

# SILK ROAD

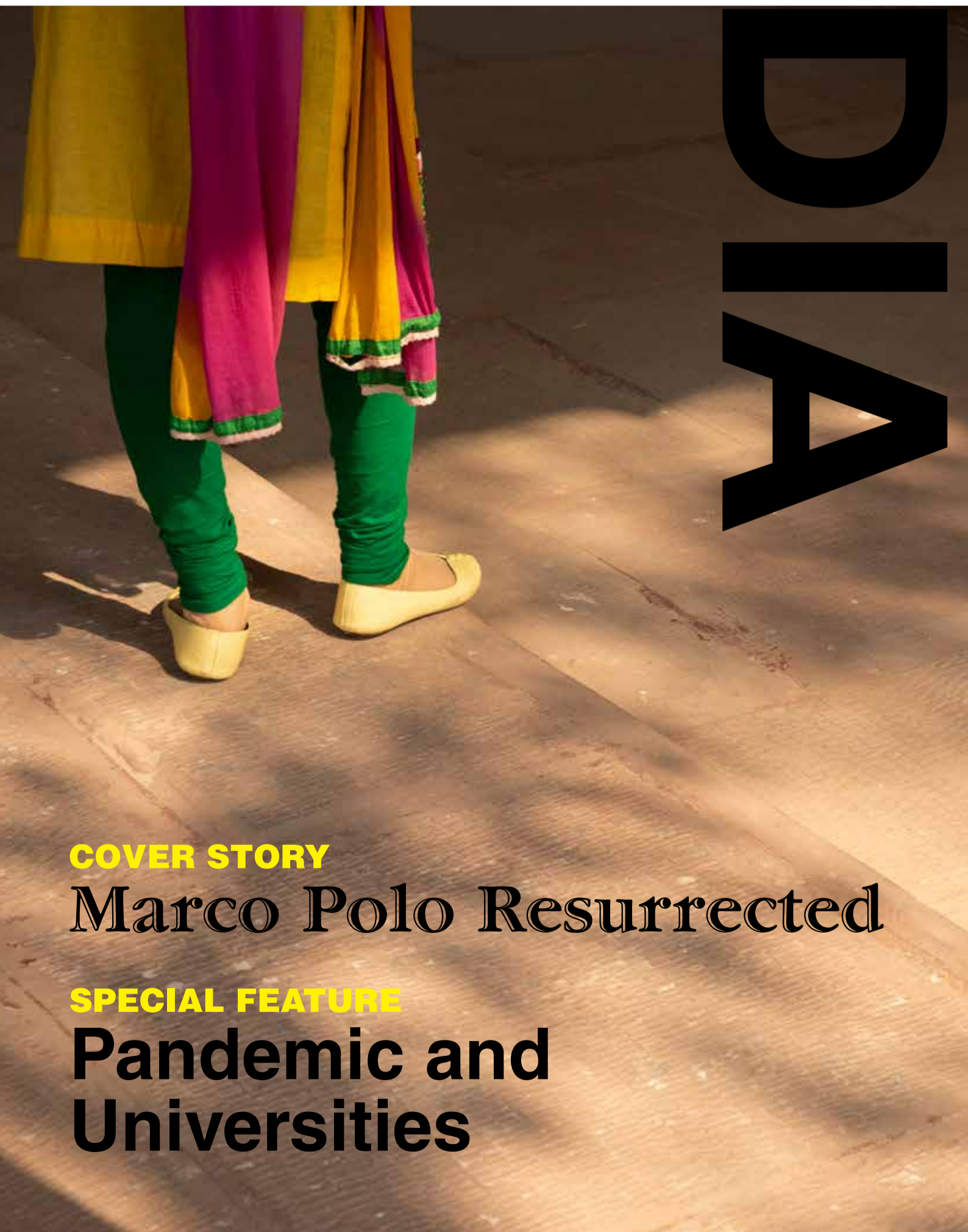
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**SILK-ROAD  
UNIVERSITIES  
NETWORK**



**COVER STORY**

## Marco Polo Resurrected

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

## Pandemic and Universities

## **SILKROADIA**

Biannual webzine of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) - a non-governmental, non-profit international organization.

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# Letter from the Editor



**Shi-yong Chon**

Being a biannual publication, **SILKROADIA**, web magazine of the Silk-Road Universities Network, may not need to stick to timeliness and current issues, key elements of journalism. But the impact from the novel coronavirus that had hit the world since early this year was so huge that the editorial staff did not have difficulty in reaching consensus that the COVID-19 pandemic be the Special Feature of this edition.

The sudden outbreak of the epidemic has exposed the vulnerability of the human civilization to nothing but a new virus which, taking advantage of what the mankind has achieved since the era of the ancient Silk Roads – globalization - has taken the world

by storm.

Nevertheless, globalization should not be condemned simply because of the pandemic. What should be condemned is the lack of global cooperation and leadership. The World Health Organization or the United Nations or any other international organization has been barely visible in the desperate fight against the evil virus. Why had we not carved out an international medical regime corresponding to the like of the UN Peacekeeping Forces or the International Red Cross?

The United States and China, the two superpowers, exposed once again their obsession with political and economic hegemony. Instead of joining hands to resolve the global crisis, they were preoccupied with accusing each other and utilizing the pandemic to justify their entrenched nationalism and exclusivism. Indeed, the crisis only strengthened the belief that neither of the G2 deserves global stewardship.

Countries on the Silk Roads, member universities of SUN, were not spared from the vicious pandemic. Universities had to bear the brunt of the contagious disease that resulted in massive lockdowns, movement restrictions and ban on gatherings.

Hence we invited leaders of our member universities to share their wisdom and insight as they braced for the unprecedented crisis engulfing university campuses. I hope the messages from presidents and rectors - and contributions from students who wrote on their own experiences and observations – will encourage all the members of the world university community to overcome the unprecedented challenge to higher learning.

The Cover Story - a fictional interview with Marco Polo, one of the most famous Silk Roads figures – is part of **SILKROADIA**'s ambitious endeavor to publish a series of imaginary interviews with those who played important roles in the development of the Silk Roads.

Our pride on the inception of the series was augmented by the magnificent work of Professor Elisabetta Ragagnin of Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She brilliantly combined her deep and vast knowledge about the most symbolic figure of the 13th-century Silk Roads with her artful storytelling skill. **SILKROADIA** takes pride in finding the right writer.

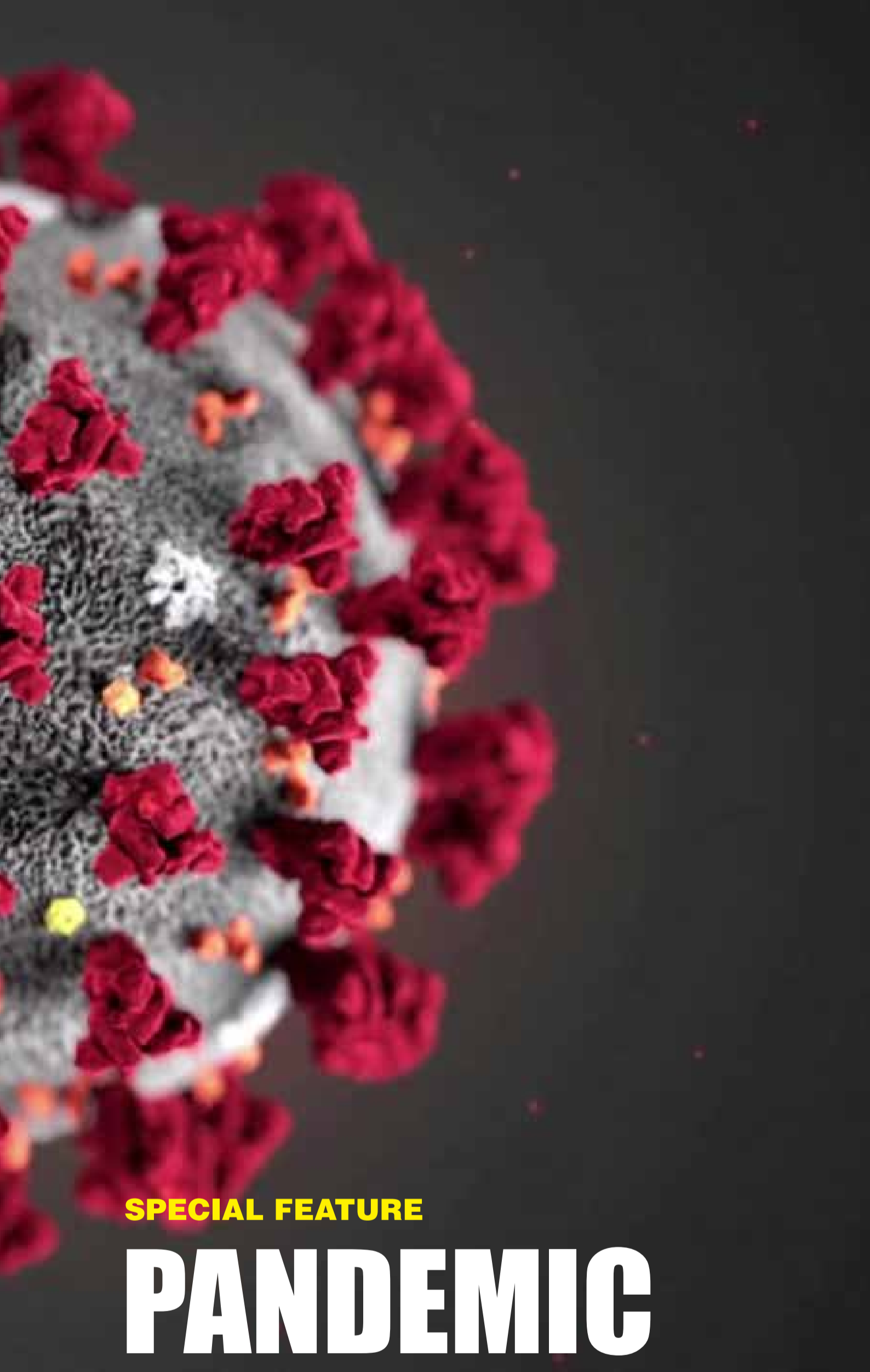
The In Focus Section reflects our regret over the cancellation of the 2020 SUN General Assembly which otherwise the

Ankara University would have hosted in Izmir in June. It is truly regretful that for now, we have missed the opportunity to visit the historic city and country where the East and West met on the Silk Roads. Anyhow, Turkey always deserves to be highlighted in any Silk Roads-related publications.

The launch of the Travel Section demonstrates the will of our passionate Secretary General, Professor Sungdon Hwang, to help SUN promote tourism on the Silk Roads. Professor Hwang had been working on a plan to organize a Silk Roads Tourism Convention in conjunction with the Silk Road International University of Tourism, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, as part of SUN's efforts to develop Silk Roads-themed tourism. Without the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism event would have taken place in December this year. I'm confident that the demise of the virus would be followed soon by the birth of the tourism initiative of SUN.

As the new Editor-in-Chief, I must give personal thanks to both Professor Hwang and my predecessor Dr. D.A.P. Sharma for having done superb work for the first and second issues, which laid the basis for this third edition. I'm honored to be part of this valuable endeavor.

I am compelled to be grateful to all the professors and students who contributed articles and images, as well as Professor Hwang, Art Director Eui-hwan Cho and editorial assistants Amali Ranavi Thanthrige and Ji-won Lee at the Secretariat in Seoul. A very special thanks should go to our English Editor, Professor Ron Steiner of Chapman University in California, and his assistant Farzin Moridi, who gladly went through the toil of editing the endless articles. It should be reminded, however, that all the defects and mistakes such as typos and grammatical errors, if any, are faults of the editorial staff, not least myself.



**SPECIAL FEATURE**

**PANDEMIC**

**AND**

**UNIVERSITIES**

# Pandemic awakens universities to importance of their role

*Heads of SUN member universities share wisdom and insight regarding challenges posed by COVID-19*

Education is one of the sectors that have been affected heavily by the COVID-19 pandemic that has been plaguing many parts of the world since early this year.

One need look no further than universities, including members of the Silk-Road Universities Network. Academic programs, research projects and on-campus activities and events that usually require gatherings and personal contacts have been disrupted.

Universities had to struggle to devise new forms of teaching and learning, mainly distance education platforms. The use of online classes, virtual classes, distance learning or remote education – whatever

you call it – was never new to many institutions of higher learning around the world.

But replacing traditional classes with virtual ways of teaching and learning in such a massive scale was unprecedented and posed quite a challenge to the faculty, students, administration staff and presidents and rectors. Many universities encountered big and small problems with online classes and assessment and the heavy dependence on virtual classes created or deepened gaps between countries and between universities.

Besides operating academic semesters amid the highly contagious epidemic, universities face challenges of coping with financial difficulties and improving basic research capabilities on vital issues like none other than pandemics and climate change .

It against this backdrop that **SILKROADIA** sought comments from some of the leaders of SUN member universities as they are bearing the brunt of the onslaught of the pandemic from which countries on the Silk Roads were not spared.

The presidents and rectors noted that turning to the new education format posed a serious challenge to them, but that resilience, ingenuity and unity would

lead their efforts to tide over the pandemic and adapt to a new normal after the novel coronavirus dies out.

Perhaps universities may need to devise a mixed form of education combining both traditional classes and new education platforms and new research and management systems as well. In this sense, universities need innovation as much as governments and private companies.

One leader aptly put forward a vital mission for universities, calling on them to take the latest pandemic as a “knowledge sensor” for climate change. A rector also pointed to the importance of opening new lines of research to deal with post-COVID-19 uncertainties, including economic and social crises, and welfare and social gaps.

The president of Allameh Tabataba'i University succinctly summed up the role of universities: “The key to saving the world and humanity is in the hands of universities.” This may well be shared by all members of the world university communities at a time when the mankind and its civilization is under a grave threat.

# Hankuk University of Foreign Studies



HUFs President &  
SUN Chairperson  
**In-chul Kim**

All of us have been experiencing difficulties related to the devastating impact of COVID-19. Although there are still some lingering concerns over potential community and cluster infections, we are now able to renew our resolve against the pandemic thanks to the brave and dedicated efforts of healthcare workers and the public's strong participation in practicing social distancing.

Facing unprecedented disruptions by this brutal pandemic, we are reminded every day of the value of normal life. However, we should not forget that the darkest hour of night comes just before the dawn. Lastly, I would like to express my whole-hearted support and appreciation to all of you as members of the HUFs and Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) communities who are doing your best in your position to make it through this difficult time.

# Samarkand Institute of Veterinary Medicine



Rector  
**Yunusov**  
**Khudaynazar**  
**Beknazarovich**

Currently, there are different opinions about the origin of the coronavirus and its spread around the world by scientists from different countries. In particular, there is speculation that the virus was produced in the laboratory with the participation of the human factor. I think the virus originated naturally.

The reasons for the prevalence of pandemics, such as the coronavirus, actually go back to what we humans did.

Our activities, such as being in close contact with wild animals, hunting them, selling them, eating them, and destroying their natural habitat, lead to the spread of new diseases, and as a result, if we do not stop these activities - new diseases and pandemics.

# Ural Federal University



Rector  
**Victor  
Koksharov**

For us, this situation is a serious challenge. All 35,194 UrFU students have been transferred to distance learning for the quarantine period. The transition to a new training format is a stressful process, but so far everything is going well.

Besides, UrFU international research and methodological center, which provides courses for teachers of other universities, has switched to remote working.

# University of Coimbra



Rector  
**Amílcar  
Falcão**

Climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have one big dilemma in common: the irresponsible way to face the problem by the different leaders of developed countries, refusing science through delusional statements. COVID-19 pandemic should truly function as a «Knowledge Sensor» for what is to come regarding climate change.

# University of Valencia, Spain



Rector  
**M Vicenta  
Mestre**

COVID-19 crisis is challenging universities to turn on quickly teaching and management to a complete virtual way, and to open new lines of research, as well. On the other hand after pandemic will arrive the subsequent era of uncertainty, economic and social crisis. Therefore to overcome this we will need strong research and political consensus to face them, rebuilding our economies, labor and welfare. Moreover, bold policies and public aid & services will be needed to avoid social gaps.

# Canadian University Dubai



President  
**Karim  
Chelli**

During the COVID pandemic, we demonstrated the broader elements of teaching and learning. We learned that, in addition to our core faculties, we are skilled in resiliency and ingenuity. These skills helped us navigate a challenging time, and when we return to the traditional classroom, we will transition with these skills on hand. It will forever be critical to embed empathy and compassion into everything we do.

# Allameh Tabataba'i University



President  
**Hossein  
Salimi**

Different chapters of history have demonstrated that academic ties and relations are powerful enough to withstand the temporary disasters and difficulties. The current COVID-19 lockdowns are a good example where academia did not stop interacting. No environmental, biological, and political agenda can impede our collaboration in the world today. I have the honor to invite, on behalf of Allameh Tabataba'i University, all academics to join and conduct academic activities with this university. The key to saving the world and humanity is in the hands of universities and academicians.

# Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



Rector  
**Nikolaos G.  
Papaioannou**

In recent months, the global community has faced a huge challenge. Mankind is in a tragic position to count millions of people around the world infected with coronavirus and thousands of death. Epidemic has no national boundaries, and the public health crisis is a challenge faced by the entire world. From the first moment we at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki were on the side of those affected. Within the campus, we took all the necessary measures to do deal with the epidemic, including online courses and work from home for our staff members.

The challenge for humanity and for universities around the world is not over. The most important lesson of this epidemic is that we must all work together in a coordinated efforts to overcome this difficult time. The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in this effort, along with its partners, aiming to archive an excellent result in the fight against the virus and in the return to normality.

# Moscow State Linguistic University



Acting Rector  
**Irina Arkadievna  
Krayeva**

At this time of challenge, we at MSLU cannot shake hands physically, but we are even more ready to give each other a hand. Professors are sharing their creative ideas with colleagues, staff has a hand in making online learning smooth, students are responding admirably, adapting swiftly to alternative teaching and assessment methods.

At this time of uncertainty, one thing I am certain of is our unity, which has been our university's strength for 90 years. And I feel touched and honored to witness and admire it.

# Ca' Foscari University of Venice



Rector  
**Michele  
Bugliesi**

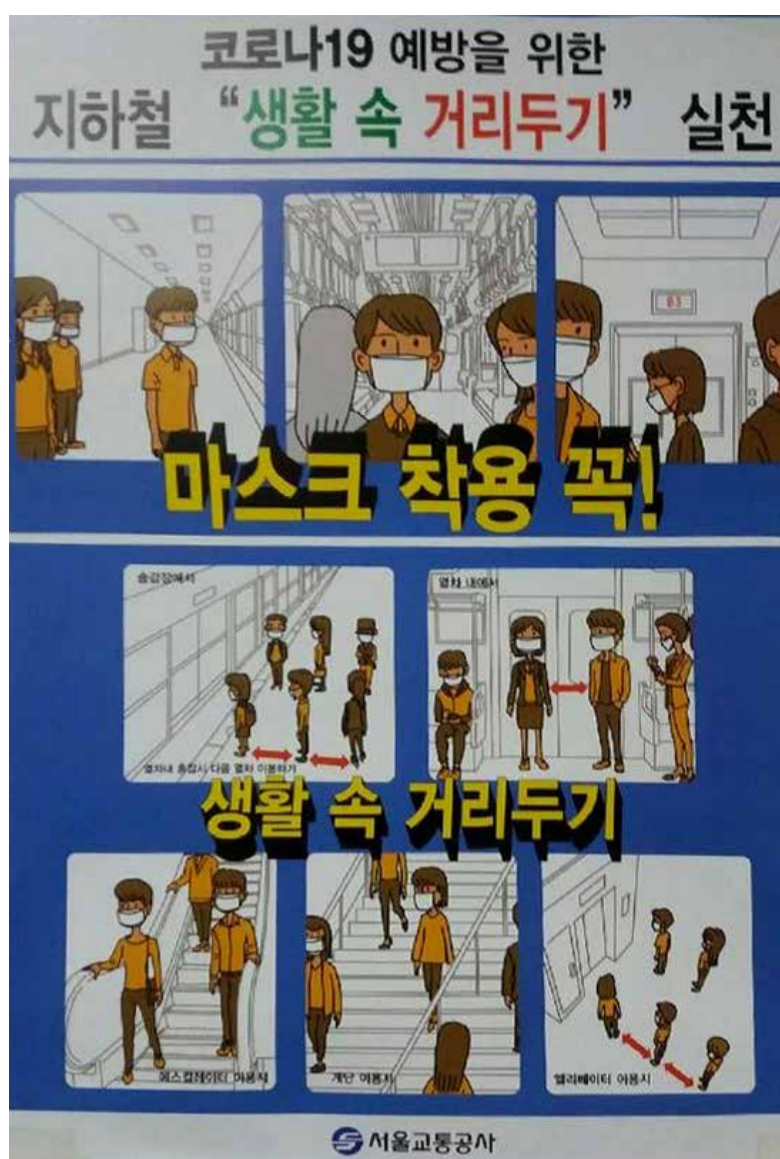
Since the coronavirus pandemic began, our first concern has always been the health and safety of our university community. Yet it is in difficult situations like these that universities must find the strength and resourcefulness to stay true to their institutional mission. I am proud to say that Ca' Foscari rose to the challenge, replacing traditional classroom learning with online teaching and evaluation in a matter of days when the coronavirus emergency erupted. But as we look forward to the fall, we have put a flexible plan in place to get students back into our libraries and classrooms in September through the use of a dual mode of teaching, with on campus lectures for reduced numbers and the provision of access to these classes online via streaming and recordings. In response to the economic impact of Italy's extended lockdown, we have also gone one step further to give our students a helping hand by allocating 4.5 million euros for merit- and need-based financial aid as well as for assistance with the cost of local rental housing, local transportation, and even the purchase of a new personal computer.

# My new routine under COVID-19

By Young-kyung Kim

Historically speaking, infectious diseases have diffused through the routes of trade among countries. COVID-19 also spread country to country through Silk Road-like paths of exchange. It was first identified in China, but soon spilt over to the rest of Asia, Europe, North America, and the rest of the world. Now the global community is experiencing an unprecedented life due to COVID-19.

After delaying the start of the semester by two weeks, Korean universities moved all in-person classes to an online platform. This was the first entirely online classroom experience for both professors and students, and it involved a lot of trial and error.



The online class system and the school's computer server capacity should have been greatly upgraded. At the beginning of the semester, students were unhappy with the quality of online classes. It was hard for them to ask questions to the professors and to concentrate on the class. But gradually, adjustments were made. When asked whether they wanted face-to-face offline classes after the midterm exam, more than 80 percent of the students answered that they would rather continue online for the remainder of the semester. It is still uncertain whether things will change in the fall.

Masks, hand sanitizer, and checking body temperature are new elements in our

daily routine. We see everybody wearing masks on the streets. When entering public buildings or shopping centers, we check our body temperature. Hand sanitizers are conveniently available on elevators or at the office. When people have to line up, they keep a space of more than a meter for social distancing. When I go to a local restaurant with my family, we are sometimes asked to sit zigzag on the table. This is 'the new normal' now.

My daily routine has become extremely simple. I take online classes and do assignments for these classes almost every day. We have more assignments from classes, probably because we take classes online. Communicating with friends on social media and watching movies and dramas on Netflix are small pleasures to enjoy. It's hard to remember the last time I went to the movies, or having fun chatting with friends over tea and food at cafes and restaurants. Perhaps it was early this year before COVID-19. In addition to our classes, there are things we enjoy in college, such as getting around with colleagues, collaborating in clubs, and hanging out on campus. We have lost all that, and we're in a sorry state.

Usually, we ran into a lot of students from other countries at my university. I used to interact with them in and out of classes. But this seems to have greatly decreased in online classes, which limit the degree of interaction among students. The international exchange programs have also been canceled. We are not sure when it will resume. This is sadder news than less face-to-face classes. However, I hope that exchanges will continue again in the near future, if not immediately. Just as the spread of infectious diseases along the Silk Road in the past could not stop the exchange of people and information indefinitely, I hope the Silk Road exchanges will bounce back and continue once this pandemic is behind us.

**Young-kyung Kim** studies English literature & culture at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul.

# The blur of the self

By Ana Grecu

The story of this pandemic that we experience is about sharing with others remarks about time. That particular time we spent with ourselves, discovering methods of coping with the dilemmas, uncertainties, and anxiety caused by the sudden shift from the life we knew to the unknown land of fighting off an invisible evil force. The borders were very strict; the self could not surpass any possible light or hope that the truth or a cure will be released in the world. In my country (Romania), the course of life started to regain its senses, but people are still afraid of the misguidance and political rules that influence society to act irrationally.

I had the time to make a cup of coffee, sit on the couch, and talk with myself every single day for the past two months. I have come to terms with my past and the thoughts that haunted me. I read abundantly and I continued my studies through online platforms. I finished my BA paper and now I wait to find out how we will proceed with the final examination. I returned to my job in a bookshop after two months of isolation, and I started socializing again via real environments.

The labyrinth of emotions and unnecessary stress caused my inner self both to shrink and expand uncontrollably, and to feel the exhaustion of daily life at a completely different level. But, fortunately, I have listened to my inner voices after a long period of silence and my timid self discovered new creative ways of expressing the doubts surrounding the human condition in this particular time. I searched for my past through old photographs, as a link between spaces that can control a part of the present. I asked important questions and I didn't get the right answers, but I got the courage to pose in uncomfortable situations and to not feel shame for it. This period offered me the opportunity

to achieve a deeper understanding of my personal time in concordance with the time of the world.

**Ana Grecu** studies Romanian language and literature at University of Bucharest, Romania.

# The COVID-19 battle:

## *The lens of a frontliner in Malaysia*

By Calyn Tan jen Ai

As I pen this article, Malaysia is currently on the forefront battle with the COVID-19 pandemic and is on its 3rd going



into 4th Phase of Movement Control Order (MCO), with indefinite periods of extension. Being a member of Malaysia's healthcare fraternity, I too join many others on the front line to fight this battle with the unseen. This is the COVID-19 battle from my lens.

In public health, we learn about outbreak management and emergency preparedness.



**My team and I doing medical surveillance work at a Quarantine Centre**

I never imagined that my first encounter with it would come in the form of a real-life global pandemic. In many ways, this pandemic was for me a giant textbook that came to life. Malaysia reported its first case of COVID-19 on 25 January 2020. In the eyes of the public, this was the starting point of Malaysia's battle with what the WHO later announced as a pandemic by 11 March 2020. But not many know that the real battle in dealing with pandemics often starts way before a new virus has its name. Quoting Malaysia's Director General of Health, Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah, "Public health at its best is often not visible to the public until we have a catastrophic outbreak."

Being in the public health arm, I share the privilege of joining the first-line defense

against COVID-19, as a frontliner battling behind-the-scene. In Malaysia, disease surveillance is an on-going activity, often behind-the-scene, with updates on global emerging pathogens obtained through the International Health Regulations (IHR) focal point. Joining the backstage battle were activities related to lab work, research, and infection control, which prepares the country for the unseen and unknown.

But by mid-March, Malaysia saw a sudden surge of cases and I was deployed to the scene. Within a month, I saw myself in different roles, which demanded physical strength, mental resilience, and constant adaption. My tasked roles include performing health screening at international entry points, setting up triage counters at clinics, conducting field sampling, and managing quarantine centers. Though my role changed from time-to-time, my aim remained the same – to halt the spread of the virus and to protect the vulnerable community, as I join hands with my fellow comrades in the clinical arm, who form the last-line of defense as we fight this battle.

This pandemic has taught me a lot about myself and others. During this battle, it was personally heart-warming to receive

a thoughtful message from a fellow SUN member from afar. Equally encouraging was knowing that fellow Malaysians were also fighting the battle together as a nation, through the tagline of #kitajagakita, which translates into “We take care of us”. As a front-liner, I’m not spared from the fear of uncertainties. I can’t see the road ahead and I know I can’t stop fighting either. But I do know for certain that this fight can’t be won alone.

**Calyn Tan Jen Ai** is a public health DrPH candidate at the University of Malaya, Malaysia.

# COVID-19: Lessons from South Korea

By Amali R. Thanthrige

The year 2020 began like every other year. People around the world made different plans for their academic lives or careers in order to archive their goals. However, by the end of the first month of the year, most international media outlets were busy with this strange virus which started in Wuhan, China. Most countries did not express any fear because no one imagined that this novel virus would create a significant impact elsewhere in the world.

Because of this procrastination in many countries, most countries in the world have locked down, established curfews, and suffered a vast number of deaths as the virus has spread everywhere. Many

countries have issued states of emergency, even those countries that have best healthcare systems in the world. But a country neighbouring China is doing exemplary work in controlling this virus, called COVID-19, gaining attention from the entire international community. That country is none other than South Korea, the 11th largest economic power in the world.

As COVID-19 started to attack people outside of China, many countries quickly banned Chinese from entry, but many of those countries still were unable to manage the damage from the pandemic. South Korea initially did not ban entry from China, but the Korean government nevertheless was able to take timely and constructive steps. In particular, since the virus was capable of human-to-human transmission, it was very important to impose social distancing requirements to decrease the degree of spread.

On January 27, the first cases were reported in South Korea. From that point, the country started doing screening, while also developing a test kit for COVID-19. According to South Korean health officials, about 20 medical companies were working on this, and after one week the first

diagnostic test was approved, while others soon followed. The Government provided this test for free to people who were not able to pay. By doing this, South Korea was able to test 46,127 patients in less than three weeks, while in a similar time frame the United States had tested 426; even though both countries had their first confirmed case at about the same time in January.

Another important action taken by South Korea was to implement tracking and tracing of people who came in contact with the virus. Once a patient was confirmed to have the virus, health officials were able to track the person's movements, which allowed them to identify who others might have been affected. The national authorities worked with local governments to use a GPS tracking system app which made this work more easily and efficiently. The Government later invited other companies to develop this kind of app to track and trace potential patients.

The next effective action was setting up mobile test spots to check people who drive up in vehicles. This system made it possible to check many people more quickly than having everyone visiting hospitals for testing. South Korea also introduced various

other testing places in addition to hospitals, which also made the work go faster. The Government attributed the positive results of this effort to public support, and argued that the most significant reason for this support was the transparency of the process set up to control the virus.

COVID-19 has become a principal challenge not only to less developed countries, but also to the world superpowers, including the United States. Even countries like Italy, known as one of the best countries in the world for health care, were unable to contain the spread of virus and ended up locking down the whole country. The United State also did not manage the disease very well, and eventually had the highest number of deaths. These examples prove how unprepared some countries were to face this disease.

But this is not the first time world has had to fight with this kind of infectious disease, and all countries should have learned lessons from history and should have had national policies to deal with such a crisis. Because such diseases not only impact human health, but also economic growth and security, having efficient policies in place to take action in time of crisis is important in

reducing the negative effects. South Korea has been a model during this pandemic, and can share with the international community its capability in controlling the spread of virus and limiting the number of deaths.

The novel coronavirus, which we now call COVID-19, has clearly shown just how interconnected is the world system. Most of the East Asian countries have responded well to the coronavirus, and these are the countries which had to deal with SARS in 2003 and H1N1 influenza in 2009. I think that policy makers have understood the weakness of their national responses during those times, and therefore those states were able to take quicker actions than other countries.

Like a financial crisis or a food crisis, pandemics are the type of shocks that can quickly go beyond national borders to have global impact. The coronavirus has forced countries to take emergency actions which had unavoidably negative impacts on their economy. But due to the fact that so many countries were impacted at the same time, the situation was made even worse. This episode shows how important it is to take quick action that thinks beyond the national level. Perhaps instead of investing in things

like nuclear weapons, countries should focus on investing more in improving healthcare facilities, research and development, providing quality education, and so on.

Beyond being able to control the health situation, the countries of the world now have to face other fears in the economic sector (i.e., increase in government debt, lack of labour force, increase of poverty, etc.). Given how East Asian countries set the best examples, other countries should immediately start follow their lead, because COVID-19 has already become a global health crisis, but soon it will also lead to an unavoidable global economic crisis.

**Amali R. Thanthrige** is majoring in international studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Republic of Korea.



**COVER STORY**

# Marco Polo:

**Nice to see caravanserais  
are still working**

*This is an imaginary interview with Marco Polo.*



**Elisabetta Ragagnin**

**Marco Polo (1254-1324), one of the first Europeans to travel to the Orient, is undoubtedly one of the prominent symbols of the Silk Roads. His world-renowned travel account – passed down to us by different names such as *Devisement dou Monde* (“Description of the World”), *Livres des Merveilles du Monde* (“Book of the Marvels of the World”), and, in Italian, *Il Milione* (“The Million”) – contains a huge wealth of information regarding what Europeans of the time thought of as the practically unknown and rather mysterious countries and peoples of the Silk Roads and the Orient. Marco Polo’s travelogue gained great success in medieval Europe. It was copied several times, and translated in different languages, becoming a genuine best-seller. Furthermore, it inspired Christopher Columbus and had a huge influence on the development of European cartography. The original manuscript is, however, lost.**

We have the great honour to interview Marco Polo today.

*Q: Messer Marco Polo, we would like to have some first-hand information on your travels.*

*Could you help us?*

**A:** Sure, it is my great pleasure. When our travel to the Orient started, I was very young, a teenager. At that time, I did not know how important this travel was to me, as it totally shaped the rest of my life and forged my character and my view of the world.

