

UZBEKISTAN

STRETCHING FROM RED SANDS TO GREEN OASIS: THE SOUL OF CENTRAL ASIA

This paper concentrates on those aspects of modern Uzbekistan of interest to the toponymist: modern history, people, language, writing systems and geographical names. It is not otherwise a specialist text. Spellings of geographical names are for the most part in accordance with the new Uzbek Roman orthography, though *Tashkent*, *Karakalpakstan* and *Fergana Valley* are considered conventionally English and are used textually. The paper is drawn together from an assortment of material, from a wide variety of sources, all contained in the PCGN *Uzbekistan* country file.

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SECTION A: Brief Outline of Twentieth Century History

- 1 Uzbekistan as a political entity is a result of the Soviet period. Beforehand, the area had principally comprised the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva, both of which had become Russian Protectorates in the period following the Tsar's conquest of Tashkent¹ in 1865. It took several years following the 1917 revolution for Soviet power to subdue this region, and it was only in 1924 that the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) was established. For a few years, Tajikistan was included within the Uzbek SSR as an autonomous region, eventually to become its own SSR in 1929. Then in 1936 the Karakalpak autonomous area, hitherto administered as part of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (and then briefly by the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic), was incorporated administratively into the Uzbek SSR.

- 2 In administrative-territorial terms, matters then remained fairly stable until the end of the 1980s, at which point the Soviet Union was beginning to disintegrate. In June 1990, the Uzbek SSR claimed a form of sovereignty within the Soviet Union, and then in August 1991 it claimed complete independence under the name of Uzbekistan. Independence took material effect upon the final collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, whereupon Uzbekistan became a founder-member of the newly created *Commonwealth of Independent States*². A first sovereign Constitution followed in December 1992; with minor adjustments this remains in force today.

- 3 Uzbekistan³ became an independent sovereign state without possessing a foundation of national consciousness upon which it could call for support. As a child of the Soviet Union, it had never experienced that concept of nation-state identity with which many countries in Europe, for example, are readily familiar. The country's boundaries had been drawn by a distant and alien Moscow, and drawn across natural and ethnic boundaries in a fashion that intentionally rendered the achievement of national identity (and possible anti-Soviet insurrection) very difficult⁴. Neither of the two common factors which did exist, namely a religious identification with Islam⁵ and a cultural sense of Turkic brotherhood, was in any way a unique identifying factor exclusive to Uzbekistan. If the country were to succeed as a nation, much would depend on the people themselves asserting (and, where necessary, inventing) a unified identity encompassing all indigenous elements.

¹ *Tashkent* is the spelling in Russian and also the conventional English spelling; *Toshkent* is the Uzbek spelling.

² This commonwealth is an association of independent sovereign states, comprising Russia and 11 of the former SSRs (the entire former Soviet Union except for Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania).

³ Of passing interest is the fact that Uzbekistan is one of only two doubly landlocked countries in the world (the other being Liechtenstein); more than one other country has to be crossed before open water can be reached.

⁴ These are characteristics which Uzbekistan shares with its former Soviet neighbours.

⁵ Over 90% of the population are Muslim, very largely of the *Summi* branch of Islam.

SECTION B: People

4 Uzbekistan, a country of just over 170,000 square miles⁶, has a current population of about 25.7 million. This population is heavily concentrated in the markedly more fertile eastern third of the country, particularly in the green oasis of the Fergana Valley, the easternmost portion of Uzbekistan's territory. Over 80% of the population are ethnically Uzbek, a less than wholly homogeneous Turkic grouping of people comprising an amalgamation of several key regional clans. About 8% are ethnically Tajik, a people belonging to an Iranian grouping found principally in neighbouring Tajikistan. A further 5% are ethnically Russian. There is a small Kazakh population (about 2%), and a similarly-sized Karakalpak population. Both of these latter ethnic groupings are Turkic.

Summary:

Uzbek	80%
Tajik	8% [the 5% figure sometimes seen is probably an underestimate] ⁷
Russian	5%
Kazakh	2%
Karakalpak	2%
other	3% [mainly Tatar]

5 The ethnic groups within Uzbekistan show distinct patterns of regional distribution. The Russians are principally concentrated in the urban agglomerations, with for example almost half the 2 million-plus population of the capital Tashkent being Russian. The Tajik minority is mainly to be found in and around the city of Samarqand and in nearby Qashqadaryo province [see map on page 7]. The Kazakhs are very thinly spread across the western half of the country, principally the Qizilqum⁸, and the Karakalpaks are found almost exclusively in the central portion of Karakalpakstan⁹, in the extreme west bordering the Aral Sea. Even the Uzbeks themselves, though far more numerous, are largely confined to the eastern half of the country.

