

## BOOK REVIEWS

## STUDY ABROAD IN JAPAN



Japan is one of the most fascinating countries on earth: its ultra-modern, high-tech exterior overlays a society with rich cultural and aesthetic traditions going back centuries. In the twenty-first century, its “soft power”—economic might combined with a influential popular culture of *manga* graphic novels and *anime* animated films—attracts people from all over the world to its shores.

Japan has become one of the most popular destinations for study abroad. Students who study abroad in Japan show remarkable progress in mastering a difficult language, learn about Japan’s society and culture both inside and outside the classroom, and make strong connections with the country that often influence their career choices and paths in life.

The Association of Teachers of Japanese **BRIDGING PROJECT FOR STUDY ABROAD IN JAPAN** is a portal to information on study abroad in Japan, programs at dozens of Japanese universities, and sources of financial aid for study in Japan. The Bridging Scholarships, awarded to more than 100 students annually from all over the United States, provide not only funding but chances for scholarship recipients to meet members of the business and cultural communities in Japan.

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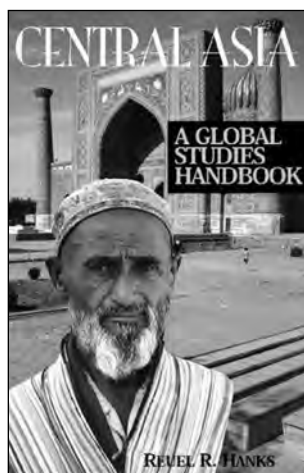
## Central Asia

### *A Global Studies Handbook*

BY REUEL R. HANKS

SANTA BARBARA: ABC-CLIO, 2005

467 PAGES, HARDBACK, ISBN 1-85109-656-6



Most Americans know little about the vast area called Central Asia. Today it has been arbitrarily redefined as five countries: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Yet, historically, culturally, geographically, and politically, much links this region that further confounds those who want to study about these five countries.

Created by Reuel Hanks, *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* has several winning qualities. It is encyclopedic in its coverage of

Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. There is careful analysis of history, society, institutions, and political structure, followed by a very useful reference section. When students are asked to research any of these countries, the handbook provides information difficult to find in any other one source. It has been arranged for easy reference. This is one of its limitations, however. Some categories are so dense with information that a fledgling reader would have great difficulty determining the significant information from the trivial.

There is an inherent problem in developing a handbook about Central Asia. Early on, the author must make a determination: Is it a region or a series of distinct countries? A handbook of Central Asia that excludes Turkmenistan and Tajikistan omits ethnic, linguistic, and economic issues that play out in our daily press.

Professor Hanks has made a good beginning assisting students in learning something about Central Asia. In its current configuration, students will find themselves flipping from section to section to construct some sense of how this is a region, as the title implies. But this is one of the real problems of moving beyond national histories to those that are less defined. I commend the author for making a strong attempt to bring this information to American classrooms. The events in Central Asia change each day, and our daily press proves the need for all Americans to know this area of the world and assess its importance to our nation. I hope this work can spark interesting classroom discussions and research projects. ■

**HAZEL SARA GREENBERG** is a Director at The American Forum for Global Education in New York City, and she is the author of several US Department of Education International Research curriculum guides, including one on Central Asia, *Spotlight on Inner Asia: The Bizarre Bazaar*.