Uzbekistan Chess Olympiad Reflections (4) by Dr Lyndon Bouah

Greetings family, friends, colleagues and the broader chess community from Uzbekistan.

The 2026 Chess Olympiad is being held in Samarkand in Uzbekistan. 200 countries from across the world have gathered to play in this prestigious event. Uzbekistan is in Central Asia, in the heart of the ancient Silk Road region.



Yesterday I was telling you readers about chess in Uzbekistan. After the region became part of the Russian Empire in the 19th century, the European version of chess spread more widely. Chess clubs began to appear in educational institutions and officers' assemblies. By the beginning of the 20th century, the first organised chess community was formed in Tashkent. Local tournaments were held, and chess problems began to be published in newspapers.

During the 1980's, Uzbek players started to make their mark on the international stage. The level of tournament organisation improved, and international competitions were held in the republic. After gaining

independence in 1991, Uzbekistan began to develop its own chess policy. A national chess federation was established, and the country actively integrated into the international system of FIDE.

In 2004 a major achievement was the victory of Grandmaster Rustam Kasimdzhanov who won the Fide World Chess Championship in Libya. He became the first Uzbek world chess champion.



Figure 1: Rustam Kasimdzhanov



Figure 2: Map of Africa highlighting Libya

In the 2010's a new generation of grandmasters emerged in Uzbekistan. One of the most notable was Nodirbek Abdusattorov. In 2021 he became World Rapid Chess Champion and in 2022 he became the leader of the national team.



Figure 3: Nodirbek Abdusattorov

In 2022 the Uzbek team won the Gold Medal in the Open Section which confirmed Uzbekistan as one of the strongest chess nations in the world. Of course now everyone also knows Janvokhir Sindarov who will be contesting for the World Championship in November 2026.



Figure 4: Shamsiddin Vokhidov, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Jakhongir Vakhidov, Nodirbek Yakubboev, Javokhir Sindarov

A few days ago, I had an opportunity to visit the tomb of the prophet Daniel. The Mausoleum of St Daniel in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, houses a remarkable 18-metre-long tomb revered by Christians, Muslims (who call him Khoja Doniya) and Jews. It is located along the Siab River near the Afrosiab settlement. It is famous for its unusual length and legends of the saint's remains growing over time.



Figure 5: 18-metre-long tomb



Figure 6: Grenada Open Team Captain Dr.Lyndon Bouah and Grenada Women's Team captain Dr. Denise Bouah

Legend states that the 14th century conqueror Amir Timur (Tamerlane) tried to conquer Susa (in modern day Syria) where the biblical Daniel was traditionally

buried. After struggling to take the region, a wise advisor told Timur his failures were due to the protection of the holy prophet's grave. Timur then negotiated to take a portion of the relics - specifically Daniel's right hand - back to his capital of Samarkand to ensure military success.



Figure 7: Amir Temur

Various folktales explain the massive size of the sarcophagus: some say the holy body continues to grow, while others claim it was built extra-long to confuse grave robbers about where the actual relic is hidden.

Daniel whose name means "God judges" or "God Judge" was a sixth- century prophet living in exile in Babylon. Daniel recounts key event firsthand that occurred during the Jewish captivity and shares visions that were given to him by God. He likely wrote the book sometime shortly at the end of the Babylonian captivity.