6 Since independence, the number of Russians in Uzbekistan has declined, as many have felt increasingly isolated in a new country where their own language is no longer official, and have decided to emigrate. At the same time as the figures for Russians decrease, both proportionately and absolutely, so those for Uzbeks increase¹⁰, and this is in turn leading to a gradual reduction in the average age of the population of Uzbekistan as a whole, with half the population now under 16 years of age. There are ethnic tensions present; the histories of present-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have often been bound up together, and tension arises through the strong proprietorial attachment which the Tajik minority in Uzbekistan (and many Tajiks in Tajikistan) feel towards the cities of Buxoro and Samarqand. Conversely, if there is a real national Uzbek heartland then it is in the Fergana Valley, whose inhabitants regard themselves as the true guardians of Uzbek culture and language. This region is, by extension, also the main focal point within Uzbekistan for Islamic fundamentalism as well as traditional Islam; see paragraph 15.

⁶ A little larger than California and almost twice the size of the United Kingdom.

⁷ See paragraph 15.

⁸ a desert area; in Uzbek, *Qizilqum* = "red sands".

⁹ "the land of the black fur hat": in Uzbek = *Qoraqalpog'iston*.

¹⁰ In the early 1990s the figures were roughly 75% Uzbek and 10% Russian.

SECTION C: Language

- 7 The official state language of Uzbekistan is Uzbek, a fact asserted in Article 4 of the 1992 Constitution and re-asserted by the December 1995 *Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the State Language*. Uzbek belongs to the Turkic group of languages, and is descended from a literary language originating in the fifteenth century which is known scientifically as Chagatay or Chaghatay, and colloquially as “Old Uzbek” or “Classical Uzbek”. Over the course of the centuries, this language was significantly influenced by languages of the Persian family (particularly Tajik) and largely lost the feature of vowel harmony so characteristic of Turkic languages. Indeed, the mutation from Chagatay to modern Uzbek, encouraged in the early Soviet period as being a conscious break with the past, is such that texts in the former language seem largely archaic today. Inevitably, too, modern Uzbek in the Soviet period acquired elements of Russian vocabulary and terminology to sit alongside the Persian influences from the more distant past.
- 8 The ethnic minorities listed in paragraph 4 above naturally favour the use of their own languages (rather than Uzbek) amongst themselves¹¹, and the 1995 Law confirms their right to do so. In theory, at least, citizens of Uzbekistan have since 1997 also been able to choose their language of education and communication. In practice, however, the Tajik minority certainly considers itself discriminated against by the Uzbek authorities in matters of education and employment. The Russian minority, formerly privileged in the era of the Soviet Union, also now feels uncomfortable among the government exhortations to advance the cause of the Uzbek language for reasons of national dignity, patriotism, and respect for the motherland¹². The authorities have made efforts to reduce the impact of Russian, and from 1992 the revision of geographical and other names became a regular topic of concern¹³. One simple example of this is the general replacement in Uzbek of the Russian word *kvartal* (neighbourhood, urban quarter) by its genuine Uzbek equivalent word *maxalla*. There does however remain some evidence of Russian (and an increasing use of English, both directly and by means of loan words adopted into Uzbek) in business and commercial spheres of life in Uzbekistan.
- 9 Within the Republic of Karakalpakstan, at the western extremity of Uzbekistan, the Karakalpak language is also official, alongside Uzbek. Karakalpak is also a language of the Turkic group, though in fact rather more similar to Kazakh than to Uzbek. However, it appears that the names of populated places, geographical features, and administrative divisions in Karakalpakstan are considered to be of a national Uzbek heritage, and are found written in Uzbek only.

¹¹ Indeed, Tajik rather than Uzbek is likely to be heard on the streets of Buxoro and Samarqand.

¹² Language is here being used by government as an essential element in the creation of an Uzbek national identity (see paragraph 3).

¹³ For examples of name changes, see Annex C.

