

Abstract

The Aral Sea, a closed lake located in Central Asia is fed by two main tributaries: the Amu Darya and the Syr-Darya. Today the Aral Sea is dried out. Although, it was the fourth largest lake in the world, the lake's surface area has decreased of 90% over the last 40 years. The main causative factor until the 1960s was the diversion of the two rivers by Soviet Union to boost the expansion of cotton production. This brutal action had accelerated the desiccation of the vulnerable Aral Sea because of its shallowness and its location in an arid region. A variety of scientific approaches indicates a long history of alternating phases of regression and transgression which have been attributed variously to climate, tectonic and human activities. This contemporary disaster is one of the world's most serious ecosystem catastrophes of the 20th century. The consequences on the population are dramatic. Today, a small part of the sea is stabilized thanks to the construction of a dike but for the southern large part of the Aral Sea, the desiccation seems inevitable.

Keywords: Arid, Aral Sea level, desiccation, tragedy, regression, transgression, population