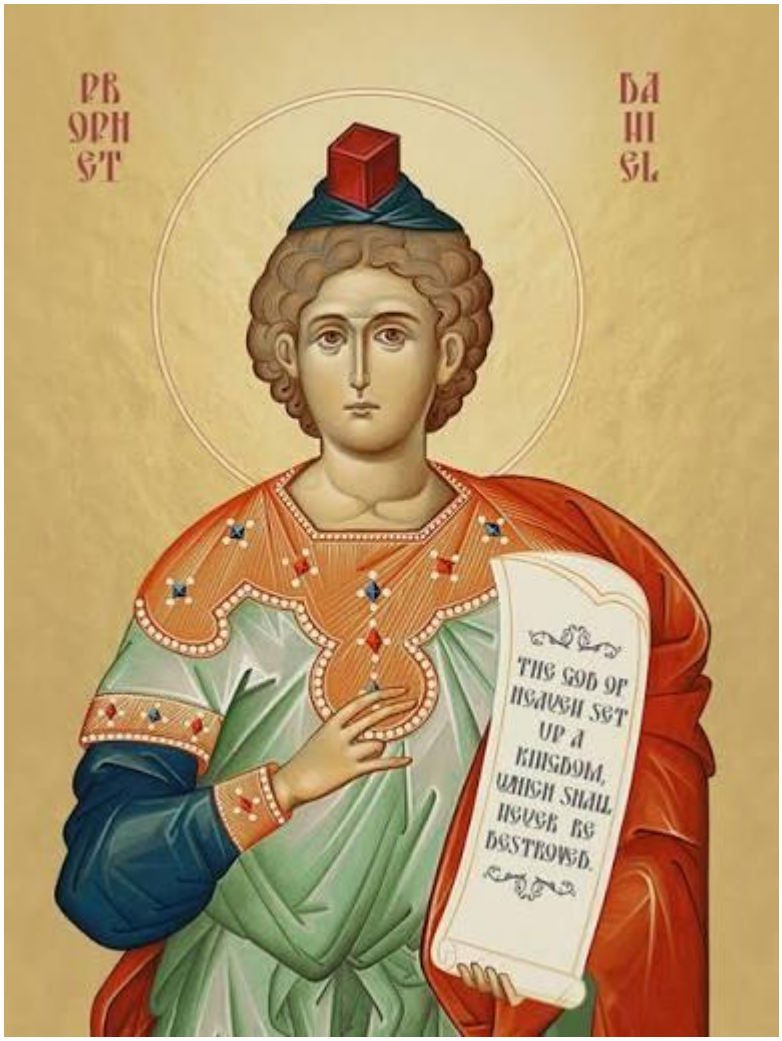


Figure 8: Prophet Daniel

My countryman Alex la Guma travelled throughout Uzbekistan. He also visited Samarkand. He says in his writings, “from the mid 1970’s Samarkand is a regional centre and an industrial city. Some 40 000 people work at its sixty factories, producing fertilisers, lifts, refrigerators, prefabricated housing units, china and much else. Still, I had watched the traditional dancers performed in the vast doorway of the old Shir-Dor Madrasah in the old Registan Square, with its towering portico, domes and towers, decorated with millions of mosaic tiles, rising in all its ancient magnificence. Ulugbek, the old astronomer, had worked there, and an observatory he had used stood among the old brown plaster medieval walls and mosaic minarets”.



Figure 9: Alex la Guma

Registan is the ancient part of the city of Samarkand, established during the period of the Timurid Empire (cf 1370- 1507), founded by Timur, also known as Tamerlane (1336-1405), who aspired to restore the Mongol Empire (1206-1368) that Genghis Khan (cf 1162-1227) had created.

Ulugbek (1394-1449) was translated as Ulugh Beg was a Timurid rules and astronomer, who built an observatory in Samarkand that was one of the most important in the Islamic world and Asia. Denise and I visited the observatory. We found the history fascinating. Ulugbek found mew constellations and was way ahead of his time.



Figure 10: Ulugh Beg Observatory

Today Grenada's Open team played Djibouti. The team is very happy tonight as they recorded their first match win against Djibouti. They are situated at the Horn of Africa. On board 3 our Player won a pawn early won and then proceeded to nurse that advantage to the endgame. On board four We drew. On Board one we also drew and on Board two we had a food game win which propelled us to 3 -1 victory. Two years ago the team secured their first match win in round six and this year they are doing it two rounds early. It is also important that no one lost and and thus four players have now added points.

Bo.		Djibouti (DJI)	Rtg	-		Grenada (GRN)	Rtg	1 : 3
		(c) Dahir Abdourahman Youssouf				(c) Lyndon Bouah		
100.1	□	Houssein, Mohamed Bilal	1807	-	■	Renniel, Gilbert	1848	½ - ½
100.2	■	Mahamoud, Mohamed Mahamoud	1760	-	□	Roberts, Gennard	1564	0 - 1
100.3	□	Mohamed, Ali Dima	1741	-	■	Jaedyn, C	0	0 - 1
100.4	■	Nour, Farhan Nour	1658	-	□	Mendez, Vladimir	1651	½ - ½

The Grenada Women's team played Papua New Guinea. The ladies unfortunately lost tonight but as I told them you never lose, you always learn!

Bo.		Grenada (GRN)	Rtg	-		Papua New Guinea (PNG)	Rtg	0 : 4
		(c) Denise Bouah				(c) Jeremiah Age		
92.1	□	Rhonda, J Lambert	1577	-	■	Joku, Liberty	0	0 - 1
92.2	■	Naziyah, S.A.James	0	-	□	Age, Luciana	0	0 - 1
92.3	□	Senthilkumar, Abiramy	0	-	■	Mimino, Natasha	0	0 - 1
92.4	■	Tehalyani, Kenishka	0	-	□	Kukula, Tiania	0	0 - 1



Figure 11: Grenada Women's Team with coach Dr. Denise Bouah (Back)

The SA Open team played Sweden. In 2022 SA also played Sweden in India where Sweden played some wonderful chess to beat SA.

Bo.	36	Sweden (SWE)	Rtg -	77	South Africa (RSA)	Rtg	3 : 1
		(c) Peter Bergstrom			(c) Henry Robert Steel		
25.1	GM	□ Grandelius, Nils	2603 -	IM	■ Karsten, Jan	2386	1 - 0
25.2	IM	■ Seo, Jung Min	2503 -	IM	□ Levitan, Caleb Levi	2316	½ - ½
25.3	GM	□ Blomqvist, Erik	2482 -	FM	■ Mhango, Banele	2354	1 - 0
25.4	IM	■ Sorensen, Hampus	2428 -		□ Mnyasta, Charlton	2236	½ - ½

The SA Women's team played Belgium today.

Bo.	86	South Africa (RSA)	Rtg -	51	Belgium (BEL)	Rtg	1½:2½
		(c) Kenneth Terence Solomon			(c) Adrian Roos		
37.1	WFM	□ Badenhorst, Chloe	1997 -	WIM	■ Goossens, Hanne	2248	0 - 1
37.2	WIM	■ Laubscher, Anzel	1817 -	WFM	□ Vanduyfhuys, Daria	2123	½ - ½
37.3	WCM	□ Nel, Hayley	1864 -		■ Lascar, Radoslawa	1975	0 - 1
37.4		■ Masango, Sizakele	1880 -		□ Dierckens, Sarah	1923	1 - 0

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah

Reporting live from Uzbekistan