It was very often very strenuous; I remember the harsh times on the high snow-capped mountains in the heart of Central Asia and in the Taklamakan desert. But I also remember how comfortable it was to travel in Asia with imperial *paizas*, much better than your diplomatic passports. It is nice for me to see that many auberges and caravanserais we stayed at are still working nowadays along the Silk Roads.

All the new knowledge I gained! Ah, those fantastic burning stones. We did not have them in Europe at that time; “coal” you call them, don’t you? How much I would have liked to have some during the wet Venetian winters! And all the zoological and botanical knowledge I acquired. I remember the first time I saw yaks and rhinoceroses. And not to mention all the scientific information that was unknown to medieval Europe. I discussed many of these topics with my friend Pietro



**Statue of Marco  
Polo in downtown  
Ulaanbaatar**

d'Abano, at that time a professor in Padova.

Then, the memories of all the years passed working as a foreign emissary, that is, as eyes and ears of my Great Qa'an Qubilai - peace to his soul - travelling extensively in the southern provinces of the empire and beyond.

And finally, the adventurous travel back home. As you surely know, we would have preferred to travel by land, since we knew the roads very well. However, the land journey was going to be too dangerous at that time, especially owing to the rebellions of Qubilai Qa'an's nephew Qaidu and his supporters, who were causing severe unrest in Central Asia. We were in charge of a highly important

mission: escorting the beautiful Mongol princess Kökečín to her future husband, the Ilkhanid Qan Arghun, and we could not risk losing her. So, we had no other option than to travel by sea. We delivered Kökečín – who had been a fantastic travel companion – to her husband at the Ilkhanid court, as agreed with Qubilai Qa'an...well...not exactly. Arghun meanwhile had died, so Lady Kökečín married his son Ghazan. We then proceeded further West back to Venice with the intention, as promised to the Great Qa'an, to go back to him in due time. Unfortunately, Qubilai passed away in 1294. Moreover, my father and uncle had grown old and were keen to pass the rest of their lives in Venice with the capital we had managed to raise during all those years of absence from our homeland. As for me, the Mongol court without my Great Qa'an would not have been the same. So, after a totally unplanned little detour in Genoa – as you surely remember, I fell prisoner to the Genovese, and shared a cell with Rustichello da Pisa – I went back to Venice, married the Venetian Donata Badoer, and passed the rest of my life as a wealthy merchant together with her and our three adorable daughters, Fantina, Bellela and Moretta.

*Q: Messer Polo, maybe you have heard that some people doubt that you actually travelled to China since you neglected to mention important parts of Chinese civilization, as for instance drinking tea and the Great Wall of China. Could you give us some explanation in this concern?*

**A:** Oh, yes, sure, my pleasure. Let's start with tea. I drank tea only a few times. At the court, I rather stuck to the more familiar beverages of the Mongols as well as to various types of sherbets, which I, honestly, enjoyed much more than tea.

Why didn't I mention tea? Well, the answer is very simple. In my travelogue, you can find less than half of all what I have seen and experienced in my travels in Asia. Besides, as you know, I am a merchant. I tried to focus on products which could be interesting for our business at home, in Venice. Medieval people used to drink various kinds of red and white wines, as well as strong beers, especially in more northern countries, like for instance *Affligem*. So, tea was surely not going to be an attractive business item in medieval Europe.

Coming now to your second question, why I did not mention the Chinese Wall. Well, the answer here is straightforward: I simply did

not see it. What you know now as the Great Wall of China are especially those parts built during the Ming time. Yes, I recollect, now that you ask me, ramparts made of pounded earth and sometimes reinforced with wooden stakes and the like. I saw several similar ones in other parts of Central Asia as well.

*Q: One last question Messer Polo: where are your personal travel notes preserved? I cannot imagine that in all those years you have never noted down anything.*

**A:** I knew you were going to ask me this! This was also the first question that three professors – namely Paul Pelliot, Luigi Foscolo Benedetto and Igor de Rachewiltz – asked me upon reaching the Celestial City. During the 24 years of my travels and sojourns in the Orient, I had written down several notes in the crypto-language I used with my father and uncle as well as with Petrus – my Tatar slave and dear friend – and Kökečin, who masterfully learned it during our sea travel. This language – we called it *Monpervenian* – is a mixture of the four foreign languages we knew, namely Mongolian, Persian – that, as you know, had the status of a lingua franca in my circles at Qubilai Qa'an's court – Torkî

and Arabic, intermixed with Venetian, our native tongue. Some papers got unfortunately lost during a violent monsoon...I was working on the edition of the very first notes together with Petrus and Kökečin during our endless days at sea on our way back to Venice. We managed, however, to save a large part of this treasure. Where is it now? Well, in Venice of course, where else!

And here I have a nice offer for you: show me some further interesting developments of the new Silk Roads and I will tell you about my secret notes next time! Then, you will have the satisfaction to compare my own version of the facts with the information passed down by the various codices you already have at your disposal. You will see that you are informed about less than half of what I saw. And only then will you be able to see in what measure Rustichello contributed with exaggerations and embellishments to my text.

Recollecting now the time passed together as cellmates in the prisons of Genoa, I remember with nostalgia how much he enjoyed listening to all that I told him about the Orient. It was he who first had the idea to write everything down together. So we started...in prisons days and nights are long...I remember very vividly how passionate he was in adding daring

details to some of what were, in his opinion, the too factual and boring stories of mine. Some of his exaggerations make me blush even now! But, as you know, he was a writer of romance stories and his duty simply was to amuse the public. I do actually appreciate that he did not infuse the stories with all of those irrational and fantastic marvels circulating at that time on the lands and creatures of the Orient – you surely know about the medieval so-called *mirabilia*, that so much amused our European people back then.

*Thank you very much Messer Marco Polo. We hope to come back to your offer very soon.*

**Elisabetta Ragagnin** is Associate Professor of Turkic and Mongolic studies at the Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her research fields include linguistics, philology, cultural studies and literature of Turkic and Mongolic languages and peoples, as well as Silk Roads Studies.

# **Rector İbiş: Pandemic to facilitate mixed education models**



**Prof. Dr. Erkan İbiş graduated from Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine in Ankara. He was elected and appointed as the Rector of Ankara University August 2012, and re-elected and appointed for a second term in 2016.**

*Q: You have given us unstinting support and cooperation as the rector of a key member university of SUN. Established in 2015, SUN turns five this year. How do you assess what it has done and what expectations do you have for SUN?*

From the very beginning of the establishment of SUN, Ankara University has supported its idea, theme, and structure, and believed in the new Silk Road phenomena within the new world concept as a way to maintain the virtual bridge between ancient and modern times, as well as the bridge among Silk Road region countries. From this perspective, I truly believe that SUN regular general assemblies and also academic achievements are very fruitful and constructive. I hope and strongly believe that the future of SUN is absolutely promising.

*Q: When it comes to the Silk Roads, Turkey and Ankara are among the most important locations. From the perspective of a citizen of Turkey and the Rector of Ankara University, what significance do Turkey, Ankara, and Ankara University have on the Silk Roads?*

**A:** Turkey is one of the most important

countries on the Silk Road. As you know Ankara is Turkey's capital, namely the heart of our country. Ankara University is also a flagship institution named after the capital of our country. Along the Silk Road, which passes through Turkey's Anatolian peninsula, many very important commercial centers were established. The most important of these is Istanbul, which was established at the place separating the continents of Asia and Europe. We fulfill our responsibilities with all of these identities. Now, we will do our best in the Silk Road Universities Network, which we are proud to be a member of.

*Q: As the rector, with what philosophy, vision, and principle have you led Ankara University so far? Please tell us about the most rewarding moment, and most important project that you are now focusing on.*

**A:** Nowadays, given the globalization of the world, we are focusing on: internationalization, accreditation, quality education, research, creating highly equipped graduates as global citizen with strong socio-cultural awareness in intellectual specialities, digital conversion, data management, social responsibility, and a determined vision for

national and international cooperation. Ankara University is progressing to be a better university thorough its policies, incentive systems, student-oriented education model, and output-based evaluation models.

*Q: Based on your long experience, what is the most serious challenge that universities all over the world face today and how should they respond to it? And also, what would be the most important role and capability of university leaders in responding to this challenge?*

**A:** The future strategies of the university must address designing the future, disseminating team work, strengthening interdiciplinary cooperation, progressing with determination in the direction of innovative change, integration with society, and enrichment of diversity. In structuring for the upcoming era, outstanding universities on both a local and global scale should not underestimate the young generation which are being educated in universities in order to achieve the “real” role and responsibility within society.

*Q: It has been 20 years since we entered the new millennium. What were the bright and*

*dark sides in the past two decades in the human civilization? What would be your advice for young generations who are preparing for their future?*

**A:** The last half of the 20th century was a period in which technology, objectives, applications and point of views changed very rapidly and excellently. The first half of the 21st century is a period in which perceptions change with powerful social media, and perceptions somehow even have a strong conflict with reality. These dazzling changes affect and differentiate the social structure, individual and social behaviours, and interests and understandings.

For this reason, the most important responsibility of our generation is to “knead” yesterday’s experiences values, traditions and history in a better way, and present them to the new generation in a way that they can understand, be involved in, and be interested in. Young people, of course, should not be afraid to learn about the past and previous generations, and should try to integrate that with today.

For this, students need technological and data literacy, skills in research and inquiry, reasoning and critical thinking, sociocultural

development toward being a good intellectual, a sense of being a global citizen equipped with universal human values, pursuing what she/he has a passion for, studying hard, reading whatever they can find—including poetry, novels, short stories, books about history, philosophy—basically reading everything. Probably the most important recommendation is having continuous dreams and imagination.

*Q: Ankara National University had planned to host the General Assembly of SUN in Izmir this year, but unfortunately it had to be put off to next year due to the COVID-19 outbreak. How would you prepare next year's GA? If you have any request to the member universities of SUN and SUN Secretariat, please share it with us.*

*A: It's obvious that in 2020 the world has been experiencing one of the worst worldwide pandemics in history, which has interrupted all domestic and international programs. Unfortunately, the 2020 General Assembly of SUN, scheduled to be hosted by Ankara University, has already been postponed, as have other such events. All Ankara University members and I myself as the Rector of*

Ankara University are very sorrowful because of this unexpected situation, but I personally hope the COVID-19 outbreaks will come to an end and we all can get back to our expected programs. In 2021 my most important calendar item will be the SUN GA. I would like invite once again all member university's delegates to Turkey, to the Ankara University Didim Conference Hotel for an unforgettable event.

*Q: We heard that you and your university as a national university of Turkey, and having the largest medical school in the country, have been dedicated to the fight against COVID-19 in Turkey. What was the role of Ankara National University and you as a rector as well as a medical doctor? What was the most serious challenge and how did you overcome it? Can you share some lessons that you think were the most important?*

**A:** The COVID-19 pandemic we are living through has also taught us many things. First of all, after the quick decision of our Presidency and Higher Education Council (YOK), we immediately started to have our classes through distance education. In our hospitals, it was completely essential

and important to learn about the virus, its regional behaviour, and to demonstrate its physical and mental effects and take precautions against them.

We closely followed developments in Iran, Italy and other countries, especially China, and analyzed the data we could obtain. We have learned from their experience, and also reviewed our medical infrastructure. We made virtual exercises and action plans according to different pandemic scenarios. In short, we prepared as much as possible. In the pandemic, the first stage of our three-stage action plan has been sufficient so far in terms of the services and intensive care bed capacity of our hospital.

Covid-19 trainings and the job assignments of our health personnel were made separately. Additional staff assignments were made from our units other than the health personnel for general support. All of the medical supplies that may be required were obtained from the Ministry of Health. During the pandemic, there was no excessive patient density in our hospitals. These achievements, of course, were not just up to the preparations we made. The main reason was the strong health system, health infrastructure, and well-trained physicians in our country.

As a physician, the main factor in the success in this episode was the devoted struggle of all healthcare professionals, whether physicians, nurses or other health personnel, with a determined, faithful and courageous high spirit. Apart from the healthcare response, we have gained very important experience and skill in distance education during this process. We believe that mixed models, which include both formal and distance education applications, will be preferred in the future, and we tend towards structuring in this direction.

*Q: Please tell us a bit about your personal life. What was the most decisive moment in your life? Is there any book that influenced your life? And what is your favorite hobby and food?*

**A:** First of all, I want to talk about my resume. I was born on March 30, 1958 in Trabzon. Trabzon is an ancient capital with a deep history of more than 4 thousand years in the eastern Black Sea region. I completed my primary, secondary and high school education in Trabzon. I completed my university education in Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine in Ankara and my nuclear medicine specialty education in Ankara University

Faculty of Medicine.

I got the title of associate professor in nuclear medicine in 1991 and professor in 1997. In addition to being an academician, I also worked as the vice rector at Ankara University and I have been working as a rector since 2012. I also serve as an inter-university board member, the chairman of the Turkish-Russian social forum education and science committee, a board member of the Turkish-American Association, a board member of the university sports federation, and on the boards of many non-governmental organizations.

I can say there were two most decisive events in my education and career. First, after getting a high score from the central examination required for university entrance after high school graduation, my first choice was medicine, because of the intervention of my late father; all the rest were engineering. I won my first choice, which is fine, actually. I owe my present position to my late father's intervention 45 years ago. The second one was when I was in my first year assistantship of nuclear medicine, and I was asked by the students in an interview about my future target, I said “being the Ankara University Rector.” That answer was my dream at that

time, the reality of today.

My hobbies varied during different times in my life. Tennis, trekking, gardening, gemology, playing the plague, a natural stone collection, and a walking stick collection. I tend not to distinguish food, but I prefer mostly Black Sea cuisine and seafood.

*Q: If you are asked to give an advice to university students about one thing that they should never give up in their life, what would it be?*

**A:** Thanks for this question, indeed. I strongly would like advise them to be self-confident, determined, faithful, and focused, having the job they want most, understanding the importance of family, friendship, and social sharing, also reading, reading, reading whatever they can find.

*Q: We also would like to hear about your family. When and how did you meet your wife and how many children do you have? What do you think is the most important in your relationship with your children?*

**A:** Family is the most important factor in one's life. Parents, siblings, spouse,

and children are very important. I myself grew up in a crowded family of 8 siblings. I met my wife during my student years. I have a daughter and son. Despite my busy professional life, I care about sharing and spending time with my children and wife at every opportunity. I think we can manage the father-child relationship together with mutual understanding, tolerance, support, and sharing.

Thank you for giving us your precious time for the interview. We wish you health and may your life be full of joy and happiness.

# Ankara University, the oldest and largest university in capital



Ankara University was formally founded in 1946. It is not only the first higher education institution founded under the Republic of Turkey and the capital city of Ankara, it is also the oldest, and largest university in Ankara and one of the best-established universities in Turkey. The University has the promise and potential to be one of the leading



universities in the world.

Ankara University is one of the largest universities in the world with its 300,000 graduates, more than 70,000 students, 18 faculties, 14 institutes, 11 vocational schools, 1 school, 1 State Conservatory and 49 Research and Application Centers, as well as three Training, Research and Application Hospitals, with approximately 5000 academic staff and 7000 administrative staff. With more than 70 years of history, Ankara University is one of the most respected, qualified, research-focused and innovative universities in the country and the world. As part of Bologna Process, the University is an integrated university in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). It has 333 Master's Programs, 246 PhD Programs, 48 Associate Degree Programs and 113 Undergraduate Programs. The number of full-time international

students registered in these programmes is over 5000.

There are 44 programs carried out 100% in English at the University. It has a total of 810 international agreements, 650 of which are within the scope of Erasmus programs, and 160 of which are within the scope of other academic cooperation programs. Within these programs, there are 670 outgoing students and 150 incoming students. Ankara University was awarded "research university" status on 26 September 2017, and it gives great importance to Master and especially PhD studies. The University not only provides education services, but also does successful research activities in areas such as Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmaceuticals, Applied Sciences, Agriculture, and almost all of the Social Sciences. Ankara University provides language courses to over 20,000 people every year in 20 different languages through TOMER (Turkish Language Teaching Research and Application Center), with offices throughout Turkey.

Ankara University is well respected with its highly-qualified academic personnel and students and well-established teaching, learning, and research centers. In the last 50 years, Ankara University had made great

developments in the area of education and research. The University has increased its physical capacity as well as its academic quality. It is consistently making efforts to enhance the quality of education programs at every level. The University is committed to revise and reconsider its programs to provide more flexible and functional education, and to equip students for the requirements of a changing world. The University is based on a student-oriented education system with a primarily "national" accreditation, but also an "international" accreditation strategy to internalize and disseminate quality in education programs. With its institutional development and great potential, Ankara University has made "internationalization" one of its primary objectives in the coming years.