SECTION D: Writing Systems

- 10 Chagatay, the forerunner of modern Uzbek¹⁴, existed right up to the early twentieth century and was written in a modified and extended Arabic script. Following the 1917 Soviet revolution, as part of a drive towards modernisation, moves were made to write the Turkic languages of the Soviet Union in Roman script, using additional modified letters to represent the characteristically Turkic sounds. In the case of the language by now known as Uzbek, this transformation was achieved by 1928.
- 11 However, the Soviet regime soon considered that the introduction of Roman script for Uzbek, and indeed for the Turkic languages as a whole, had in fact been a dangerous development liable to lead to secessionist tendencies in the constituent Turkic administrative units of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, modified Cyrillic scripts were devised for the Turkic languages, a development designed to cement the *de facto* supremacy of Cyrillic as a pan-Soviet script. The modified Cyrillic alphabet for Uzbek was employed in 1940.
- 12 Following independence and the adoption of the 1992 Constitution, Uzbekistan sought to sever certain aspects of the Soviet legacy. In 1993, a law was passed which introduced a new Roman alphabet for the Uzbek language, intended to replace Cyrillic completely by 2000. Two years later, in 1995, modifications to the alphabet were made, and the target date for full implementation was extended to September 2005. Over the course of the 1990s, this new Roman alphabet was gradually introduced; for instance on postage stamps, for Tashkent underground stations, and on road destination signs. Then, in the year 2000, the Uzbek authorities published a map of Uzbekistan, at the scale of 1:1,500,000, with its geographical names portrayed in this new Roman alphabet. At their 20th joint conference in autumn 2000, the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and PCGN agreed in principle that sources in this Roman alphabet now provided the official spellings of geographical names in Uzbekistan; this principle is now BGN/PCGN policy. BGN drew up a table of correspondences between the letters of the former Cyrillic alphabet and those of the new Roman alphabet; this table can be seen at Annex A. It is important to note that the correspondences table should be used only where Uzbek Roman-alphabet spellings are not directly available. This is because a small but significant number of Uzbek geographical names have been re-spelt during the 1990s and now display official Roman spellings which differ from those arrived at through application of the table¹⁵. Examples of the effect the changes of the last decade have had on the spelling of various towns and cities in Uzbekistan can be seen at Annex B. Some elements in Uzbekistan would like to see a return to the modified Arabic script used in the time of Chagatay¹⁶, on the grounds that this would reconnect Uzbeks with their literary heritage, though the archaic nature of Chagatay texts renders this connection rather tenuous.

¹⁴ See paragraph 7.

¹⁵ For instance, application of the correspondences table to the village known in Uzbek Cyrillic as **Гўйстўн** gives *Ziyovuddin*, but the current official Roman spelling is in fact *Ziyodin*.

¹⁶ See paragraph 7.

- 13 For Karakalpakstan, the Uzbek authorities have determined a parallel chronology of script transition, and a new Roman-script alphabet for the Karakalpak language should also be in place by September 2005. Since the Karakalpak language is akin more to Kazakh than to Uzbek, it must be assumed that the Roman alphabet for this language differs somewhat from that seen for Uzbek in Annex A (though PCGN has not seen a tabulation for Karakalpak). For instance, the principal town of Karakalpakstan, which is *Nukus* in Uzbek, is more likely to be *Nökis* in Karakalpak. However, this fact may be of academic interest only, since it appears that geographical names in Karakalpakstan are rendered in terms of Uzbek rather than Karakalpak¹⁷.

SECTION E: Administrative Divisions & Associated Information

- 14 Uzbekistan is administratively divided into 14 first-order territorial units, comprising 1 republic (*respublika*), 12 provinces (singular = *viloyat*: plural = *viloyatlar*) and 1 city (*shahar*) of first-order status. These are tabulated below; the generic terms can be omitted if short forms of the names are required.

