure-stories and chronicles will be scrutinized in the succeeding chapter. To proceed with this sketchy outline of the travel history of Central Asia, the Great Game spilled over into the first few decades of the 20th century, with even more catastrophic effect on its hapless environs than before. The last years of the 19th century saw major changes in the political structure of Russia; by the beginning years of the 20th century, Communism had completely overrun and extinguished the last of the Tsars; Nicholas II and his entire family were secretly murdered in Yekaterinburg on 16th July 1918, and almost the whole of Central Asia had been taken over, with much bloodshed and loss to life and property. As far as the players of the Great Game were concerned, the Tsarist element had merely been replaced this time by a fanatical Communist faction; the political tensions between them and the British continued as before, and even escalated into bloody strife and warfare. The taking-over of Central Asia by the Communists and the changes they wrought there are oft-
repeated motifs in many 20th century travelogues, notably those of Gunther, K.P.S. Menon, Nazaroff, Roosevelt, Bissonnette and Kapuścínski. The tug of war for possession of India between Russia and Britain intensified to breaking-point. Lenin's ambitious aim of "set(ting) the East ablaze" with the colours of Communism and the thought that the East would help him conquer the West never materialized (Hopkirk Setting the East Ablaze IV. Hereafter STEA). In Hopkirk's words, "the East failed to ignite" (STEA 238). With the unexpected entrance of Hitler in the Soviet Union, Russia and her former foe, Britain, had to join hands in fighting off this new Fascist terror. Any hope that Indian Communists had of overthrowing the British rule in India was dashed. But while things were still politically uncertain, there were quite a few opportunists who saw in the general confusion of events a chance to advance their own personal careers. In his remarkable work Setting the East Ablaze, Hopkirk traces the life and career of these intrepid men, the most prominent among them being Colonel Bailey, a British secret service agent hired by the Cheka to track himself down, Captain Brun, a Danish officer, Paul Nazaroff the White Russian counter-revolutionary leader, Colonel Percy Etherton, British Consul-General at Kashgar, Baron Ungern-Sternberg, a madman who terrorized Mongolia, M.N.Roy, an
Indian revolutionary and Comintern strategist, Mikhail Borodin, top Soviet Comintern agent, and 'General' Ma, leader of the Chinese Muslim uprising. After the Revolution and the bloody success of the Bolsheviks in Central Asia, the seventy-odd years of Soviet rule here saw very few outsiders. The Iron Curtain very efficiently sealed off all foreign interest in Central Asia, and sundry individual travellers were strictly monitored by the Intourist apparatus, if not actually discouraged. The few travelogues of this period reflect on the one hand, the dull monotony and general demoralization of Soviet life imposed on the once colourful and diverse populations of Central Asia, now bereft of their ethnicity; on the other, the initial euphoria caused by the new philosophy and its success apparent in the technological, industrial and scientific progress evinced by the major cities in the land. By degrees, the ideological enthusiasm that Lenin had generated died away, with Stalin's terrible purges and liquidation tactics. It was during Stalin's time that the map of Central Asia came to be redrawn at its very core; the five Central Asian Republics (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan) came to be created. Stalin caused entire populations to be displaced and relocated, to form new geographical demarcations without any regard for cultural boundaries and ethnic considerations. Since everybody was primarily a
Soviet citizen and had no claim to any ethnic roots, this drastic measure did not at first show up any flaws. It was in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its aftermath, that Stalin's methods of arbitrary divisions came to be recognized for the monstrous error of judgement it was. Colin Thubron, a British travel-writer who visited Central Asia in the first summer of its independence from Moscow, was particularly struck by this aspect of the Soviet collapse. His *The Lost Heart of Asia* presents Central Asia almost as it is today - resurgent nationalism jostling with fractured and lost identities, unemployment, uncontrollable inflation, displacement, and a forlorn search for rootedness in a near-obliterated ethno-cultural background.

*Works Cited*


   *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*.


2. Beal, Samuel. Int. 

   *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang*

   By the Shaman Hwui Li A.E.S., New Delhi: 1998.
3. Dani, A.H. and V.M. Masson. eds.

*History of Civilizations of Central Asia.*


*The Travels of Marco Polo*

The Literary Guild of America, U.S.A. n.d.

5. Harmatta, Janos et. al. eds.

*History of Civilizations of Central Asia.*


6. Hopkirk, Peter.

*Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*


7. ...

*Setting the East Ablaze*

8. Litvinsky, B.A. et. al. eds.

History of Civilizations of Central Asia.


The world revealed -Asia.
Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, London: 1925.

10. Shaumian, Tatiana.

Tibet: The Great Game and Tsarist Russia


12. Waugh, Daniel.

Excerpts from the Legge translation by Prof. Waugh.
NOTE:
This chapter has been largely based upon information gleaned from the very comprehensive History of Civilizations of Central Asia, a laudable project undertaken by UNESCO in the last decades of the 20th Century and purported to be in six volumes, only four of which have been published in India so far. The history of travel in Central Asia from 5 B.C. upto the late 17th Century was reconstructed from various Internet sources, which have been suitably documented.