# Izmir boasts 8,500-years history, landscape and nature



Located in western Turkey on the shores of the Aegean, Izmir, the pearl of the Aegean, is the third largest city In Turkey. With its 8500 year history, fertile lands, favorable climate, 629 km coastline, 300 sunny days a year, a sea that offers every shade of blue, and the heritage left behind by the 32 civilizations to which it has been a home, Izmir is ready to be discovered.

Izmir owes its position as an economically and socially dynamic city to its location, climate, and the fact that it has been home to many different cultures and religions. Persians, Ancient Greeks, Assyrians, Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans are just a few of the dozens of different civilizations that the city has hosted throughout its long history.

The fact that almost half of its population of 4 million is under the age of 30 makes Izmir a city full of life. The city hosts tens of thousands of University students, and educates scientists, artists, business leaders and academics.

With its perfect climate, Izmir has a wonderful natural environment for agricultural products such as olives, figs, grapes, and cotton. Various sea foods, wines, local herbs, olive oil, and its delicious cuisine make Izmir an attractive city also for gourmets.



Izmir is one of the oldest settlements in the Mediterranean basin. The latest archaeological excavations have revealed that the history of the city dates back to 6,500 B.C. Traces of civilizations accommodated by the city for 8,500 years can be observed in the artifacts exhibited in ancient cities, ruins, castles, buildings and museums.

Izmir was built 8,500 years ago on Yesilova Mound and the neighboring Yassitepe on Meles River's Delta. The city was moved to Bayrakli with Troy in 3,000 B.C., which was the most developed period of the Anatolian Culture. Subject to the influence of the Middle Eastern Hittite Empire in 1,500 B.C. and called "Smyrna", Izmir became one of the most important cities of Ionian Federation in 1,000 B.C. Seven out of twelve Ionian city-states were in Izmir, which were the leading cities in philosophy, science, the arts, politics and maritime endeavors. After its golden era came to an end with the conquest by the Lydians around 600 B.C, Izmir became smaller during the time of the Persian Empire. A new city was built at the foot of Kadifekale during the reign of Alexander the Great in 334-333 B.C. The second golden era of Smyrna came during the Roman period starting in the first century B.C. Its Byzantine

Era dated to the 4th century A.D. and lasted until the 11th century, when the city was conquered by the Seljuks. Izmir became a part of the Ottoman Empire in 1415.

# **Globalization, Silk Roads and Turks**

**By Abdullah Gündoğdu**

## **Introduction: Globalization and Eurasia**

Globalization is viewed as an international integration process where beliefs, cultures, and ideas circulate freely, along with goods and services. We can talk about different degrees and periods of globalization from the earliest times until today. In a narrow sense, however, globalization marks a certain period that accelerates the circulation of goods, services and capital, and opens new geographies to this exchange. The question of why globalization first emerged in Eurasia is the principal problematic of the academic work on the Silk Road.

## **The First Age of Globalization**

In the light of anthropology, archeology and historical data, we have discovered that different peoples from different regions developed at different speeds in the long period between 11,000 BC and 1500 AD. During this period, most of the Eurasian peoples, and a large proportion of the peoples living in the Americas, and those the south of the Sahara had passed through developments in agriculture, animal husbandry, metallurgical technology, and complex political organization. All of these new developments took place earlier in Eurasia than elsewhere. The unique geographical location of Eurasia, which is spread horizontally across a large land mass, and the unusual number of domesticated large mammals on the Eurasian landmass, were key determinants in this. Large domestic mammals provided the human communities that owned these animals with meat, dairy products, fertilizers, leather, and wool, as well as land transportation, military attack vehicles, and traction for plowing, so that all the key shortcomings of the human creature were overcome.

In addition, thanks to the fact that large mammals carry lethal microbes, Eurasian peoples developed immunity against many

diseases, which amounted to a very effective weapon against those who had not been so immunized. This privileged position ensured that globalization took place in Eurasia first.

The great developments of mankind in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry, especially through the extensive plant and animal breeding in the Neolithic Age, is usually described as the Agricultural Revolution. However, this process also involves a large-scale livestock revolution. It is not known exactly how long this domestication process took to become established, but it started with the domestication of dogs and pigs, continued with wheat, barley, goat, sheep, cattle, flax, peas, lentils, olive trees, horses, grapes, donkeys and camels. However, by the last period of the Copper Age, down to about the invention of writing (3500-3000 BC), the actual primary wave of domestication had come to an end.

During the Copper Age (5000-3000 BC) and the Bronze Age (3000-1200 BC), agricultural economy had made a great progress in various regions, including the Fertile Crescent (from Mesopotamia, through the Levant, and into Egypt), in Anatolia, Crete, the Aegean (Greece or Helas), the

Balkans, and China. Humanity had witnessed the transformation of settled agricultural societies into city-states and then into great empires. Although developments in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry continued during the Bronze and Iron Ages, no significant plant and animal domestication had been made in the preceding two thousand years. The experiences of these changes, including the knowledge of pets and farming, had spread through migrations throughout Europe and Asia. The domestication of horses and beasts of burden provided military power that facilitated the spread of Indo-European speaking peoples to the west. These languages then replaced all the old Western European languages, with the exception of the Basque and a few others. Later, when horses, chariots, and other vehicles began to be used in warfare, these technologies gradually changed wars in the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and China, beginning around 1800 BC.

From the Neolithic age to the end of the Late Bronze Age (1200 BC), humanity developed agriculture and animal husbandry simultaneously from the hunter-gatherer order, and most regions had a hybrid economy that carried forward both together. Small scale agriculture based on natural irrigation

resources and livestock breeding of range animals were characteristic of this period.

Before the Bronze Age, the Kelteminar in the Maveräünnehir region and the Anav cultures in the Kharezsm region were agricultural economies that emerged from the south of the nomadic steppe belt of Inner Asia. In the east of Eurasia, a development path based on a different animal husbandry economy had developed. Afanasyevo culture (3300-1700 BC), born in Minusinsk in Southern Siberia in the Chalcolithic Age, spread throughout Yenisei, Siberian interiors, and Altai. The development of animal husbandry in the Altai region started with Afanasyevo culture. Although there are plenty of both horse and sheep bones in Kurgan excavations, there are more findings related to horse breeding. Based on the latest information, these were the first horse breeders of Altai. The Andronovo culture, starting in South Siberia in the Late Bronze and early Iron Age and spreading all the way to the mountains of Altai and God, constitutes a phase in which the animal husbandry economy had developed. In this culture, there is evidence that horses, cattle and camels were grown (though not pigs), but that sheep breeding was more dominant.

It is noteworthy that Andronovo culture spread only on the northern foothills of the Altai and the adjacent steppe. Andronovo people had also developed agriculture and learned how to cultivate. Agricultural tools such as the hoe, sickle, and scythe found in excavations confirm other information about agriculture development. By determining the structure of nomadism, which is the unique social structure of the animal husbandry economy, the process of gaining productivity, which requires expertise and developing various competences, started in the Late Bronze Age and was completed during the Iron Age. This development, which had an Altaistic character, had become a feature that dominated all the mobility we identify with the first globalization in Eurasia since the Late Bronze Age.

Karasuk Culture, which appeared in the eastern range of Andronovo Culture in the late Bronze Age (1500-800 BC), had become more dominant than Andronovo Culture in this region at that time. Spread in the region between the Aral Lake, the Tanrı Mountains, the Yenisey River, and the Altay Mountains, this cultural environment belongs to the Bronze Age, but also represents the transition to the Iron Age. In excavations in the region,

the use of four-wheeled trolleys covered with tents woven from felt represents an important stage in the formation of the steppe culture. Artistic works in the form of animal figures indicate the birth of the animal style, which is the basis of the steppe culture. Although people living in Karasuk culture knew about weaving and agriculture, they were more inclined to animal husbandry. Breeding camels, as well as horses, sheep, and cattle, was of great importance for the development of the livestock economy. In particular, it enabled the establishment of the major achievements such as camel breeding, and then the development of transportation-based trade, and the Silk Roads itself.

These cultural circles became indispensable components of the birth process of the nomadic economy, which is based on a sustainable practice of animal husbandry. The nomads who specialized in animal husbandry provided a ongoing relationship between groups which populated the wide spaces between the oases of civilization spread along the rivers of Eurasia. Thus, the steppe tribes became the protective lords of the trade routes.

## **Iron Age and The Great Cavalry Revolution**

The wide Eurasian steppe belt extending from Lake Baikal to the Himalaya mountains, and south of Siberia from Manchuria to Eastern Europe and the Balkans, has recently come to be defined as Central Asia. This region has been the embodiment of a separate economic and social order because it is surrounded by agricultural societies (other than on its northern frontier). For this reason, while creating a stark contrast with the settled world with which it was in conflict, the residents of the northernmost tundra belt were deprived of political power, remaining in the periphery and steadily absorbed by the Bozkır generation, both in terms of population and culture. Due to their dispersed social structure, which led to the retention of the hunter-gatherer order, the inhabitants of the tundra and taiga bands were always unable to create a cohesive political force. They had always been subordinate to the Bozkır belt, which had the ability to organize state to state relations in the south.

The chariot technology, which was the most advanced form of warfare in its time, was powered by bronze (before 1200 B.C.). The emerging use of iron, which is easier and cheaper to procure, changed the balance of power in the old world. The development

of metallurgy based on iron ore, which is common in nature, also produced economic and social change in agriculture. Smithing not only allowed farmers to make new tools for cultivating the soil, but also made ships more durable. Utilisation of horses as mounts in war began five centuries after the invention of iron, and was made possible by the invention of stirrup, which seems simple only in retrospect. This leap, known as the Great Cavalry Revolution, took place on the steppes between 850 and 700 BC, and was carried out by the steppe warrior cultures, who combined then high-tech steel and the horse tradition. Rather than just using horses as transport to the scene of battle, the nomads became true equestrian warriors (or cavalry), with the advantage of a simple method of riding horses to augment the human fighter with the power and speed of the horse.

The Iron Age saw the advance of societies in the economic and social sphere, allowing population growth and the development and globalization of trade. Humanity has witnessed the emergence of three different universal orders during the 1500 years from the start of the Iron Age: (1) the financial order, with a rising economic foundation, (2) the political order, with great empires

established, and (3) the religious order, with the rise of great institutional religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism and Islam.

This first period of globalization also was marked by a biological exchange, including the spread of microbes and of plants, which resulted from the establishment of extensive maritime trade routes, facilitated by significant geographical discoveries after the end of the 15th century.

It is not surprising that we see strong evidence of this exchange in studies of microbiology and genetics. In research published in science and nature journals, the transfer of Hepatitis B and plague towards the West by equestrian steppe tribes, the substitution of Indo-European farmers by these tribes, and the beginning of larger-scale animal husbandry in agricultural areas are significant indicators of this.

## **Great Silk Roads and Steppe Tribes**

The most characteristic feature of this process of exchange is the standardizing of trade routes, especially the Silk Roads, which ensured the establishment and expansion of a global trading system extending from east to west across Eurasia. During the Old

and Middle Ages, when Silk Roads trade was dominant, the Eastern Hemisphere had a kind of global integration, with Eurasia at its core. The trade routes, especially the Silk Roads, were the main factor that ensured this global integration by connecting the various parts of the old world to each other.

The Silk Roads takes its name from Asian silk, the lucrative main commodity of many trade routes. This concept of the “Silk Roads” is said to have been invented by Ferdinand von Richthofen, who made seven expeditions to China from 1868 to 1872. However, the notion became widespread in 1938 through the writing of the first book using the label “Silk Roads” by the Swedish geographer Sven Hedin. Of course, this was not the only lucrative route of the trade that moved between Asia and the Mediterranean world. As Warwick Ball emphasizes, the economic value of the sea spice route, running through India and the Red Sea, was sometimes higher than land based routes, especially that of the Sogdians. The land based Silk Roads nevertheless captured most attention for the free movement of goods from East Asia to the West, under the safe guarantees of steppe empires such as the Hun, Göktürk, Uygur and Cengiz.

In studies of the Silk Roads, which was the principal route of globalization, the role of China and Iran in the establishment and functioning of this global system has been widely researched. However, the effects of the steppe peoples and the Turks on the Silk Roads have not been sufficiently emphasized.

The main factors determining the place of Turkic peoples in world politics are the economic conditions at issue, rather than religious, social and cultural factors and the political relations connected to those. From ancient times to the beginning of modern history, namely end of the 16th century, the Silk Roads was the primary determinant in the history of the Turkish peoples' spread across Eurasia over the course of 2500 years. Transit trade routes were a constant source of wealth for the steppe tribes of Asia, especially for the Turks. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to define the Silk Roads as the "Turkic Road." Maintaining stability in the steppe region was critical to the development of trade. In later periods, there continued to be a connection between the viability of trade and the political life in the steppe empires.

Commercial activities between East and West underwent periods of great revival, especially with the Hun era. In this period,

when the Han dynasty was dominant in China (206 BC - 220 AD), the art of silkworming was highly developed and there was a great increase in wealth. During this time, agricultural and industrial production in China increased and surpluses allowed global trade to flourish through both the steppe belt and the Indian Ocean. This development made a significant impact on the establishment and expansion of the Silk Roads.

While China did engage in massive industrial-scale production during the Ancient and Medieval Ages, the Indian subcontinent also was highly productive, especially of life-styles goods: porcelain, tea, bird varieties, furs, leathers, Kashmiri wool, musk, pearls, gemstones, natural dyes, spices (ginger, cinnamon, cloves, Hind mullet, henna, coconut), processed silk from Chinese, special furniture woods, etc. The complex road systems that transported the various products of these regions to the consumption societies in the Mediterranean basin was largely through Turkic countries. We can see the essence of the political struggles within and among steppe empires as an attempt to dominate these trade routes. Starting from the Hun era, steppe tribes

were under a central authority in the form of imperial confederations, and they developed a state tradition that we can call the “Steppe Concept.” The basis of this concept was "to establish control over trade routes, to ensure security and to use the material and spiritual wealth flowing from these places as they wish.”

At the onset of the Christian age, we know that Mongolian tribes were getting stronger in their region and that some Huns migrated to the West. Those Huns who migrated not only ensured that West Turkestan was Turkified, but also later appeared in Eastern Europe in another wave of migration in the second half of the 4th century, playing a role that had an ongoing impact on European history. This great western migration of the Huns expanded the area of activity of the nomads in Mongolia, leading to the birth of political, cultural and economic integration between Iran and China.

These developments also meant a convergence of the East and the West. In this way, the political importance of the steppe tribes as makers of history had increased. All the steppe empires, including the Genghis Empire, played this role. During the Göktürk, Uyghur and Cengiz empires, the Turkish

and Mongolian peoples, representative of the nomadic steppe world, expanded their area of activity beyond their previous range between China and Iran, with their new scope spanning all the way from China to Rome. With their flexible and portable cultures but stable political and social structure, they left permanent traces in the history of many civilizations, well beyond that of Central Asia.

Trade has always sought peace and stability. Traders preferred centralized control to unstable and insecure environments; they preferred to avoid arbitrary taxation, as well as unpredictable threats to their own life and property. Genghis Khan, a typical steppe emperor in this regard, was a faithful executor of this commitment. He and his successors did not hesitate to try all possible devices, including war, when it came to the control and security of trade routes. Ebulgazi Bahadır Khan explained the Genghis peace on the trade routes that existed during the empire of Genghis as follows: "at that time, Iran and Turan were so secure that if one person put a tray of gold on his head and walked, no one would dare to attack him."

## **The Caravanserais**

An outstanding lasting witness to this Steppe

Concept are the caravanserais established on the vast trade routes. When you see the caravanserais on the Silk Roads route from Tash Rabat to the Balkans and Anatolia you are likely to feel that all of these are the works of a master architect made by the order of a monarch.

The Silk Roads, said by some to start from the city of Chang'an (Xi'an) in China, covered all of Central Asia and reached the borders of Anatolia. It was divided into two branches in Anatolia and reached the Mediterranean by wrapping Anatolia like a net. The caravanserais along the Silk roads were charitable institutions between cities and built on the main roads for the caravans and passengers. The oldest caravanserais in Asia, which were called Ribat and which were established by the Turks, belong to the Ghaznavids and Karahanids. Their architecture and plans later became an exemplars for caravanserais built during the Great Seljuk period.

“Caravanserai” is derived from the Persian words karban (caravan) and saray (palace). A caravan is a line of load animals carrying passengers and merchandise to distant places. The Seljuks developed bridges, roads, and accommodation facilities based on the model

of Roman trade in Anatolia, and established a system that would make the entire region along the trade routes safe for travel. Part of this system is the caravanserais, built along the main roads in all directions for safe accommodation.

