



MĀ WARĀ' AL-NAHR

MĀ WARĀ' AL-NAHR (lit. “what lies beyond the river”), the classical designation for Transoxania or Transoxiana. It was defined by the early Arabic historians and geographers as the lands under Muslim control lying to the north of the middle and upper Oxus or *Āmu Daryā*, in contrast to Iran proper and its eastern province of *Khorasan*, sometimes called *Mā dun al-nahr* (lit. “what lies this side of the river”), although from the perspective of Arab historians writing in distant Iraq, the term “Khorasan” might extend to all lands beyond the Oxus, including Khwarazm and Transoxiana.

The northern frontiers of *Mā warā' al-nahr* were ill-defined and tended to correspond to the limits of Arab military expansion, but by early Abbasid times (ca. 800 CE) they might be taken to comprise the regions between the Oxus and Jaxartes or Syr Darya, that is, *Sogdia*, the upper Oxus provinces of *Čaġāniyān*, *Ḳottal*, and *Waḳān*, and *Ošrusana* to the south of the middle Syr Darya; *Čāč* or *Šāš* beyond the middle Syr Darya; and *Farġāna* and the valley of the upper Syr Darya.

The term was still used in Turkish and Persian historical sources on the history of this region, such as *Bābor* in his *Bābor-nāma* and *Mirzā Ḥaydar Duġlāt* in his *Tāriḳ-e Rašidi*, and even up to the opening of the 20th century, with the regions beyond Transoxiana often termed in later medieval, pre-modern times “*Moġolestān*.”

See [CENTRAL ASIA](#); [GEOGRAPHY](#).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Guy Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1930, pp. 433-34.

W. W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed., London, 1969, pp. 64-179.

Y. Bregel, *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, Leiden and Boston, 2003, pp. 2, 16-21 and maps 9-10.