

Description of Samarkand

The City

- on a plain
- protected by earth wall and ditch
- larger than Seville
- extensive suburbs
- vineyards, orchards
- streets with open squares
- water-conduits in gardens and city streets
- literally Semiz-kent = Rich-Town
- people live in caves and tents outside the city

Population

- densely populated
- pop outside >> pop inside
- nobles and rich people live outside
- hamlets outside the suburbs
- 150,000 souls
- Turks, Arabs, Moors, Greeks, Armenians, Europeans, Indians

Castle

- not built on a hill
- deep, water filled moat → impregnable
- holds Timur's treasure
- special access rules
- ≥ 1000 captives making weapons and armor

Food

- abundance of melons and food in general
- when the army camps there is still some
- people cure melons, making them good for a year
- soil is very fertile, growing wheat
- fruit trees and rich orchards
- magnificent livestock, beasts and poultry
- fat tailed sheep
- low prices
- open squares where cooked and prepared meat is sold
- bread and excellent fruit
- it's clean, traffic all day, even at night

Goods

- silk, crapes, taffetas, Tercenals
- fur linings for silk garments
- rich colors, gold, blue
- spices
- hemp and flax introduced to the region

Trade

- Russia, Tartary: leather, linen
- Cathay (best craftsmen in the world): finest silk, musk, rubies, diamonds, pearls, rhubarb
- India: nutmegs, cloves, mace, cinnamon, ginger, manna (most expensive, not even found in Alexandria)

Timur

- brought many craftsmen to Samarkand
- fostered trade → wants noblest city in the world
- took best men from all places he conquered to Samarkand
 - Damascus: weavers, bow, armor, glass, and porcelain makers
 - Turkey: gun smiths, silver smiths, masons
 - artillery men, bombardiers, rope makers
- conquered Turkey and Damascus 7 years ago
- told troops to take family with them because he wanted to be gone for 7 years and conquer all his enemies and not return before he is done
- seizes Chinese caravans and wants ambassadors hung

Relations with China

- Chinese ambassadors ask Timur for tribute, for last 7 years too
- he sent them away, falsely promising to pay
- no earlier tribute demands because China had turmoil
 - 3 brothers inherit split empire
 - oldest kills youngest, gets beat by middle one
 - oldest kills himself and most of his men by burning his camp
 - middle restored order – wanted Timur's tribute
- Timur wanted all Chinese ambassadors hung
- 800 camel caravan arrived from China, Timur seized them
- he had them give him information on China, which was mighty and had large cities and armies

Possible Topics / Foci

Connect these to your travel experience or what you think about them

- What is your impression of life in Samarkand at that time?
- What sticks out about Clavijo's report? What is weird/notable?
- Why does he love melons so much?
- What do you think of Timur's rule?
- Which of Timur's strategies was most beneficial?
- Would you have done the same things as Timur in his position?