Malatya, Urfa, Amasya, Divrik, Sivas, Niğde, Kayseri, Konya and many other Anatolian cities are still full of such structures, bearing the magnificent features of Seljuk art. During the reign of Anatolian Seljuks, trade was recognized as very important. In Anatolia, where caravans sometimes have to proceed very long distances under very difficult climatic conditions, the Sultans built caravanserais in as many places as possible to meet the need for safety and accommodation. Accommodation in the caravanserais was free of charge for three days, with expenses covered by the sultans and the wealthy traders and the foundations to which they belonged.

After the Seljuks institutionalized transit trade with the caravanserais spread all throughout the region, the Ottomans were eager to take over responsibility for control and security on the trade routes, much like their steppe ancestors had done. The Ottoman State, fully aware of the financial benefits of the regular organization of trade and

trade routes through its territories, followed a very wise commercial policy in the 15th and 16th centuries. This was smart politics; this policy meant that the land trade route between the Far East and India and Europe through the Near East maintained its vitality for a hundred years after the discovery of a commercially competitive South African sea route.

During the Ottoman period, caravanserais were generally found in trade-related parts of settlements or in complexes. The Ottomans put more emphasis on the construction of commercial complexes and the construction of range (menzil) complexes to settle and develop deserted areas. For this reason, range caravanserais within the range complexes have a special place. Caravanserais were found not only in the places where the caravans were placed, but also in the cities with the actual ranges, targets, and transit centers they wanted to reach.

During this period, although there were some changes in their structure, caravanserais and inns were built all over the country. While the caravansaries in the Seljuk period were built in the form of large architectural monuments made of masonry with angular, cut stones, the inns and caravansaries outside

the city constructed during the Ottoman period were more simple and with less creature comforts. However, the inns in the cities were built with great care in terms of architecture and art. In addition, as a result of the conquests and geographical discoveries in the Ottoman period, some changes occurred in the regions where the caravanserais were being built. As a result of geographical discoveries shifting the center of gravity of the Indian trade route into the Atlantic Ocean, many the caravan roads of the Seljuks became deserted. However, upon the emergence of new road routes, the Ottomans continued the construction of the caravanseraï along these new roads. They built many caravanserais, from Baghdad to Istanbul, from Mecca to Tunisia, from Bursa to Budin, from Belgrade to Skopje, and also along the pilgrimage route connecting Istanbul to the Arabian Peninsula.

## **Deterioration of Global Integrity and the Great Break**

Just as with the rise of Asia and Turkic countries, their subsequent decline was linked to the fate of the Silk Roads. By the 16th century, a great decline had begun throughout the whole world of Islamic Turkestan. It should not be forgotten that this was a world-

wide phenomenon which resulted from a combination of many geographical, political, psychological, social and economic factors. The trade between Turkestan, Far East Asia, and Eastern Europe was mainly through the roads passing through Turkic countries. The transition of this global trade from the land to the seas was compounded by changes in the paths of the rivers that gave life to Turkestan, such as Amu Derya and Sır Derya, and by the emergence of a new social structure based on tribalism. All this led to the decline in Turkistan.

Indeed, for all of Asia, the 18th century was a period of political, economic and cultural decline. As V. V. Barthol and Z. V. Togan stressed, the main reason for this phenomenon seems to be the development of maritime routes controlled by Western Europeans, which began in the 15th century and led to the collapse of caravan trade. As economic historian Ömer Lütfi Barkan emphasized, this situation, which was fatal for Turkestan in the east, was also central to the fate of the Ottomans in the west. As is well known, the Ottoman Empire, founded on great migration and trade routes, collapsed economically as a result of the displacement of world trade routes and the change of the

center of gravity of trade.

Since the beginning of the 16th century, in the face of the increasingly superiority of the West, the corresponding loss and decline of the East is related to the loss of their vital position along the land trade routes from east to west. The old roads have lost their advantaged position relative to the later South Asia-Africa-Europe maritime route from the Indian and Chinese border, as well as the northern sea route opened by Siberia-Arhangelsk. In addition, after the discovery of the continent of America by the Europeans, the maritime trade routes across the oceans gained even more importance. Nevertheless, this impact of the initial period of the expansion of Europe should not be exaggerated. In the sixteenth century, the Islamic world, represented largely by Turkish dynasties, underwent an important process of enlargement through the Ottoman, Safavid and Babur State.

Global integration in the old world lasted until the 16th century. In the 16th century, there began the simultaneous development of the great geographical discoveries and the loss of the importance of the old trade routes. During this period, the West began a 400 year period in which they used the

oceans as a spring board that allowed an unlimited leap forward. The world, which lost its previous global integration with dawn of the Columbian Age, emerged with a divided nature, in which economic, political and cultural developments take place in two different dimension, old and new.

On the one hand, there was the Old World, spanning from the Pacific to the Adriatic, and on the other, there was the New World, from the Western Mediterranean beyond the Tunus-Palermo-Malta line to evn newer lands beyond the horizon. The world experienced a great break, a major rupture in every field from economy to politics, social structure, and cultural life. Europeans who wanted to achieve the path to epic wealth that the advance of Golden Horde and the Ottomans foreclosed to them had no choice but to leap beyond the Atlantic, leaving the world of Reformation and the Renaissance behind. In this way, the rapidly rising West and its role in Global Capitalism overwhelmed the Old World, largely as a result of the acceleration it gained through the both the Industrial Revolution and the democratic revolutions.

This an abridged version of an

academic paper written by  
**Abdullah Gündoğdu** who is a professor  
at Ankara University.  
Full text is available on the internet  
[http://www.sun-silkroadia.org/board/  
list?bd\\_id=webzine](http://www.sun-silkroadia.org/board/list?bd_id=webzine)

# **Remembering Pontic Greeks to create a better future**

**By Angelos Larisis**

In 2019, at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, as well as in other Greek cities, a series of events were organized, including marathons, movie viewings, lectures, conferences, and dances. The reason for all of these events was the same: to remember the victims of the 20th century persecution against the Pontic Greeks and to celebrate the cultural or scientific achievements of these people. Who were the Pontic Greeks and what was the Pontic Greek Genocide?

Throughout the ages, Greeks lived in many places around the world, and especially in cities along the Silk Roads. The Greeks who lived in the region of Pontus, in modern northern Turkey, were called Pontic Greeks.



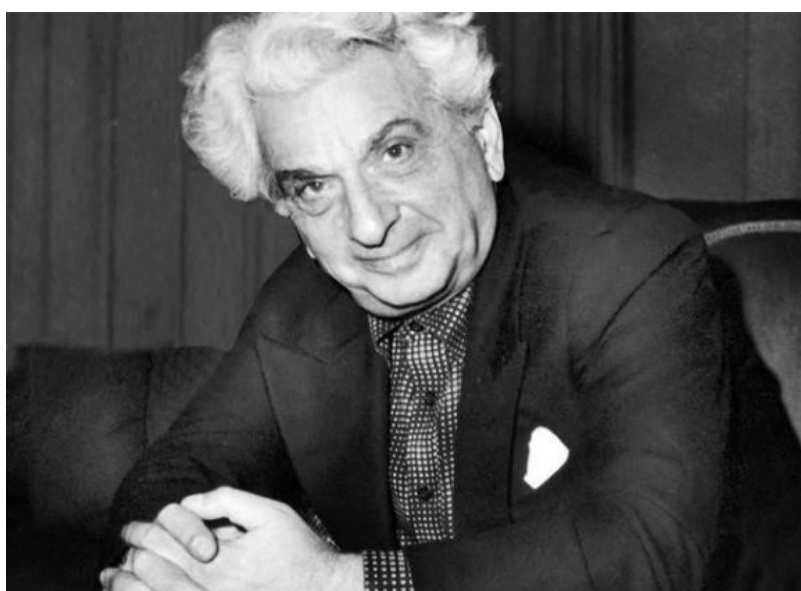
## **International Conference on the Genocide of the Christian Populations of the Ottoman Empire in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**

Due to the region that they lived and the constant communication with the other nations in the area, they created their own way of life and a distinct dialect, known as Pontic Greek.

For hundreds of years, they lived in peace with the rest of the people in the area, whatever their ethnicity or religion, but in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, things changed drastically.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was in turmoil. It had gone through a series of wars and revolutions and entered the First World War on the side of the Central Powers, along with the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The minorities of the Ottoman Empire, such as the Armenians



**Fyodor Yutchikhin (left) and  
Oysseas Dimitriadis**

and the Assyrians, were targeted, but the Greeks were not an exception. During the persecution, thousands of Greeks lost their lives and fled from their homes and land, where they had lived for many generations. The atrocities against these people were condemned by the international community and the genocide of the Greeks was later recognized by many countries like Sweden, Armenia, the Netherlands and Austria.

In 1994, the Greek parliament voted to make the May 19 a Day of Remembrance for the Greek genocide in Pontus; in 1998, voted the September 14 to make a Remembrance Day of the Greek genocide in Asia Minor.

Many of those who survived managed to escape to other countries. They arrived on the shores of Russia, and in Ukraine, the northern part of Greece, in Georgia, and even



**Moments from the events in Tbilisi**

in the USA. Their new lives were not easy, but they worked hard to become useful and productive members of their communities, while retaining their way of life and language.

Because of this mixture of different cultures, great men were born. Odysseas Dimitriadis was a classical music conductor of Greek descent who was born in Batumi, Georgia, in 1908. In 1980, he was given the honor of conducting the closing ceremony of the Moscow Summer Olympics. Russian astronaut Fyodor Yurchikhin was also born in Batumi to a family of Greek descent, and he has served as a crew member on the U.S. space shuttle and the International Space Station.

In 2019, as a student of the Aristotle

University of Thessaloniki, I participated in the events organized by the Union of Greek Communities of Georgia to honor the victims of the genocide of the Pontic Greeks that took place 100 years ago.

On the 18th of May in the Church of St. David in Tbilisi, a liturgy was performed in Greek and on the next day the main event took place at the great hall of the Union of Greek Communities of Georgia. At the beginning, one minute silence was observed for the 353.000 victims of this tragedy.

The Greek Ambassador Dimitrios Karabalis conveyed the greetings of the President of the Hellenic Republic, followed by a message from Ivan Savvidis, the President of the Federal National and Cultural Autonomy of Greeks of Russia and the Chairman of the Ivan Savvidis Foundation.

This message was read by Eugenia Kotanidi, who is now the President of the Association in Georgia. At the event, I was representing the Municipality of Langadas and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and passed along the greetings of the Mayor, Ioannis Karagiannis.

The story of this great tragedy was told that day through a speech and a film. But the highlight of the event was when the young

members of the Greek community, dressed in traditional Pontic cloths, entered the room. At the beginning, they started speaking in Pontic Greek, paying homage to this historic Greek dialect. Then, they started dancing to the sounds of the “Pontian Lyra”, the traditional instrument of the Pontic Greeks, and a girl sang a few traditional songs.

Initiatives like this are very important for two reasons. First, they bring together people from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures and we learn to respect each other. Both the Greek and the Georgian languages were used throughout the events. It also helps us to remember the past, so we will not repeat the same mistakes that will throw our countries once again into the flames of war. Only with respect for each other can we combine our powers to make something great. And this region can be great.

There are many examples of people born on the crossroads that bind east with west or north with south, and their achievements in science and arts are still celebrated. Thus, the Silk Roads will truly be a positive vehicle on the road to peace and prosperity.

**Angelos Larisis** is a student studying medicine in the Aristotile University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

# **Ossetian Genealogy: From Arya to Alan to Ir**

*Descendants of Scythians  
preserve proud heritage*

**By Richard Foltz**

National identity became something of a worldwide rage during the 20th century, and nowhere more so than in the former Soviet Union, particularly when the breakup of that multi-ethnic empire allowed for the resurgence among non-Russians of nationalist claims to territory and history.

The Ossetes, numbering less than a million and living in one of the world's most linguistically and culturally diverse regions, where they had intermingled with other groups for centuries, suddenly found that they could assert a heritage going back to the ancient Scythians, who dominated the vast Eurasian steppe for more than a millennium in ancient times, but also that others were



making competing claims to that legacy as well.

Given centuries of shared existence, it is only natural that the Ossetes would have much in common with Georgians, Circassians and Chechens, despite their very different origins. Trying to untangle their mutual connections is hardly a straightforward project, and it has led to much bitterness and even bloodshed. It is one thing to take pride in the glories of one's ancestors, but too often this leads to exaggeration, exclusivism, and counter-productive hostilities. I will attempt here to briefly characterize the validity of prevalent Ossetian notions regarding their own past in relation to that of their neighbors.

The Ossetes speak an Iranic language which is directly descended from that of the Scythians, diverse tribes of often warlike pastoral nomads who occupied the steppes

from Eastern Europe all the way to Mongolia during the first century BCE. They were known to the Greeks, the Persian and the Chinese, who all feared their military might as mounted archers. They were also known for producing magnificent gold jewelry, which was especially prized by the Greeks, with whom they traded in settlements around the Black Sea.

The Sarmatians were a Scythian group who interacted with the Romans, often fighting them but sometimes being coopted as cavalry into the Roman army. A Sarmatian contingent was settled by the Romans in Britain during the first century, and the Arthurian legends have been connected with them. A century later the Sarmatians come to be referred to in Latin sources as Alans, which is a phonetic transformation of the ethnonym “Aryan”, meaning “noble”, by which the diverse Iranic tribes referred to themselves. The Ossetes today call themselves “Ir” (adjectival form iron), and their country Iryston, but since the fall of the Soviet Union both North and South Ossetia have added the name “Alania” to their official designations. (“Ossetia” derives from the Georgian “Os-eti”, meaning “Land of the As”, the As being one of the Scythian tribes known from antiquity.)



**Scythian relies discovered in Gyeongju, capital of the ancient Korean Silla Kingdom**

Since the Ossetian language is indisputably Iranian and is descended from the Scythian/Sarmatian branch through medieval Alanic, of which a number of written examples exist, claims by contemporary Ingush, Kabardians and others to be the “true” descendants of the Alans would seem to be entirely spurious.

The fact that many clearly Iranic cultural elements are preserved in the heroic epic tradition of the Narts, which other Caucasian peoples also claim as their own, adds further weight to Ossetian claims vis-à-vis their non-Iranian (and hence non-Indo-European) neighbours.

On the other hand, the Ossetes have not spent the past two thousand years in a vacuum, and they have absorbed many Caucasian influences as well, to say nothing of their DNA. The tradition of families building stone towers (Russ. *bashnya*) in which they would hole up when under siege by invaders may go back as much as three thousand years, well before steppe-dwelling Aryan horsemen began to settle in the mountainous Caucasus two millennia ago.

And the Nart stories, which evolved organically over a long period through oral transmission until they finally began to be collected and written down by folklorists in the 19th century, contain many non-Indo-European layers, showing influences from all the other Caucasian peoples as well as Turks, Mongols, and Greeks. Racial and cultural purity are the chimeras of ignorant fanatics and should be dismissed out of hand by anyone genuinely seeking historical truth.



**Scythian-style kurgan, drinking horn and gold jewelry, capital of the ancient Korean Silla Kingdom**

The Alans' importance in history is generally underappreciated, except in the Caucasus, where everyone wants to claim them as their own unique ancestral heroes. In fact, medieval Europe was greatly shaped by the equestrian culture of the Alans, who settled throughout Britain, France, Italy, Spain, and across North Africa as far as modern Tunisia.

Scores of place names attest to their memory—Alainville, Alaincourt, Alençon, possibly even Catalonia (Goth-Alania)—as does the common proper name Alan (Fr. Alain). Ossetes today claim that Alans were everywhere: the Norse were actually Alans, I am frequently told, and there is a popular joke that evidence has recently been found of Alans on the moon.

Such notions are not always purely romantic, however. I was astonished during a visit to South Korea in October 2019 when touring the monuments of the famous Silla kingdom (flourished 7th-8th c.) near Gyeongju to see royal burial mounds (kurgans) that exactly resembled those left by the Scythians from Bulgaria to Kazakhstan.

The style of construction as well as of the burials themselves—kings laid out amidst their gold jewelry, accompanied by their favorite horse—seemed too close to that of the Scythians to be merely coincidental. On consulting with Korean historians I learned that they generally accept a Central Asian origin to this tradition.

In conclusion, both language and cultural traditions tie the Alans more closely to the Ossetes than to any of the other Caucasian peoples. The Ossetes can be considered as the direct descendants of the Alans, but, as a concession to the claims of the Kabardians and the Ingush, I would note that tribal nomadic confederations are typically quite fluid and multi-ethnic, assembling periodically for reasons that are primarily opportunistic. The best-known example is that of the Mongol horde, in which ethnic Mongols were vastly outnumbered by Turks

and others. The Alan armies were also most likely composed of different ethnicities speaking a variety of languages, but within such a mosaic clearly the Iranic element was dominant, and it is the Ossetes alone who have preserved this.

