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- Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran - Dilip Hiro, 2011, 464p
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- The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years - Chingiz Aitmatov
- Kyrgyzstan: traditions of Nomads- 2005, Kadyrov (Author), Ian Claytor, 56p
- Kyrgyzstan- Claudia Antipina (Author), Temirbek Musakeev (Author), 2007
- Samarkand: Recipes & Stories from Central Asia & The Caucasus- Caroline Eden, 2016, 224p
Books about Central Asia with their official summaries taken from Amazon.com

History


A vast region stretching roughly from the Volga River to Manchuria and the northern Chinese borderlands, Central Asia has been called the "pivot of history," a land where nomadic invaders and Silk Road traders changed the destinies of states that ringed its borders, including pre-modern Europe, the Middle East, and China. In *Central Asia in World History*, Peter B. Golden provides an engaging account of this important region, ranging from prehistory to the present, focusing largely on the unique melting pot of cultures that this region has produced over millennia. Golden describes the traders who braved the heat and cold along caravan routes to link East Asia and Europe; the Mongol Empire of Chinggis Khan and his successors, the largest contiguous land empire in history; the invention of gunpowder, which allowed the great sedentary empires to overcome the horse-based nomads; the power struggles of Russia and China, and later Russia and Britain, for control of the area. Finally, he discusses the region today, a key area that neighbors such geopolitical hot spots as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China.

The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia - Professor René Grousset, 1970, 718p

While the early history of the steppe nomad is shrouded in obscurity, The Empire of the Steppes brings both the general reader and the specialist the majestic sweep, grandeur and the overriding intellectual grasp of Grousset’s original. Hailed as a masterpiece when first published in French in 1939, and in English in 1970, this great work of synthesis brings before us the people of the steppes, dominated by three mighty figures—Attila, Genghiz Khan, and Tamberlain—as they marched through ten centuries of history, from the borders of China to the frontiers of the West. The book includes nineteen maps, a comprehensive index, notes, and bibliography. The late Rene Grousset was director of the Cernuschi Museum and curator of the Muse Guimet in Paris, a member of the French Academy and author of many works on Asia Minor and the Near East.

History of Civilizations of Central Asia; UNESCO edition – 6 volumes on Central Asian history- all can be downloaded for free

Despite the major role played by Central Asia in shaping the history of the past and of today, this vast region, stretching from the Caspian Sea to Mongolia and western China, had not been studied as a whole cultural entity in time and space. This multi-volume History of Civilizations of Central Asia, published in English, is the first attempt to present a comprehensive picture of the cultures that flourished and vanished at the heart of the Eurasian continent from the dawn of civilization to the present day. Based on a wealth of archaeological materials and written by a distinguished team of specialists, many of them native to the region, this History sheds new light on the fabulous cultural heritage of lands that were shaped by the movements of peoples and varied civilizations, and that are at the centre of growing international interest.

The History of Central Asia: The Age of the Steppe Warriors Christoph Baumer, 2012, 372p

The epic plains and arid deserts of Central Asia have witnessed some of the greatest migrations, as well as many of the most transformative developments, in the history of civilization. Christoph Baumer’s ambitious four-volume treatment of the region charts the 3000-year drama of Scythians and Sarmatians; Soviets and transcontinental Silk Roads; trade routes and the transmission of ideas across the steppes; and the breathless and brutal conquests of Alexander the Great and Chinghiz Khan. Masterfully interweaving the stories of individuals and peoples, the author’s engaging prose is richly augmented throughout by color photographs taken on his own travels. For all the complexity
of the history, Dr. Baumer, a noted authority on Central Asia, never loses sight of the sweeping grandeur of its overall setting. Volume 1 focuses on the geography of the area now occupied by present-day Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, northern Afghanistan, western and central Mongolia and parts of southern Russia and northern China. Discussing the changing climates of the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Ages, the author explores subjects as diverse as glacial retreat; the invention of the wheel; the legendary Cimmerians and Amazons; Hellenism and Zoroastrianism; and the Oxus Treasure. Future volumes will explore the later historical periods of the region.