Administrative Division	Pop of Division	Admin Centre	Pop of Centre	Coordinates of Centre
1 Qoraqalpog‘iston Respublikasi ¹⁸	1,602,000	Nukus	246,500	4227N 5936E
2 Andijon Viloyati	2,244,300	Andijon	342,200	4046N 7220E
3 Buxoro Viloyati	1,504,900	Buxoro	263,500	3946N 6425E
4 Farg‘ona Viloyati	2,717,300	Farg‘ona	212,800	4023N 7147E
5 Jizzax Viloyati	1,004,600	Jizzax	155,800	4006N 6750E
6 Namangan Viloyati	2,004,800	Namangan	413,600	4100N 7140E
7 Navoiy Viloyati	859,000	Navoiy	141,500	4005N 6522E
8 Qashqadaryo Viloyati	2,244,800	Qarshi	215,400	3851N 6547E
9 Samarqand Viloyati	2,704,500	Samarqand	371,800	3939N 6657E
10 Sirdaryo Viloyati	664,700	Guliston	55,400	4029N 6847E
11 Surxondaryo Viloyati	1,798,000	Termiz	124,100	3714N 6716E
12 Toshkent Viloyati	1,608,100 ¹⁹	Toshkent	2,144,500	4119N 6915E
13 Xorazm Viloyati	1,372,500	Urganch	165,400	4133N 6038E
14 Toshkent Shahri	3,331,700 ²⁰	Toshkent	2,144,500	4119N 6915E

Notes

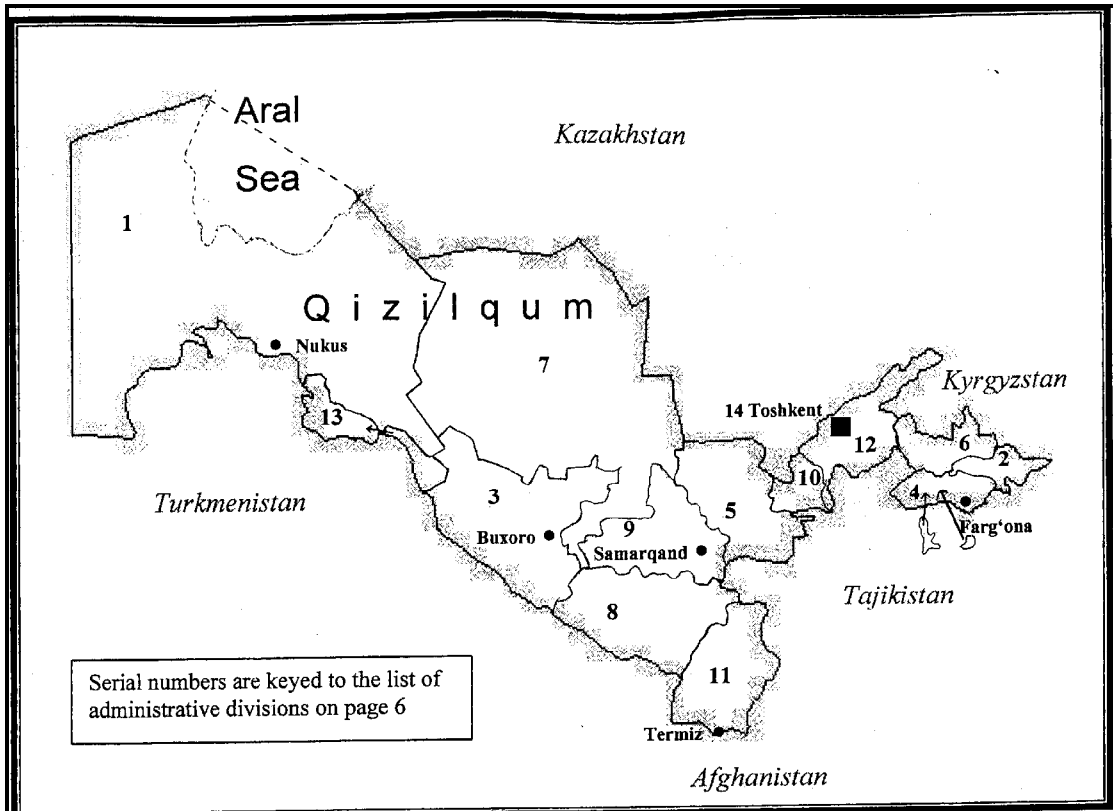
- a) Articles 70-75 of the 1992 Constitution state that *Qoraqalpog‘iston Respublikasi* is a “sovereign” part of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and has the right to secede from it. These articles also state that *Qoraqalpog‘iston* shall have its own Constitution, but that this must be in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and that the latter’s laws shall be binding throughout.
- b) Note that *Farg‘ona Viloyati* incorporates two parcels of land (*So‘x* and *Shohimardon*) which are exclaves of Uzbekistan within the territory of *Batken Oblasty* in Kyrgyzstan. This anomaly, another legacy of the Soviet period, is the cause of friction between the two countries.