**Richard Foltz** is a professor at the department of religions and cultures in Concordia University, Canada.

# **The Mongolian horse culture**

**By T.Otgontuul and  
D.Otgontuya**

Horses have been domesticated since ancient times and used extensively in daily life, including for riding, loading, hunting, battling, and posting, as well as for transportation, food, and drink. Soon after domestication, horse racing was developed as a sport. Horses have forever been the best friends of men, and played an important role in the history of human beings.

Horses have always been valued everywhere, but the Mongolian traditional custom of respect for horses is unique among the many ethnic groups of the world. Mongolian history is the history of equestrians. The Mongols and their descendants, the ancient nomads of Central



Asia, established not only their own empire, but also other great dynasties, and shaped the destiny of the world, all with the aid of their strong horses. The nomadic Mongols created their own unique ‘horse culture’ thousands of years ago.

Horse culture covers a variety of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, such as horse equipment, objects, and artifacts. These include black and white banners made from horse mane and tail hairs, wristbands, bridles, and halters, as well as horse-headed fiddles, paintings, sculptures, and monuments made from horse skin. The intangible cultural heritage includes many horse related traditions derived from the long-term horse herding experience found in Mongolian folklore, songs, myths, and traditional medical science (e.g.,

the many medical research materials for the treatment of various horse diseases and injuries).

The knowledge, traditions and practices of Mongolian horses still exist today, not only in the hearts and spirits of the herders and nomadic cultures, but also in the ancient sources, books and scriptures. Mongolian horses differ from other horses due to the fact that they graze on open pastures during the four seasons of the year. Similarly, the unique Mongolian horse culture plays an important role in nomadic civilization, and many aspects of the study of Mongols and nomadic civilization are related directly and indirectly to horse culture.

There is no exaggeration in the Mongolian saying that “horses are smarter than humans”. There are too many interesting details about horses and horse culture to convey in this short article, but some of the most fascinating features of Mongolian horse herding can be considered. When I went to the countryside to ride horses with my friends from Korea and other countries, they were amazed when I told them about how a stallion on the Mongolian grasslands builds its herd and protects and leads them. They even wondered whether it was real or not. You might find it

amazing, too.

Horse herds are divided into large, medium, and small herds, depending on the number. They are also divided in terms of sex, classified as either stallions' herds or gelded horse herds. Steppe herds consist of fifty or sixty horses, while the mountain herds have fifteen to twenty horses. If the number exceeds these limits, then the herd will become harder to control. In a large herd of forty to fifty horses, there will be twenty mares and foals, as well as other horses, which creates one stallion herd, or perhaps a group of herds. One stallion herd can be understood as one family of horses.

A medium herd has perhaps thirty horses, including ten mares with foals, along with other horses. A young stallion typically mates with only five to six mares. Although horses have their own herds centered on the stallions, they also will stay close to other herds, while maintaining a certain distance. When foreigners see horses in the countryside, they always wonder why the horses cluster in this way in their separate groups.

The distinctive form of clustering means that they are one family. A typical stallion herd consists of mares with foals, two and three year old offspring, as well as other

horses. Stallions always guard their herds throughout the four seasons of the year. The critical task for the stallion is to keep its herd separate from other herds, and the stallion always leads the herd when they change the pastures or water holes.

A stallion also must protect his group from enemies. When wild animals such as wolves attack the herd, stallions gather their herds, raise their mane and tail hairs, and fight with the enemies by kicking and biting them in order to protect their herds. Stallions can be bitten by wolves and seriously injured in such fights. Some stallions do not even let “bad men” approach their herds. The central role of the stallion is a big difference between the way horse herds fight and cattle herds fight with wolves. Not all the members in the horse herd participate in the fight; all members in a cattle herd fight together. Only the lead stallion and a perhaps another stallion and mare or so will fight against wolves. In this way, horse herds sometimes lose their strength in a fight and lose some of their foals.

Stallions do not mate with their own three-year-old female offspring, so those young mares are forced to leave their original herd to join another herd. This behavior only happens within horse herds; it is very rare



for other animals to drive their relatives out from their own herds/family. Once their place is established, horses never leave their herds, and never get lost from their herds even if hundreds of horses are mixed in one place. Horses call each other by neighing, and the herd finds each other and come together as a group.

Horses generally are very friendly animals. During the breeding period, stallions may fight with each other. A stallion fight looks amazing, but it doesn't last long. Even if a fight for dominance occurs, rarely do opponents hurt each other in the wild, because the weaker combatant has a chance to flee.

The instinctive behavior of stallions is same as the traditional model for Mongolian men, who play a similar role in breeding and protecting their own families. The

Mongolian custom of worshipping their horses as a masculine symbol has remained an unchanging cultural feature from ancient times to the present day.

When you see a herd of horses galloping like the wind under the bright sun in the vast steppes of Mongolia, you may feel the peaceful paradise of the Mongolian countryside on the plains of Central Asia. (Maybe you will even take off your medical masks and enjoy a mental break from the COVID-19 pandemic which has been spreading rapidly around the world!) In the vast steppes, the ancient Mongols have kept up their customs and nomadic ways of lives as nowhere else in the world, and they have been able to live peacefully while enjoying the breeze of nature from the back of a horse.

If you want to know more, we kindly recommend you “Encyclopedia of Mongolian Horse” (two-volume) with need-to-know facts which published in 2016.

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# **Ayurveda – Boosting immunity to fight coronavirus**



**Vaidya Balendu Prakash**

The Sanskrit word *Ayurveda* is comprised of two words - Ayu (life) and Veda (knowledge). It is written in the Atharva Veda (the fourth Vedic collection and second oldest Indian text about mortal life) and was systematically developed from 6th century BC to 7th century AD. It was further nurtured and refined by great Indian sages, particularly among those living within forests and the surrounding Himalayas. The present-day Ayurveda is an outcome of their intuitive vision and their observation-based experiences, which have been penned in the Sanskrit language in various samhitas and granthas. Ayurveda is profoundly based on the principle of maintaining the health

of the healthy as well as treating the disease of the diseased. Thus, the principle of *Ayurveda*, by itself, depicts the whole philosophy of Ayurvedic concepts: first prevention, then treatment.

*Ayurveda* was written thousands of years ago using the resources, parameters, and protocols of those eras. This ancient wisdom of India emphasized healthy living to 100 years of age with all vitals in order (Canto 19; Sukta 67). However, it could only be possible by maintaining disciplined efforts. Therefore, *Ayurveda* has laid down routines under *Dincharya* (daily routine), *Ratricharya* (night routine), *Ritucharya* (seasonal routine), *Aaharcharya* (eating habits), and *Viharcharya* (lifestyle that relates to exercise, daily work, etc.). All these measures are essential for a strong metabolism and immune system at the cellular and humoral level. A person may follow Ayurvedic concepts of diet, lifestyle, and certain formulations, depending upon one's age, weather, area, clinical condition, and under physical/social/emotional stress to better maintain good health.

There are numerous examples of people who have lived one hundred years of healthy life by incorporating a disciplined lifestyle and dietary habits. Until the evolution of



**Giloy**  
(*Tinospora cordifolia*)



**Neem**  
(*Azadirachta indica*)



**Tulsi**  
(Basil, *Ocimum tenuiflorum*)

modern scientific gadgets, human beings had been living more closely with nature. However, certain factors, especially epidemic outbreaks manifested by bacteria or viruses, started affecting humanity badly, especially in poor and developing countries. Though the population there was habituated to such outbreaks, few people could sustain themselves well during those tumultuous times. Such pandemic outbreaks could be well understood as reflecting Darwin's theory of the evolution of life, "Survival of the fittest".

There is a close link between viruses and the human body. Scientists have identified

nearly forty trillion bacteria which are a part of human microbiome. It is commonly known that every bacteria can shelter nearly ten viruses. This would imply that a human body is inhabited by about four hundred trillion viruses. These viruses co-exist within the human body as an integral part of the body's metabolic system from birth till death, or even after. They actively participate in the body's metabolism in a healthy body, and trigger pathogenesis under certain conditions. The human body hosts nearly four hundred trillion viruses, and those could mutate further. Rhino-virus, corona virus, adeno virus, influenza virus, and parainfluenza virus are some of the most common viruses which affect humans, often at least once a year, and can cause occasional hay fever, influenza, H1N1, Spanish flu, bird flu, swine flu, SARS, and seasonal and allergic rhinitis. Most of these viruses are self-limiting, and the body heals on its own by using host body defense mechanisms. However, in some cases there might be progression in immunocompromised individuals who are either old, young, or have existing underlying diseases, which can lead to either serious illness or death.

Last year, China first reported a mutant

form of corona virus called COVID-19. Within months, COVID-19 spread to other parts of the world and brought significant mortality among the elderly population in the western world. The mortality rate was significantly higher among those with chronic ailments like diabetes mellitus, hypertension, heart disease, COPD, lung, and liver disorders. But nearly 90% people healed after getting initial treatment or taking preventive measures. In the absence of any preventive treatment, social distancing has been found the most effective tool in arresting the spread of the virus so far. Boosting immunity has also been emphasized. Scientists around the globe have been working to develop a vaccine or a unified treatment protocol to control the effect of this pandemic.

Here, I fully endorse such properties of *Ayurveda* and would call for the application of Ayurvedic concepts in prevention and treatment of COVID-19. I practice *RasShastra*, which is a branch of Ayurveda that deals with therapeutics of processed mercury, metals, and minerals. I have been successfully treating different forms of leukemia, chronic inflammatory, immunological, and metabolic disorders with sustainable effect. In the present



**Haldi  
(Turmeric)**



**Adrak  
(Ginger)**



**Amla  
(Indian gooseberry)**

context, a herbo-mineral formulation (HMF) was observed to have positive effects in the treatment of acute, seasonal, and persistent Allergic Rhinitis. The controlled clinical studies have shown significant and sustainable effect in patients with all forms of Allergic Rhinitis as compared to Levocetirizine. The HMF, which takes effect within two minutes of swallowing, has shown anti-histaminic (anti-allergic) and natural killer cell (immuno-modulatory) properties in in-vitro studies. HMF also has hepatoprotective, detoxifying, anti-inflammatory properties, and does not cause

any adverse effect up to three hundred times the recommended dose. Nowadays, HMF is commercially available through a large Indian Ayurvedic pharmaceutical company. I have been using and recommending this product in combination with gargling a boiled saturated salt solution in water with a few drops of vinegar twice every day. Apart from what I have mentioned above, there are many other Ayurvedic concepts (such as langhan, meaning fasting, drinking hot water, and using certain decoctions of herbs) which also have the same immuno-modulatory effects. The AYUSH Ministry of India, the Indian Medical Research Council, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research have invited extramural research projects for the validation of immuno-modulatory effects of Ayurvedic formulations, mainly of herbal origin.

Some herbs that are commonly used as immunity boosters are *giloy*, *neem*, *tulsi*, *adrak*, *haldi*, *paan*, *aloe vera*, and *amla*.

A recipient of fourth highest civilian award, *Padmashri*, from the President of India,

**Dr. Vaidya Balendu Prakash**

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# **Santa Maria della Salute in Venice: a votive church and the Black Death**

**By Martina Frank**

The Church of Santa Maria della Salute acts as an important landmark in the urban space of Venice and its large, unmistakable domed mass dominates the entrance to the Grand Canal just after St. Mark's. The history of the baroque style building is a reminder of the epidemics that repeatedly struck the city. In comparison to other cities, Venice was well prepared with regards to plagues. By 1423, the Senate of the Venetian Republic established a hospital – the first in the world – for the treatment of plague-infected people, on an island in the lagoon. Some fifty years later, the nearby island Lazzaretto Nuovo (New Lazaret) was equipped as place of quarantine for sailors suspected to be infected, arriving



## The high altar of the church of Santa Maria della Salute

Photos: Wolfgang Moroder



from various Mediterranean ports.

On October 26, 1630 in the midst of the bubonic plague, that caused the death of a third of the population, Doge Nicolò Contarini made a vow to construct a church to be dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In that

difficult situation, the Republic decided to have recourse to Mary's help, because the legend of the foundation of Venice tells that the mythical birth of the city took place by divine will on the feast of the Annunciation to Mary in the year 421.

After choosing the site for the church, an architectural competition took place. Many projects were presented, and after long debates in the Senate of the Republic, the project chosen belonged to 33 year old Baldassarre Longhena. Baldassarre described his project as a new, never before seen architecture, and stressed the symbolic meanings, starting with the choice of the octagonal plan whose shape recalls the crown of Mary, Queen of Heaven. Having opted for this plan and its giant dome meant facing technical and technological challenges. In particular, Venice's unstable and muddy soil required extensive work on the foundations, and special construction techniques that would guarantee the static stability of such monumental architecture. The building process was extremely long, and only in 1687, five years after the death of its architect, was the church consecrated.

Due to that long building process, new contents gradually found their way into the church, which enriched the original

meaning of the votive plague church. The high altar from 1670 makes this particularly clear. In the middle stands the Virgin Mary with the Child, on the left is the kneeling personification of the Venetia imploring her, and on the right an angel pushes the defeated Black Death into the abyss. Underneath, however, a Byzantine icon appears: it comes from the cathedral of Heraklion on Crete. When the Venetians had to abandon that city after losing the war against the Turks in 1669, they brought the icon with them.

Venice has been celebrating the cessation of the Black Death since November 21, 1631. Still today, the feast of the Madonna della Salute is one of the most authentic festivals in Venice.

**Martina Frank** is a professor at the Department of Philosophy and Beni Culture in Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy.

# Camels: The bridge between Eastern and Western cultures

By Maryam Bolouri

Animals are an essential part of the story of the Silk Roads. One of the most useful animals to humans has been the camel, especially essential to this day through their presence on the Silk Roads. The Silk Roads became a prominent trading route while China was under the rule of the Han dynasty and the area of modern Iran was being ruled by Parthians. As a trade route establishing business between the East and West, its development was vital to the economies of both regions. Hence, Parthians started to use two-humped Bactrian camels across the vast reaches of the land route between East and West.

Camels possess some unique characteristics

which made them an ideal animal for travelling along the Silk Roads. These features and abilities include:

- Carrying as much as 300 pounds or 136 kilograms of weight (more weight than horses or donkeys can manage)
- Traveling for extremely long distances without rest or water (up to six weeks)
- Adaptations for to harsh desert conditions (cold steppes and inhospitable deserts)
- Drinking large quantities of water very quickly (200 liters or 53 gallons in three minutes)
- Functioning as an effective anti-cavalry weapon in battles (camels typically alarm and disorient horses)
- Having a musty-earthy smell that fools insects, leading the insects to search in vain for a drink, resulting in the accidental pollination of flowers
- Having thick lips, which allow them to forage for thorny plants that other animals can't eat (living on dried leaves, seeds, and thorny twigs)
- Having thick pads of skin on their chest and knees, allowing them to sit in very hot sand
- Shutting their nostrils during sandstorms
- Having a highly sensitive nose that smells water at distances of more than 75km
- endure the major temperature changes of the desert, from the sweltering heat of the

- Sleeping standing up to stay away from predators (for up to six hours per night).

Artifacts depicted a clear picture of the extent to which camels were utilized on land routes of the Silk Roads. Figurines have been discovered among Parthian, Chinese, and Roman remains that portrayed the same two-humped camels. Camels appear even in early Chinese poetry, Arab poetry, and the oral epics of Turkic people in Central Asia, often in a metaphorical sense.

This was significant from two respects. First, it explained the value of this animal to the civilizations all along the Silk Roads, and, second, it signified a connection between the different locations. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that the trade and economic expansion of the Silk Roads have been dependent on this indefatigable animal.

There is ample evidence that three types of camels were bred for use along the Silk Roads, especially in the Arabian breeding areas. The three breeds of camels include a one-humped shaggy camel, a two-humped shaggy camel, and a camel with one long hump containing a shallow dip in the center of the hump. The humps function the same way, storing fat

to be converted to water and energy when sustenance is not available. Concentrating body fat in their humps helps the camels to survive in hot climates. If fat had distributed over the rest of their bodies, it would have minimized the insulating effect. These various breeds provide evidence of humans endeavoring to work to develop camels with high capacity for carrying loads and the ability to travel in far-stretching caravans, winding through the rugged terrains.

Although there was simply no other creature with its abilities for travel on the Silk Roads, individual camels did not always benefit from their contributions to human civilization. In dangerous conditions, caravans often would lose their way, and many camels died from thirst and starvation. As we celebrate the Silk Roads exchange, we should remember that a great many camels perished from the heavy burdens, and failed breeding experiments, that were part of that historic cultural achievement.

**Maryam Bolouri** is Ph.D. candidate of applied linguistics in Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran.

# Taus – the Indian bowed string instrument

By Sumit Kumar

A compact and lighter version of the taus, called the dilruba (also known as dilrupa), was created by Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh guru. The design was created so that the instrument can be carried more conveniently by the Sikh Army on horseback. In comparison to the taus, the dilruba has a medium sized sitar-like neck with 20 heavy metal frets holding 12 to 15 metal sympathetic strings (also known as taraf strings). There are 4 main strings which are often bowed using a stretched piece of goatskin as the sound board. The dilruba was popularized outside of India in the 1960's by The Beatles, on tracks like "Within You Without You".