About the Silk Road

The phrase "silk road" evokes vivid scenes of merchants leading camel caravans across vast stretches to trade exotic goods in glittering Oriental bazaars, of pilgrims braving bandits and frozen mountain passes to spread their faith across Asia. Looking at the reality behind these images, this Very Short Introduction illuminates the historical background against which the silk road flourished, shedding light on the importance of old-world cultural exchange to Eurasian and world history. Millward concludes that the idea of the silk road has remained powerful, not only as a popular name for boutiques and restaurants, but also in modern politics and diplomacy, such as U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton’s "Silk Road Initiative" for India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Using supply and demand as the framework for analyzing the formation and development of the Silk Road, the book examines the dynamics of the interactions of the nomadic pastoralists with sedentary agriculturalists, and the spread of new ideas, religions, and values into the world of commerce, thus illustrating the cultural forces underlying material transactions. This effort at tracing the interconnections of the diverse participants in the transcontinental Silk Road exchange will demonstrate that the world had been linked through economic and ideological forces long before the modern era.

The Silk Roads: A New History of the World – Peter Frankopan, 2017, 672p
Frankopan realigns our understanding of the world, pointing us eastward. It was on the Silk Roads that East and West first encountered each other through trade and conquest, leading to the spread of ideas, cultures and religions. From the rise and fall of empires to the spread of Buddhism and the advent of Christianity and Islam, right up to the great wars of the twentieth century—this book shows how the fate of the West has always been inextricably linked to the East.

The Silk Road: A New History - Valerie Hansen, 2015, 328p
In The Silk Road, Valerie Hansen describes the remarkable archeological finds that revolutionize our understanding of these trade routes. For centuries, key records remained hidden—sometimes deliberately buried by bureaucrats for safe keeping. But the sands of the Taklamakan Desert have revealed fascinating material, sometimes preserved by illiterate locals who recycled official documents to make insoles for shoes or garments for the dead. Hansen explores seven oases along the road, from Xi’an to Samarkand, where merchants, envoys, pilgrims, and travelers mixed in cosmopolitan communities, tolerant of religions from Buddhism to Zoroastrianism. There was no single, continuous road, but a chain of markets that traded between east and west. China and the Roman Empire had very little direct trade. China’s main partners were the peoples of modern-day Iran, whose tombs in China reveal much about their Zoroastrian beliefs. Silk was not the most important good on the road; paper, invented in China before Julius Caesar was born, had a bigger
impact in Europe, while metals, spices, and glass were just as important as silk. Perhaps most significant of all was the road’s transmission of ideas, technologies, and artistic motifs.

Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization - R. Foltz, 2010, 190p
Drawing on the latest research and scholarship, this newly revised and updated edition of Religions of the Silk Road explores the majestically fabled cities and exotic peoples that make up the romantic notions of the colonial era.

Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present - Christopher I. Beckwith, 2011, 512p
The first complete history of Central Eurasia from ancient times to the present day, Empires of the Silk Road represents a fundamental rethinking of the origins, history, and significance of this major world region. Christopher Beckwith describes the rise and fall of the great Central Asian empires, including those of the Scythians, Attila the Hun, the Turks and Tibetans, and Genghis Khan and the Mongols. In addition, he explains why the heartland of Central Eurasia led the world economically, scientifically, and artistically for many centuries despite invasions by Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Chinese, and others. In retelling the story of the Old World from the perspective of Central Eurasia, Beckwith provides a new understanding of the internal and external dynamics of the Central Asian states and shows how their people repeatedly revolutionized Eurasian civilization.

Life Along the Silk Road - Susan Whitfield, 2001, 253p
Life along the Silk Road brings alive the now ruined and sand-covered desert towns and their inhabitants. Readers encounter an Ulghur nomad from the Gobi Desert accompanying a herd of steppe ponies for sale to the Chinese state; Ah-long, widow of a prosperous merchant, now reduced to poverty and forced to resort to law and charity to survive; and the Chinese princess sent as part of a diplomatic deal to marry a Turkish kaghan. In the process we learn about women’s lives, modes of communication, weapons, types of cosmetics, methods of treating altitude sickness in the Tibetan army, and ways that merchants cheated their customers. Throughout the narrative, Whitfield conveys a strong sense of what life was like for ordinary men and women on the Silk Road—everyone from itinerant Buddhist monks, to Zoroastrians and Nestorian Christians seeking converts among the desert settlers, to storytellers, musicians, courtesans, diviners, peddlers, and miracle-workers who offered their wares in the marketplaces and at temple fairs. A work of great scholarship, Life along the Silk Road is at the same time extremely accessible and entertaining.

Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia’s Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane - S. Frederick Starr, 2015, 680p
Lost Enlightenment recounts how, between the years 800 and 1200, Central Asia led the world in trade and economic development, the size and sophistication of its cities, the refinement of its arts, and, above all, in the advancement of knowledge in many fields. Central Asians achieved signal breakthroughs in astronomy, mathematics, geology, medicine, chemistry, music, social science, philosophy, and theology, among other subjects. They gave algebra its name, calculated the earth’s diameter with unprecedented precision, wrote the books that later defined European medicine, and penned some of the world’s greatest poetry. One scholar, working in Afghanistan, even predicted the existence of North and South America—five centuries before Columbus. Rarely in history has a more impressive group of polymaths appeared at one place and time. No wonder that their writings influenced European culture from the time of St. Thomas Aquinas down to the scientific revolution, and had a similarly deep impact in India and much of Asia.
The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane - Beatrice Forbes Manz, 1999, 248p

This is the first serious study of Tamerlane, the great nomad conqueror who rose to power in 1370 on the ruins of the Mongol Empire and led his armies on campaigns of unprecedented scope, ranging from Moscow to Delhi. As the last nomad ruler to unite the steppe regions of Eurasia, Tamerlane marks the transition from the era of nomad conquest and rule to the modern ascendancy of the settled world.

The Turks in World History - Carter Vaughn Findley 2004, 320p

Beginning in Inner Asia two thousand years ago, the Turks have migrated and expanded to form today's Turkish Republic, five post-Soviet republics, other societies across Eurasia, and a global diaspora. For the first time in a single, accessible volume, this book traces the Turkic peoples' trajectory from steppe, to empire, to nation-state. Cultural, economic, social, and political history unite in these pages to illuminate the projection of Turkic identity across space and time and the profound transformations marked successively by the Turks' entry into Islam and into modernity.

The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia – Peter Hopkirk, 1992, 564p

Peter Hopkirk’s spellbinding account of the great imperial struggle for supremacy in Central Asia has been hailed as essential reading with that era’s legacy playing itself out today. The Great Game between Victorian Britain and Tsarist Russia was fought across desolate terrain from the Caucasus to China, over the lonely passes of the Pamirs and Karakorams, in the blazing Kerman and Helmund deserts, and through the caravan towns of the old Silk Road—both powers scrambling to control access to the riches of India and the East. When play first began, the frontiers of Russia and British India lay 2000 miles apart; by the end, this distance had shrunk to twenty miles at some points. Now, in the vacuum left by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there is once again talk of Russian soldiers "dipping their toes in the Indian Ocean."

Politics

Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union (Culture and Society after Socialism) - Francine Hirsch, 2005, 392p

In Empire of Nations, Francine Hirsch examines the ways in which former imperial ethnographers and local elites provided the Bolsheviks with ethnographic knowledge that shaped the very formation of the new Soviet Union. The ethnographers—who drew inspiration from the Western European colonial context—produced all-union censuses, assisted government commissions charged with delimiting the USSR's internal borders, led expeditions to study "the human being as a productive force," and created ethnographic exhibits about the "Peoples of the USSR." In the 1930s, they would lead the Soviet campaign against Nazi race theories. Hirsch illuminates the pervasive tension between the colonial-economic and ethnographic definitions of Soviet territory; this tension informed Soviet social, economic, and administrative structures. A major contribution to the history of Russia and the Soviet Union, Empire of Nations also offers new insights into the connection between ethnography and empire.