¹⁷ See paragraph 9.

¹⁸ = Republic of Karakalpakstan.

¹⁹ This is the *viloyat* population living outside the *Toshkent Shahri* administrative division (serial 14).

²⁰ This is the total population of the administrative division *Toshkent Shahri*, which is situated wholly within *Toshkent Viloyati* (serial 12). Two-thirds of the *shahri* population lives within the city limits of *Toshkent* itself, a city of 2,144,500 inhabitants which serves as the centre of both *Toshkent Shahri* and *Toshkent Viloyati*.



Other Principal Towns, with Populations and Coordinates

Qo'qon	206,100	4031N 7056E
Chirchiq	183,300	4128N 6934E
Angren	155,400	4101N 7008E
Marg'ilon	144,900	4028N 7143E
Olmaliq	131,100	4050N 6935E
Bekobod	99,100	4013N 6916E
Xo'jayli	78,800	4224N 5927E
Shahrisabz	71,600	3903N 6649E
Kattaqo'rg'on	67,800	3954N 6615E

Boundaries of Uzbekistan

Turkmenistan	1015 miles
Kazakhstan	1375 miles
Kyrgyzstan	685 miles
Tajikistan	725 miles
Afghanistan	85 miles
Total Boundary	= 3885 miles

Notes on International Features

- a) The boundary with Afghanistan, and part of the boundary with Turkmenistan, is formed by the river known in Uzbek as *Amudaryo*, and known conventionally in English as the *Amu Darya*. For the upper reaches of the river, however, i.e. for most of the stretch where the river forms the Tajikistan/Afghanistan border, the name *Panj* is used.
- b) In the north-west of the country, part of the boundary with Kazakhstan is formed by the *Aral Sea*. In Uzbek this feature is known as *Orol Dengizi*; in Kazakh it is *Aral Tengizi*. In both languages, the meaning is "Sea of Islands", a name which made abundant sense when originally coined at a time when the sea had a high water level and contained many small islands. After decades of Soviet economic mis-management, however, the sea has markedly shrunk in size and many of the islands have coalesced.

SECTION F: Uzbekistan in 2001

15 Islam Karimov, the president of Uzbekistan, has been in charge of his country since Soviet times (1990). His own personal circumstances in many respects reflect those of his country; he is the offspring of an Uzbek father and a Tajik mother. Only since achieving senior political status has he acquired a near-fluent facility in the Uzbek language. Karimov has the task of winning over the Tajik minority into regarding itself as real citizens of Uzbekistan; the reason for the suspected underestimate of ethnic Tajiks noted in paragraph 4 is that many Tajiks choose to register themselves as Uzbek in order to stave off discrimination. And, as early as 1993, Uzbek specialists were warning of the influx of dissident *Wahhabi* Islamic cells into Uzbekistan. Arriving from their homeland of Saudi Arabia, these cells were even at that time infiltrating the traditionally Islamic heartland of the Fergana Valley and fomenting tension, calling for an Islamic fundamentalist revolution and railing against Karimov as a perceived unreformed communist. The Fergana Valley²¹ is recognised as being an exceptionally volatile area, where revolutionary explosion is always a possibility. Other Central Asian countries worry about Uzbekistan creating for itself a form of regional hegemony, but this concern is to be weighed against the government's predisposition for a modern and secular Uzbekistan. Moscow regards Karimov as a *gendarme* of familiar stability in an otherwise potentially hostile world and, in turn, Karimov regards Moscow as the ultimate guarantor of Central Asian stability in general. Indeed, Karimov is conservative to the point that he initially supported the August 1991 attempted coup against Soviet president Gorbachev, a fact which has not assisted his nationalist credentials, and the regime he runs can still be viewed as an outdated socialist command economy. The battle Karimov fights against Islamic fundamentalism and extreme nationalism is, as yet, unresolved.

²¹ In Uzbek slang, the inhabitants of the Fergana Valley are known as *Fan*, an acronym derived from the three provinces which make up the area: *Farg'ona, Andijon, Namangan*.

