



ASHKHABAD

ASHKHABAD (Russian; Persian 'Ešqābād), since 1924 the capital of the Soviet Republic of Turkmenistan. It lies 40 km north of the Iranian frontier and is a station on the Central Asian Railway from Krasnovodsk (on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea) to Tashkent, built in the years 1885-99. Formerly it was called 'Askābād and Askabad, from 1921 to 1927 it bore the name Poltoratsk. Ashkhabad lies between 214 and 240 m above sea level. At the time of the Russian conquest in 1881 it was a village (*aul*) of about 500 tents. As the hub of the Russian district of "Transcaspia" Ashkhabad grew rapidly and by 1897 had a population of 19,428, mostly merchants and civil servants. By 1926 the population had increased to 51,593; in 1939 the figure was 127,000, in 1965 219,000 and in January 1970 253,000. In 1965 thirty per cent of the inhabitants were Turkomans, forty-three percent were Russians and fourteen percent were Armenians. The proportion of Persians and Tajiks has always been very small.

Ashkhabad quickly achieved economic and cultural importance, as it lay at the intersection of several caravan routes. Up to 1948, however, it could not boast any notable civic monuments. The city was repeatedly struck by earthquakes (in 1893, 1895, and 1929), with a particularly severe tremor on 9 October 1948 which virtually reduced it to rubble. In 1905-06 there was some rioting there in connection with the Russo-Japanese War. In December 1917 the city fell into Bolshevik hands; it was retaken in June 1918 with the aid of British troops but was occupied once more by the Red Army when the British withdrew in July 1919. The reconstruction program after 1948 attempted to combine traditional



and modern elements. The cultural institutions, some of which had already existed before 1917, were built up once again. From 1949 the city housed a branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences which became an independent academy in 1951; it specializes in desert and earthquake research. The Turkoman Gor'kiĭ University was founded in 1950, and there are four other institutes of higher education (including a polytechnic and colleges of agriculture and medicine). Ashkhabad has three museums containing an important collection of items relating to the indigenous Turkoman culture; a theatre and a concert hall; an academic library with some Persian manuscripts and thirty-eight civic libraries; a zoo, "cultural institutes" (e.g., for railway men or workers in the oil industry), and many administrative buildings. It also has an airport. In 1962 the Qara Qum canal was extended as far as Ashkhabad.

Local industries include steel works, engineering, vehicle assembly, oil refining, the manufacture of building materials and textiles (especially silk), and food production. The district of Ashkhabad encompasses the northern flank of Kopet-Dag, the Taĭen oasis and the central area of the Qara Qum desert with its deposits of zinc, lead, sulphur, barites, and possibly oil.

To the west of the city lie the ruins of Nasā ([Nisa](#)), the Parthian capital, to the east Anau, center of an important ancient culture discovered in 1904. Here too stands a charming mosque with an inscription by the architect Abu'l-Qāsem Bābor, who died in 864/1456-57.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Babaev and Z. G. Freĭkin, *Ashkhabad*, Ashkhabad, 1957.

Z. G. Freĭkin, *Turkmenskaya SSR* (The Soviet Republic of Turkmenistan), Moscow, 1957.

Turkmenistan, Moscow, 1969 (in the series "Sovetskiĭ Soyuz").

B. Spuler in *EI*² I, pp. 700f.



*Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*³ (in Russian) II, p. 474 (with map and illustrations; also Plates 37 and 38); Eng. tr., New York and London, II, 1973, pp. 400-01.

Search terms:

اشك آباد eshgh abad eshghabad eshghaabaad
عشق آباد