

Central Asia

Section 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. Throughout history, many different groups have conquered Central Asia.
2. Many different ethnic groups and their traditions influence culture in Central Asia.

Key Terms and Places

Samarqand city along the Silk Road that grew rich from trade

nomads people who move often from place to place

yurt moveable round house made of wool felt mats hung over a wood frame

Section Summary

HISTORY

For hundreds of years, many groups of people came through Central Asia. They left lasting influences.

At one time, there were two trade routes through Central Asia. One route went between Europe and India, through Afghanistan. The other route went through the rest of Central Asia. It was called the Silk Road, because traders from Europe traveled it to get silk and spices from China. **Samarqand** and other cities on the Silk Road grew rich.

By 1500, Europeans stopped using these roads. They discovered they could sail to East Asia on the Indian Ocean. The region became isolated and poor.

The Silk Road brought many people into Central Asia. In AD 500, Turkic-speaking nomads came from northern Asia. From the 700s to 1200s, Arabs ruled. They brought their religion, Islam. Then the Mongols conquered Central Asia. After the Mongols, groups such as the Uzbeks, Kazaks, and Turkmen came in.

In the mid-1800s, Russia conquered this region. Russians built railroads. They also increased oil and cotton production. But people began to resist Russia's rule. After the Soviets took power in Russia, they wanted to weaken resistance to their rule. So

What places did the two trade routes in Central Asia connect?

Underline the reason that Europeans stopped using the trade routes.

Circle the dates that the Arabs ruled Central Asia.

Section 2, continued

they divided Central Asia into republics. They also encouraged ethnic Russians to move in. The Soviets also built huge irrigation projects for more cotton production. In 1991, the Soviet government collapsed. Central Asia's republics became independent countries.

What happened to Asia's republics when the Soviet government collapsed in 1991?

CULTURE

The people who came through Central Asia brought new languages, religions, and ways of life. These mixed with traditional ways.

For centuries, Central Asians raised herds of horses, cattle, goats, and sheep. Many lived as **nomads**. They moved their herds to different pastures in summer and winter. They also moved their houses. The Central Asian nomad's moveable house is called a **yurt**. It is an important symbol today. Even people in cities put up yurts for special events. Nomads are still common in Kyrgyzstan.

Unscramble these letters to identify a feature of nomad life: *ury*. Write your answer:

Today, most of the region's ethnic groups are part of the larger Turkic group. There are ethnic Russians, also. Each group speaks its own language. Some countries have many languages. In some countries Russian is still the official language, because of earlier Russian rule. The Russians also brought Cyrillic, their alphabet. Now most countries use the Latin alphabet, the one for writing English.

Circle the name of the Russian alphabet.

The region's main religion is Islam, but there are also others. Some people are Russian Orthodox, a Christian religion. Today, many religious buildings that were closed by the Soviets have opened again.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Conclusions What would Central Asia be like today if the Silk Road was still in use? Write a travel journal entry for a trip along the Silk Road describing who and what you saw.