Table of Correspondences from Uzbek Cyrillic to Uzbek Roman

	<u>Cyrillic</u>	<u>Roman</u>		<u>Cyrillic</u>	<u>Roman</u>
1	А а	a	19	С с	s
2	Б б	b	20	Т т	t
3	В в	v	21	У у	u
4	Г г	g	22	Ф ф	f
5	Д д	d	23	Х х	x
6	Е е	e/ye ¹	24	Ц ц	ts
7	Ё ё	yo	25	Ч ч	ch
8	Ж ж	j	26	Ш ш	sh
9	З з	z	27	Ъ ъ	'
10	И и	i	28	Ь ь	'
11	Й й	y	29	Э э	e
12	К к	k	30	Ю ю	yu
13	Л л	l	31	Я я	ya
14	М м	m	32	Ў ў	o'
15	Н н	n	33	Қ қ	q
16	О о	o	34	Ғ ғ	g'
17	П п	p	35	Х х	h
18	Р р	r			

NOTE

1. The letter sequence *ye* is used initially, after the vowel characters 1, 6, 7, 10, 16, 21, 29, 30, 31, and 32, and after characters 11 and 28.

It is important to note that this table should be used only where Uzbek Roman-alphabet spellings are not directly available: see paragraph 12 and footnote 15.

The Evolution of the Spelling of Geographical Names in Uzbekistan

The following table lists the 22 largest cities and towns in Uzbekistan, in order of population (for the population figures and geographical coordinates, see the tables in paragraph 14). The names are spelt in the three versions seen in recent times. Column A gives the Soviet name, rendered in terms of the Russian language and romanized according to the BGN/PCGN System for Russian. Column B gives the Uzbek name used after independence, shown in the Uzbek Cyrillic form inherited from Soviet times and romanized according to the BGN/PCGN System for Uzbek Cyrillic. Column C gives the current spelling of the name, using the new Uzbek Roman alphabet.

<u>Column A</u>	<u>Column B</u>	<u>Column C</u>
Spellings in the Soviet Period: Russian Cyrillic (romanized)	Spellings in the early post-Soviet Period: Uzbek Cyrillic (romanized)	Current Spellings: Uzbek Roman
Tashkent	Toshkent	Toshkent
Namangan	Namangan	Namangan
Samarqand	Samarqand	Samarqand
Andizhan	Andijon	Andijon
Bukhara	Bukhoro	Buxoro
Nukus	Nukus	Nukus
Karshi	Qarshi	Qarshi
Fergana	Farghona	Farg'ona
Kokand	Quqon	Qo'qon
Chirchik	Chirchiq	Chirchiq
Urgench	Urganch	Urganch
Dzhizak	Jizzakh	Jizzax
Angren	Angren	Angren
Margilon	Marghilon	Marg'ilon
Navoi	Nawoiy	Navoiy
Almalyk	Olmalik	Olmalik
Termez	Termiz	Termiz
Bekabad	Bekobod	Bekobod
Khodzheyli	Khūjayli	Xo'jayli
Shakhrisabz	Shahrisabz	Shahrisabz
Gulistan	Guliston	Guliston
Kattakurgan	Kattaqūrghon	Kattaq'rg'on

ANNEX C

Examples of Name Changes

Serial No of Admin Div	Former Name (in romanized Uzbek Cyrillic)	Current Name (in Uzbek Roman)	Coordinates
10	Dimitrovskoye	Boyovut	4016N 6903E
13	Drujba	Pitnak	4113N 6118E
12	Kalinin	Eshonguzar	4115N 6909E
11	Komsomolobod	Xalqobod	3727N 6655E
2	Komsomolobod Tumani (ADM2)	Ulug'nor Tumani	4045N 7142E
10	Krest'yanskiy	Dehqonobod	4031N 6901E
1	Leninobod	Qanliko'l	4250N 5900E
9	Narimonovka	Payariq	3959N 6650E
14	Oktyabr'skiy Rayoni (ADM2)	Shaykhontohur Tumani	4118N 6914E
5	Oktyabr' Tumani (ADM2)	Zafarobod Tumani	4020N 6750E
12	Soldatskiy	Do'stobod	4051N 6856E
5	Ul'yanovo	Dashtobod	4007N 6829E
5	Yulius Fuchik	G'oliblar	4029N 6753E
6	Zadaryo Tumani (ADM2)	Mingbuloq Tumani	4045N 7115E

ADM2 = second-order administrative division (*tuman*): all other entries relate to settlements