The New Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Birth of Nations, Olivier Roy 248p, 2007

In a new, revised edition of his acclaimed book, Olivier Roy examines the political development of central Asia, from Russian conquests to the "War on Terror" and beyond. During the anti-Gorbachev coup in August 1991, most communist leaders from Soviet central Asia backed the plotters. Within weeks of the coup’s collapse, those same leaders—now transformed into ardent nationalists—proclaimed the independence of their nations, adopted new flags and new slogans, and discovered a new patriotism. How were these new nations built among peoples without any traditional nationalist
heritage and no history of independent governance? Roy argues that Soviet practice had always been
to build on local institutions and promote local elites, and that Soviet administration—as opposed to
Soviet rhetoric—was always surprisingly decentralized in the farflung corners of the empire. Thus,
with home-grown political leaders and administrative institutions, national identities in central Asia
emerged almost by stealth. Roy’s analysis of the new states in central Asia—Kazakhstan,
Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, Kirghizstan and Azerbaijan—provides a glimpse of the future
of an increasingly fragmented and dangerous region.

Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran - Dilip Hiro, 2011, 464p
In this comprehensive new treatment, renowned political writer and historian Dilip Hiro places the
politics, peoples, and cultural background of this critical region firmly into the context of current
international focus.

Paul Stronski tells the fascinating story of Tashkent, an ethnically diverse, primarily Muslim city that
became the prototype for the Soviet-era reimagining of urban centers in Central Asia. Based on
extensive research in Russian and Uzbek archives, Stronski shows us how Soviet officials, planners,
and architects strove to integrate local ethnic traditions and socialist ideology into a newly
constructed urban space and propaganda showcase.

Travelogues

Turkestan Solo: A Journey Through Central Asia - Ella K. Maillart, 1930s, 372p
Ella Maillart was the adventurous Swiss woman who made her name as an intrepid explorer and one
of the most remarkable woman travelers of the early twentieth century. Her solo journey through
Central Asia in the early 1930s was considered to be a highlight of her adventure-filled life. Setting off
from the Tien Shan mountains of Mongolia, Maillart rode horses and camels to the far away walls of
fabled Bokhara. “Turkestan Solo” is her vivid account of this wonderful, mysterious and dangerous
portion of the world, complete with its Kirghiz eagle hunters, lurking Soviet secret police, and the
timeless nomads that still inhabited the desolate steppes of Central Asia. If any book can give its
reader the ability to look back in time, this one does, written as it was by one of the world’s foremost
female equestrian explorers. Amply illustrated, it remains a timeless adventure classic.

The Lost Heart of Asia - Colin Thubron, 2008,400p
A land of enormous proportions, countless secrets, and incredible history, Central Asia was the heart
of the great Mongol empire of Tamerlane and scene of Stalin’s cruelest deportations. A remote and
fascinating region in a constant state of transition—never more so than since the collapse of the
Soviet Union—it encompasses terrain as diverse as the Kazakh steppes, the Karakum desert, and the
Pamir mountains. In The Lost Heart of Asia, acclaimed, bestselling travel writer Colin Thubron carries
readers on an extraordinary journey through this little understood, rarely visited, yet increasingly
important corner of the world.
Shadow of the Silk Road - Colin Thubron, 2008, 400p
In his latest absorbing travel epic, Thubron (*In Siberia; Mirror to Damascus*) follows the course—or at least the general drift—of the ancient network of trade routes that connected central China with the Mediterranean Coast, traversing along the way several former Soviet republics, war-torn Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey. The author travels third-class all the way, in crowded, stifling railroad cars and rattle-trap buses and cars, staying at crummy inns or farmers’ houses, subject to shakedowns by border guards and constant harassment—even quarantine—by health officials hunting the SARS virus. Physically, these often monotonously arid, hilly regions of Central Asia tend to go by in a swirl of dun-colored landscapes studded with Buddha shrines in varying states of repair or ruin, but Thubron’s poetic eye still teases out gorgeous subtleties in the panorama. Certain themes also color his offbeat encounters with locals—most of them want to get the hell out of Central Asia—but again he susses out the infinite variety of ordinary misery. The conduit by which an entire continent exchanged its commodities, cultures and peoples—Thubron finds traces of Roman legionaries and mummies of Celtic tribesmen in western China—the Silk Road becomes for him an evocative metaphor for the mingling of experiences and influences that is the essence of travel.

