

# CENTRAL ASIA: THE CROSSROADS OF CIVILIZATION

## Mark It on the Map

Have students locate the continents on a world map. Then have them focus on Asia, and locate China and its neighbors on the map on pages 2–3. Have students use the scale of miles on the world map to estimate the approximate number of miles between their state and the east coast of China and the western boundary of China. Make sure they determine the shortest distance between their state and China.

## Vocabulary

nomadic herder	tundook
yurt	shamanism
steppe land	madras
caravan	oasis
chaban	

## Introduction

Have the students use a world map (a physical map is best) as a reference to answer the following questions: Using the scales of miles, estimate the distance Central Asia measures from east to west, and from north to south. How does Central Asia compare with the United States? In what zone(s) does Central Asia lie? Is their hometown in the same zone? If not, explain. Which months are winter for Central Asia? Which are summer? How does the terrain of Central Asia compare with that of the United States? Point out the similarities and differences.

## Questions for Discussion

- ➔ What do you think the noun “Eurasia” means? Why is it an appropriate word to use in the title of the article on pages 4–7?
- ➔ What conditions in Central Asia forced people to consider migrating? What was the result of these migrations?
- ➔ What events contributed to the decline of Central Asia after 1500?
- ➔ Where is the Wild Goose Pagoda? Why was it built? Be specific with your answer.
- ➔ Why do the Kyrgyz travel so much during the spring and summer?
- ➔ What is the *Manas*? What cultural purpose does it serve for the Kyrgyz?
- ➔ Why is Central Asia often called the “land of felt”? Be specific with your answer and give examples.

## Writing Workout

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- ➔ Make a list of five questions you would like to ask Alibek and Aigul. Give a reason for each.
- ➔ Write an essay that addresses what a shaman is and what shamanism does.
- ➔ Study the images on pages 22–27. Choose the person or people you find the most interesting. Explain why you made the choice, and what questions you would like to ask them. Give a reason for asking each question.
- ➔ Make a list of descriptive words and phrases that you could use to explain Uygur culture to a friend. Explain why you chose each word or phrase.

## Think About It

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- ➔ Explain what this phrase means: “Today the people of Central Asia live at a crossroads of cultures, countries, and times.” Use specific examples taken from the articles and the “Editor’s Message” on pages 2–3 to support your statements.