*Esraj* is a modern, slightly smaller variant



of dilruba. Apart from the 12 to 15 metal taraj strings, it possesses 2 or 3 jawari strings which produce a more piercing sound, helping the artist to emphasize on Vadi, Samvadi, and Nayeshwar notes.

*The taus* and its modified, lighter forms, the dilruba and esraj, are very popular instruments in the North Indian regions of Punjab. It is used in Sikh music, as well as in Hindustani classical compositions, in the music from West Bengal.

Esraj is found in two forms throughout Indian subcontinent. It is the main accompanying instrument for Rabindra Sangeet in Shantiniketan, and Rabindranath Tagore made esraj mandatory for all students of Sangeet Bhavna of Shantiniketan.

Invented about 300 years ago, these instruments gradually lost their popularity,

and by 1980's, the instrument became nearly extinct. However, due to the “Gurmat Sangeet Movement”, these instruments are again attracting attention.

**Sumit Kumar** is the founder of the law firm “Due Legal” (<http://delhilegal.in/>) Outside of his legal practice, his hobbies include singing, performing, and learning about Indian music and heritage.

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# Hanbok, a traditional Korean dress

By Ju-hyung Lee

Traditional dress represents the history and life of a country. ‘Hanbok’ is the term for traditional dress in Korea. It is classified according to its purposes, either as everyday dress or ceremonial dress.

If we were to go back in time 100 years, everyone would be wearing hanbok as their daily attire. The colors symbolized social position and marital status. An unmarried woman would wear a yellow Jeogori (top) and red Chima (skirt). Commoners would wear white dresses.

Today, hanbok is considered as a formal clothing, only worn during special occasions, such as a child’s first birthday or a wedding.



**Colorful  
childrens  
hanbok on  
display at a  
wholesale  
market.**

© Rowan Peter / Ficker (CC BY-SA 2.0)

This cultural practice is common in many countries along the Silk-Road. In Russia, traditional dress can only be seen during ethnic holidays. Romanian folk costumes are reserved for holidays and folk dances.

There are, however, some countries, such as Mongolia, that continue the practice of wearing traditional attire in their everyday lives. Of course, there have been modifications to traditional dress so that they are easier to wear and suitable to modern fashion trends. In a similar way, modernized and fashionable hanbok is getting attention from foreign visitors to Korea, as well as from celebrities. World-famous BTS band members wore stylish hanbok in the music video for 'Idol'.

Let's examine the beauty of the Korean traditional dress and other traditional dresses



**Moon Embracing the Sun.** © Newsis

along the Silk-Road. At first glance, you will be amazed at how vibrant the colors and sophisticated the patterns are. Traditional hanboks were designed in a way that corresponds with the five elements of the yin and yang theory: white (metal), red (fire), yellow (earth), blue (wood) and black (water). Bright colors were generally worn by children and girls, and muted hues by middle-aged men and women. If you watched a Korean historical drama, such as "Moon Embracing the Sun," you would notice some differences in the hanbok designs of commoners, upper classes, and the royal family.

The upper classes wore hanbok in a variety of colors made of lightweight materials in

warmer months, and plain and patterned silks throughout the rest of the year. On the other hand, commoners' hanbok designs were white and the material was restricted to cotton.

On special occasions, commoners were dressed in shades of grey, charcoal, pale pink, and light green on special occasions. The patterns embroidered on hanbok represent the wishes of the person who wore the hanbok. For instance, lotus flowers symbolized hope for nobility while bats and pomegranates showed a desire for children. If you look closely at the royal family's attire, you will see special patterns. The dragons, phoenixes, cranes, and tigers were embroidered only in hanbok for royalty and high-ranking officials.

Today, traditional hanbok is worn on special occasions and celebrations such as Weddings and the Lunar New Year. If you turn on Korea's news channel on the Lunar New Year, you will see announcers and weather forecasters wearing hanbok. Traditional hanboks are quite difficult to wear while contemporary hanboks are easier. Contemporary hanboks are designed as

casual wear in that the skirts are shorter and the clothing is lighter than the traditional ones. In any form, whether it is traditional or contemporary, hanbok



continues to be an exquisite cultural heritage of Korea.

Change in traditions is a common development as countries engaged in trade; the influx of new imports changed the trends and lifestyles of local populations. Clothing was not an exception. Western fashion styles were adopted in many countries. However, in some countries along the Silk-Road, like Mongolia, India, and Sri Lanka, many people continued to wear traditional dress in their homes and workplaces. Mongols and other nomadic tribes of Central Asia wear deel, boots and other accessories in their everyday lives.

In India, women wear traditional saris made of cotton, silk, or factory blends. Salwar kameez is an outfit comprised of a pant and long-tailed shirt made of lightweight fabrics. Men wear dhoti or lungi, a loose shorts-type

wrap. In Sri Lanka, the traditional Kandyan saree is worn by women for all types of events, and office women and school teachers routinely wear sarees. In ceremonies, Sri Lankan women wear sarees that are colorful, bright and ornate. Sri Lankan men wear sarongs, which are pieces of cloth wrapped around their waist.

You will also find business men wearing modern sarongs with pockets. In South Asia, Mongolia, and Central Asia, people wear often traditional dresses in their daily lives. The degree to which men and women wear traditional styles of dress differs according to the customs, history, and even location within a country. Nonetheless, clothing traditions continue to be part of the rich culture in the modern times.

Traditional dress reflect the lifestyles and histories of a nation. Hanbok has a variety of styles, colors, and patterns that have different symbols and meanings. Traditional dresses in countries along the Silk-Road continue to be a significant symbol and tradition of those countries. Currently, many traditional clothes are evolving and becoming modernized. You will find people wearing modernized versions

of hanbok in Korea and in foreign countries.

If you get a chance to visit a foreign country, make sure to visit a retail shop and feel the beauty of the traditional attire with your own hands. You could go to a nearby retail shop, get dressed in hanbok, or get your hair done with Daenggi – a traditional Korean ribbon made of cloth to tie and decorate braided hair. Go to traditional sites like Buckon Hanok Village or the Gyeongbokgung Palace and take photographs. These experiences will let you feel the beauty of hanbok, and get a glimpse of the rich culture and tradition of Korea.

**Ju-hyung Lee** studies education at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea.

# The symbol of Uzbek cuisine – Plov (Pilaf)

By Nasrullaev Javohirkhon  
Ravshankhonovich

“A poor man eats plov, a rich man eats only plov.” – Uzbek proverb Uzbek cuisine is rich with more than thousand national dishes. There are 70-80 recipes for shurpa (soup). There are many types of bread and confectionery. And there are at least at the various

Plov has always been considered the favorite and most honored dish in Uzbekistan. This dish, an indispensable component of which is rice, has been known since time immemorial. Even in the 10th and 11th centuries, plov was prepared from rice of the "devzira" variety.

Amir Temur, the great ruler, himself

included plov as a staple for his soldiers. During one campaign, he was concerned with feeding a large army, moving quickly on a long road to conduct a surprise attack without huge food carts. Then, a wise Mullah suggested to him the recipe for this delicious, nutritious, satisfying dish.

His words were as follows: “We need to take a large cast-iron boiler. It should be so old that the fat from the previous food oozed out and blazed from the flashes of fire falling on it. In this cauldron should be put the meat of a lamb, not old, but not very young, along with selected rice, swollen with pride that will be eaten by brave warriors, young carrots, and sharp onions, stinging like the sword

## Plov



of the most revered Emir. All this should be cooked over a fire until the smell of the prepared dish reaches Allah, and the cook falls down in exhaustion, because he will taste the divine dish.” From one cup of this dish, the soldiers gained strength for several days, and Tamerlane's army easily won the victory.

By the 15th century, plov was considered a ceremonial dish; it was commonly served at weddings. The Uzbek name of plov is "Palov osh" - an abbreviation of the initial letters of the main ingredients that make it up: P (piyoz) - onion; A (Ayozi) - carrot; L (lakhm) - meat; O (Olio) - fat; V (vet) - salt; O (Ob) - water; Sh (Shaly) - rice. Seven ingredients, like seven musical notes, in different combinations play completely different shades of taste.

Plov, the symbol of Uzbek cuisine, is considered both a festive and an everyday dish. In each region of Uzbekistan, plov is prepared in its own way - not only do the ingredients differ but also the order of their preparation, the degree of roasting, methods of preparing and processing rice, etc. Uzbeks try to use Khorezm rice, a large grain with a special "pearl" luster, and yellow carrots. Uzbek plov has a piquant taste due to spices,

zira, and barberry, and sometimes saffron is added. [uzbeks try to use Khorezm rice, a large grain with a special "pearl" luster, yellow carrots,, zira, barberry, and sometimes saffron.

Traditionally, plov is usually prepared by women when in the home, and by men at public meals. Men considered it mandatory to be able to cook plov, and this art was often a matter of pride and competition. After the meal it is recommended to drink hot tea which promotes proper digestion.

By all means, every guest of Uzbekistan should try plov from different regions and determine the favorite!

**Nasrullaev Javohirkhon**

**Ravshankhonovich** is a graduate student and system administrator of the Information Systems Department of the Information Technology centre Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, Uzbekistan.



Petra by night (Khazneh)

## TRAVEL

# Petra, a Jordanian architectural wonder

By Salameh Naimat

Deep within a Jordanian desert canyon lays an ancient treasure, the stone city of Petra, the capital of the Nabataean Arabs, carved directly into vibrant red, white, pink and sandstone cliffs. The city of Petra is one of



### **The Siq by night**

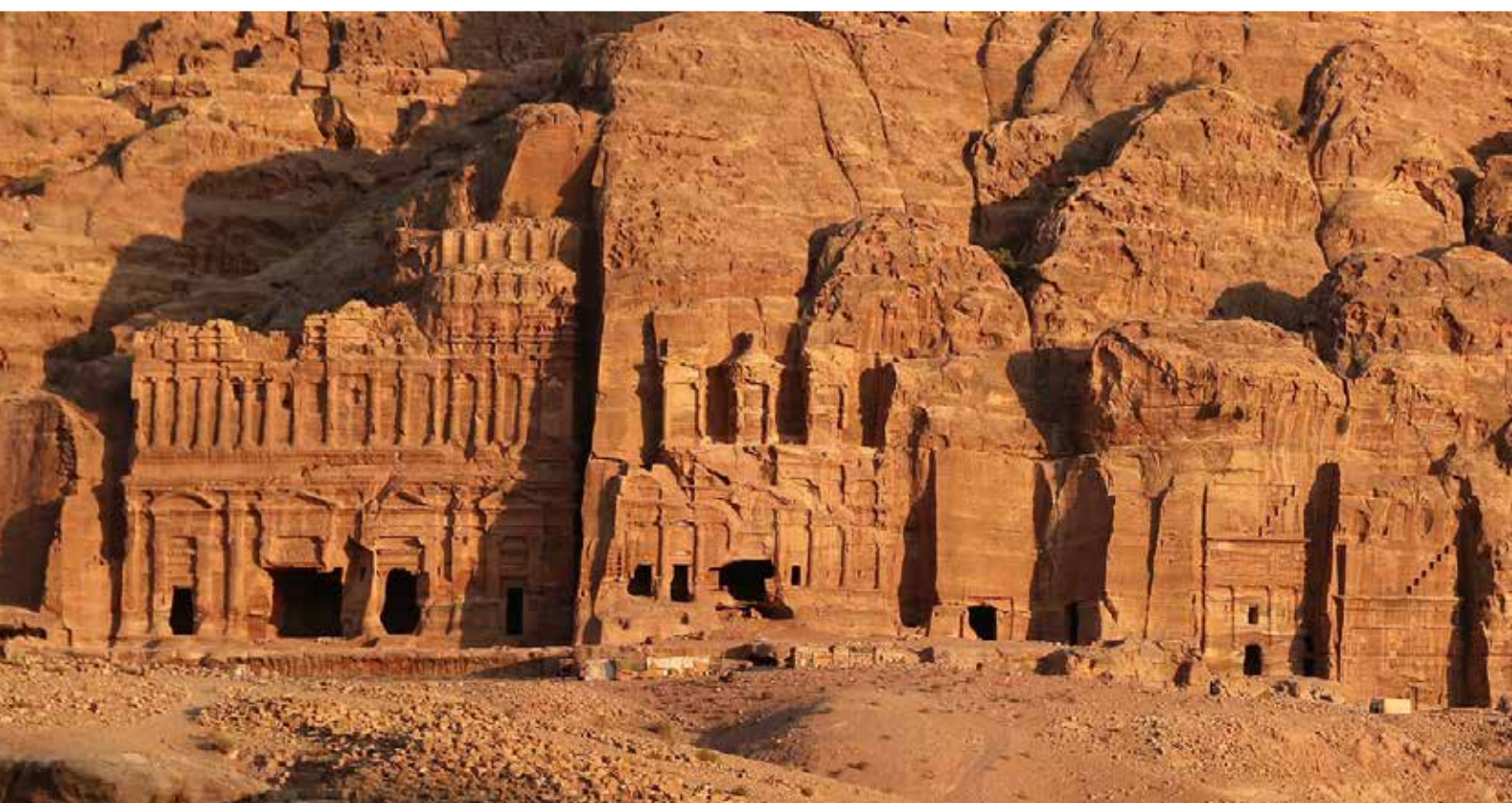
the most famous archaeological sites in the world. Located 240 km south of the capital Amman and 120 km north of the Red Sea town of Aqaba, Petra is undoubtedly Jordan's most valuable treasure and greatest tourist attraction, with visitors from all over the world. It is not known precisely when Petra was built, but the city began to prosper as the capital of the Nabataen Empire in the 1st century BC. This ancient city grew rich through trade in frankincense, myrrh, and spices, and was later annexed by the Roman

Empire. The city continued to thrive until 363 A.D., when a large, devastating earthquake destroyed much of the city.

The earthquake, combined with changes in trade routes, eventually led to the downfall of the city. By the middle of the 7th century A.D., Petra appears to have been largely deserted. In 1812, a Swiss explorer named Johannes Burckhardt set out to “rediscover” Petra. After his discovery, Petra became increasingly known as a fascinating and beautiful ancient city, and it began attracting visitors, which it continues to do to this day. On December 6, 1985, Petra was designated a world heritage site by UNESCO and in 2007, it was chosen as one of the seven new wonders of the world.

When you arrive in Petra, you will enter through a narrow natural corridor known as the “Siq.” The first building you will see at the

### **Tombs (Royal tombs)**





## Monastery

end of the Siq is the “Khazneh” (treasury). Most likely constructed in the 1st century B.C., it is perhaps the best architectural site in Petra, standing 40 meters high and decorated with Corinthian capitals, friezes, figures, and more. The Khazneh comprises three chambers, a middle chamber with one on either side, and features an elaborately carved façade that represents the Nabataean genius. It is crowned by a funerary urn, which according to local legends conceals the pharaoh’s treasure, but in reality the urn represented a memorial for royalty.

The purpose of the Khazneh is unclear. Some archaeologists believe it to be a temple

while others believe it to be a place to store documents. The most recent excavation, however, has unearthed a graveyard beneath the structure.

Entering deeper into the city, you will see more sites and magnificent buildings, many of which are tombs. There is also a theatre, a colonnaded street and the incredible architecture of temples, and at the far end of Petra you will face 850 steps leading up to the famous Monastery.

Our knowledge of this historic site continues to grow. Recently, archeologists discovered many churches which were built during the Byzantine Empire, which came after the Romans and controlled the area until the Islamic conquest. There is still much to learn about this masterpiece from the past.

**Dr. Salameh Naimat** is a professor and the director of the Center of Archives, Manuscripts and Bilad al-Sham Studies at University of Jordan.



Valley of Castles

**TRAVEL**

# Charyn Canyons, a natural wonder of Kazakhstan

**By Alexandr Artemyev**

Charyn River Canyons is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Kazakhstan. The Canyons are located in the Almaty region, 200 km east of the country's largest city – Almaty. The most visited tourist



## Valley of Castles

attraction in the Canyons is the “Valley of Castles” – a unique place to contemplate ancient towers, ramparts, grottoes, domes, and stone wells, all created by nature itself over 10 million years ago.

The sedimentary rocks that make up the slopes of the gorge have a reddish tint, which is why this place is sometimes called the "Red Canyon". It is especially beautiful in spring, when the awakening steppe is full of herbs and flowers, contrasting with the blue sky and fiery rocks. During this season, the river water is transparent and the turanga (*Populus diversifolia*), saxaul (*Haloxylon*) and relict ash (*Fraxinus Sogdiana*) (which is more than 5 million years old) seem to be piercingly

green.