Apples Are from Kazakhstan: The Land that Disappeared - Christopher Robbins, 2010, 304p
Closed to foreigners under Tsar and Soviet rule, Kazakhstan has remained largely hidden from the world, a remarkable feat for a country the size of Western Europe. Few would guess that Kazakhstan—a blank in Westerners’ collective geography—turns out to be diverse, tolerant, and surprisingly modern, the country that gave the world apples, trousers, and even, perhaps, King Arthur.
Christopher Robbins enjoyed unprecedented access to the Kazakh president while crafting this travelogue, and he relates a story by turns hilarious and grim. He finds Eminem-worship by a shrinking Aral Sea, hears the Kazakh John Lennon play in a dusty desert town, joins nomads hunting eagles, eats boiled sheep’s head (a delicacy), and explores some of the most beautiful, unspoiled places on earth.

A Carpet Ride to Khiva: Seven Years on the Silk Road, Christopher Aslan Alexander, 2010, 336p
An unique travel memoir about one of the world’s most enchanting but least-known countries.

Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present - Jeff Sahadeo (Editor), Russell Zanca, 2007, 424p
For its citizens, contemporary Central Asia is a land of great promise and peril. While the end of Soviet rule has opened new opportunities for social mobility and cultural expression, political and economic dynamics have also imposed severe hardships. In this lively volume, contributors from a variety of disciplines examine how ordinary Central Asians lead their lives and navigate shifting historical and political trends. Provocative stories of Turkmen nomads, Afghan villagers, Kazakh scientists, Kyrgyz border guards, a Tajik strongman, guardians of religious shrines in Uzbekistan, and other narratives illuminate important issues of gender, religion, power, culture, and wealth. A vibrant and dynamic world of life in urban neighborhoods and small villages, at weddings and celebrations, at classroom tables, and around dinner tables emerges from this introduction to a geopolitically strategic and culturally fascinating region.
Diverse Central Asia books

Jamilia - Chingiz Aitmatov, 1958, 96p
The Second World War is raging, and Jamilia’s husband is off fighting at the front. Accompanied by Daniyar, a sullen newcomer who was wounded on the battlefield, Jamilia spends her days hauling sacks of grain from the threshing floor to the train station in their village in the Caucasus. Spurning men’s advances and wincing at the dispassionate letters she receives from her husband, Jamilia falls helplessly in love with the mysterious Daniyar in this heartbreakingly beautiful tale. A classic from the award-winning Kyrgyz novelist.

The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years - Chingiz Aitmatov
Set in the vast windswept Central Asian steppes and the infinite reaches of galactic space, this powerful novel offers a vivid view of the culture and values of the Soviet Union’s Central Asian peoples.

Samarkand: Recipes & Stories from Central Asia & The Caucasus - Caroline Eden, 2016, 224p
Over hundreds of years, various ethnic groups have passed through this city, sharing and influencing each other’s cuisine and leaving their culinary stamp. Samarkand is a love letter to Central Asia and the Caucasus, containing travel essays, beautiful photography and recipes that are little known in the West that have been expertly adapted for the home cook. There is an introduction to the region (explaining the ethnic groups – Uzbeks, Tajiks, Russian, Turkis, Koryo-Saram, Jewish, Caucasus, Afghan) with a useful pantry of essential ingredients, followed by an array of delicious dishes. These include Lamb Kebabs with Cinnamon, Cloves & Hot Hummus, Pumpkin Stuffed with Jeweled Rice, Pomegranate & Vodka Sorbet and the all-important breads of the region – non, flatbreads and pides.

The Music of Central Asia - Theodore Levin, Saida Daukeyeva, 2016, 703p
This beautiful and informative book offers a detailed introduction to the musical heritage of Central Asia for readers and listeners worldwide. Music of Central Asia balances “insider” and “outsider” perspectives with contributions by 27 authors from 14 countries. A companion website (www.musicofcentralasia.org) provides access to some 189 audio and video examples, listening guides and study questions, and transliterations and translations of the performed texts. This generously illustrated book is supplemented with boxes and sidebars, musician profiles, and an illustrated glossary of musical instruments, making it an indispensable resource for both general readers and specialists. In addition, the enhanced ebook edition, which is so comprehensive it had to be split into two ebooks, contains 180 audio and video examples of Central Asian music and culture. A follow-along feature highlights the song lyrics in the text, as the audio samples play.