In the book "Geographical names in the mountains of Central Asia" by the famous Soviet and Kazakh scientist-geographer A.P. Gorbunov, two theories are given regarding the origins of the name "Charyn River." One theory posits that the word "Sharyn" (Charyn) has ancient Uygur roots and translates as "ash". The relict ash tree perhaps could have inspired the name of the river. The other theory derives from the Turkic word "sharyn" meaning a river with a fast flow, not meeting obstacles. Indeed, the river Charyn is quite turbulent and willful. This characteristic of the river attracts many rafting enthusiasts not only from Kazakhstan, but also from other countries, offering routes up to the most difficult category of complexity.

The "Valley of Castles" gorge itself is not very long, only about three kilometers, but is very picturesque. Starting from the observation platforms above the canyon, from an inter-mountain steppe plateau down to the river, where the height of the canyon walls reaches 150 meters. As you travel along the bottom of the gorge with the traces of spring floods, you can enjoy the ever-

changing pictures of the slopes and quaint stone sculptures and feel the serenity of this unique natural landscape.

Since 2004, the area is protected and has the status of a State National Natural Park. There are almost a thousand plant species in the flora of the Charyn National Park, over 50 of which are rare or endemic. The park's fauna includes 32 mammal species, 18 herpetofauna species, 4 amphibian species and more than 100 bird species.

For most travelers, the "Valley of Castles" is associated with the Grand Canyon in the United States. One can often hear a comparison that Charyn's canyons are a "Grand Canyon in Miniature". The canyons of the river Charyn however, are anything but small – the length of the canyon is about 150 kilometers long and the depth of the precipitous slopes roughly 300 meters deep.

The Charyn Canyons, like their United States counterpart, have their own aura, a mystical attraction. Perhaps that's why a number of “castles” adjacent to the "Valley of Castles" have quite unusual names: "Witch gorge", "Dragon gorge", "Black rocks". These names were born not so long ago – appearing

at the time when active tourist development began in the 1970's. At the same time, old legends are constantly updated and told in new ways, "warming up" tourist interest in this unusual place. It should be noted that in recent years, the number of foreign visitors to the national park exceeds the number of domestic tourists, another confirmation of its uniqueness as a natural monument of global importance.

It is no coincidence that those who have been here once, tend to come back again and again.

**Alexandr Artemye** who provided the article and photos is a senior lecturer and the head of the Department of Recreational Geography and Tourism at Al- Farabi Kazakh National University.

**Dyliara Woodward** who translated the article into English is an assistant professor of the Department of Recreational Geography and Tourism at Al- Farabi Kazakh National University.



## TRAVEL

# Petaling Street, home for Chinese immigrants

By Adziim Khaidir

One look at the picture above and you might think that you're in China. A closer observation, however, unearths something more; the shop signs are adorned with English, Chinese, and Bahasa Melayu (the

national language of Malaysia). Petaling Street, located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur's bustling downtown scene, was the landing point of many Hakka and Cantonese settlers from China. The migration of Chinese settlers to Petaling Street was the result of the 1800's tin rush and policies of the British, who as the colonial power in Malaya encouraged the Chinese to work as tin miners.

The Chinese immigrants soon settled in the towns of Malaya, where they opened family-run businesses. Petaling Street has long been popular for its shops, hawker food, and Chinese temples. Also known as “Chee Cheong Kai”, meaning “Tapioca Mill Street” or “Starch Factory Street,” this Cantonese alias



originated from the tapioca factory owned by Yap Ah Loy, one of the founders of Kuala Lumpur. The factory, and coincidentally Petaling Street, was built to serve as a source of additional income for Chinese settlers as the tin mines in Kuala Lumpur closed due to natural disasters. Besides serving as the historical economic lifeline for the Chinese community, Petaling Street is also one of the oldest roads built in Kuala Lumpur.

The Chinese traders in Petaling Street, while successful within their own ethnic community, soon understood that in order for their businesses to thrive further, it was important for them to adapt to the local culture. Accessibility was key in securing sustainable profits, so the traders could not afford to seclude themselves by only speaking Chinese languages. With the use of English and Malay in their day-to-day business dealings, the traders have been successful in their business ventures on top of preserving their own ethnic identity, even to this day. The story of this successful multilingual business model should serve as an important component in the larger blueprint of the new Silk Road vision.

As one of the earliest roads built in Kuala Lumpur, it has always been easy to find your way to Petaling Street. Thanks to the extensive public transportation network, Petaling Street in 2020 is more connected than ever. Starting from Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), take a twenty-eight-minute ride on the KLIA Express Rail Link (ERL) Transit train to Station KL Sentral. Self-service kiosks are conveniently placed at the airport train station. Once you have arrived at Station KL Sentral, you will just need to catch the LRT train along the Kelana Jaya railway line that will take you to Station Pasar Seni. Feel free to ask random strangers, “Station Pasar Seni?”; they will be more than happy to lend you a helping hand. The final and easiest step is to simply take a two-minute walk from Station Pasar Seni to Petaling Street – you really can’t miss the lantern-covered sky!

**Adziim Khaidir** is a student of Department of English at University of Malaya, Malaysia.



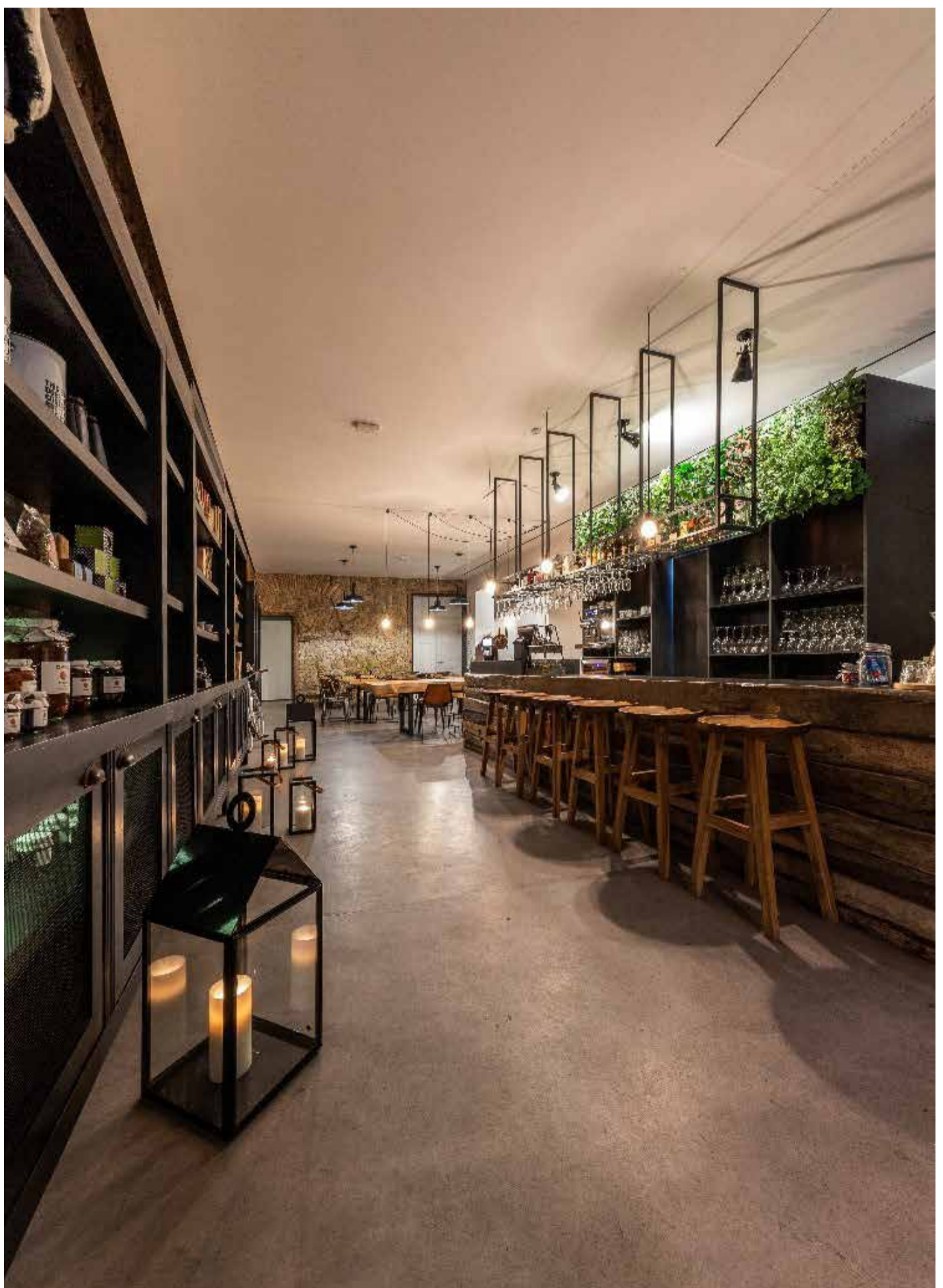
## TRAVEL

# Sapientia Boutique Hotel

By Jose Manuel Portugal

The Sapientia Boutique Hotel is the only hotel located in the heart of the magnificent University of Coimbra, an institution classified as World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Built right in the historic center of Coimbra,

the hotel is located right next to the magnificent Joanina Library, the University Tower, the Old Cathedral, the Machado de Castro Museum and the Botanical Garden, among many other symbols of the city's history. In addition to this desirable location, the hotel is also connected to the downtown area of Coimbra by narrow streets and alleys, picturesque portraits of a city over a thousand years old.



Completely integrated in the majestic scenery of University life, it allows for history to be discovered in every corner of its three interconnected buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries, with 22 units, each with their own unique identity.

In order to pay tribute to Portuguese literature and emphasize the cultural wealth and heritage of the city, each unit was assigned the name of a writer linked to Coimbra, to the University, and to its literary “tertúlias,” a social gathering with literary or artistic overtones. (“Tertúlia” also means an informal meeting of people to talk about current affairs, arts, etc.)

From poets to novelists, from classic authors to post modernists, the main Portuguese writers and poets are represented in the Sapientia Boutique Hotel, which was designed for those moments when we want to feel much beyond what is written in the poems or even beyond what can be said.

The Hotel’s rooftop “Full of Stars” is a place of emotion and perfect for shared sensations. With a 360-degree view, it is one of the best places to take in the historic city, where guests can enjoy a relaxing and sensational sunset

and a refreshing late afternoon drink.

**Jose Manuel** is a former professor of the Department of Journalism and Communication at the University of Coimbra.



## TRAVEL

# HOLI: The Festival of Colors

By Abhigyan Sharma

Holi is one of the most famous festivals of India, known as the festival of colors. It is celebrated for two days at the end of the winter season, and marks the oncoming of the harvest season of crops that are grown in

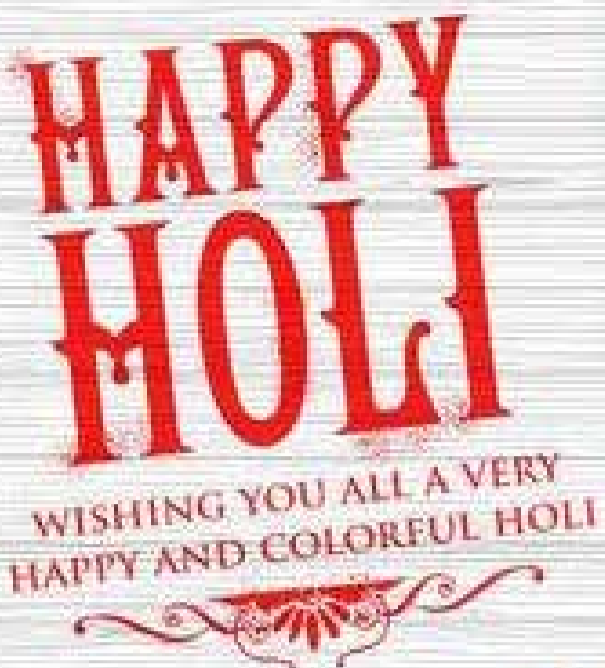
winter (wheat, barley, peas, and lentils). The night before Holi, a big bonfire is lit where people offer prayers and toss sweets into the fire. They pray for a healthy and peaceful year, and pay respect to the fire god. One of the oldest festivals in India, there are many mythological and legendary stories about the origin of this festival, but the most popular are known as *Holika Dahan* and the Legend of *Radha-Krishan*.

## **A Festival of Brotherhood**

The festival of Holi helps bring society together and strengthens secularity in our country. People forget their hardships, and even turn their enemies into friends. On this day, no one is differentiated as both rich and poor or on the grounds of caste, and everybody celebrates the festival together in a spirit of brotherhood. People visit their loved ones and exchange gifts and sweets. This helps in revitalizing relationships and strengthens the emotional bonds between people.

## **Food Festivity**

Holi is also very famous for the extensive range of delicious cuisine (vegetarian & non-vegetarian) and special kind of sweets (gujiya, malpua) and snacks (dahi vada/bhalla) from



# Love, Love and Love

of relationships by giving the opportunity to spend time together with our family and friends. Holi reminds us that everyone in this world is equal and deserving of love, and therefore we should embrace everyone with love and harmony.

**Abhigyan Sharma** is a student at  
Bal Bharati Institute, New Delhi

# SUN NEWS

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## The 5th General Assembly of SUN

The 5th General Assembly of SUN was held at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty, Kazakhstan from September 18 to 21, 2019. It was held in parallel with the event, QS Worldwide 2019. More than 500 participants including rectors, presidents, chancellors and vice-chancellors, professors and students of 23 member universities of SUN, government officials and prominent leaders of public organizations in Kazakhstan exchanged their own ideas, shared their own experiences, and





strengthened their friendship and network with other member universities particularly under the theme ‘Role of Universities for Transforming the Silk Roads into Peace Roads with Prominent Human Heritages’. The General Assembly started with culturally splendid welcoming reception dinner hosted by Rector Galimkair Mutanov (photo) of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. Award ceremonies for the 4th Photo Contest of SUN (PHOCOS) and 3rd Writing Contest of SUN (WRICOS) were conducted as a special program of this welcoming reception dinner in the evening of September 19. Participants in the General Assembly meeting held next day approved as appropriate the official report of activities of SUN and the financial accounting report of SUN since the 4th General Assembly of SUN both of which were presented by Secretary General Sungdon Hwang (Professor of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea). Action plans for 2020 proposed by



SG Hwang were also approved as official SUN projects. Approved as new projects of SUN are Designation of the Silk Roads Heritage Cities and Universities; a speech contest incorporated into DECOS (the debate contest of SUN), the Silk Roads Summer Language and Culture Camp at SUN member universities; the Annual Silk Roads Tourism Convention. The participants decided to award a certificate that recognizes the historical relevance and importance of the Province of Gyeongsangbuk-do and the City of Gyeongju, Korea in development of the ancient Silk Roads. Held outside the venue of the General Assembly was the Silk Road Student Cultural Festival in which foreign students studying at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University coming from diverse countries along the Silk Roads participated in collaboration with Kazakh students of the university. Student

participants of the General Assembly of SUN participated in the General Assembly of the United Students of SUN (USSUN) which is the student body of SUN. Activities of USSUN as a whole as well as those of USSUN branches at member universities of SUN were reported and diverse projects of collaboration and cooperation were proposed, discussed, and adopted by the participants. Thanks to sincere help by Dr. Evelyn Khor, the advisor of USSUN and Ms. Maryam Bolourie, the Secretary General of USSUN, the meeting proceeded smoothly and productively. Participants in the General Assembly of USSUN elected Mr. Mohamad Rasooli, a student of Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran as the President of USSUN for the year 2020. The General Assembly of SUN ended while designating Ankara University, Turkey as the official host organization of the 6th General Assembly of SUN in 2020 and adopting a manifesto called "the Almaty Manifesto of SUN" regarding SUN's understanding of the concept of the Silk Roads, the values of the ancient Silk Roads for civilizations now and future and the roles of universities as combined intellectual forces for peace and co-prosperity along the Silk Roads and eventually in the whole world.

# International Academic Conference and IASS GA

The 5th Annual International Academic Conference and General Assembly of the International Association for Silk-Road Studies (IASS) were held from September 26 to 28, 2019 at Moscow State



Linguistic University in Moscow, Russia. Thanks to Professor Irina Kraeva (photo), the President of IASS and the Rector of this university, the conference and the General Assembly was possible to be held successfully. Under the overall topic of the conference, “Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Languages and Ideas,” more than 250 professors, researchers and graduate students coming from 28 universities and research institutes in 12 Silk Road countries participated. 31 papers were presented and discussed. The paper, “The Silk Road and Gyeongju” written by Dr. Su-il Chung and presented by Professor Sungdon Hwang was selected as the best IASS research paper of the year. The certificate of this honor was delivered to Dr. Chung with a cash prize



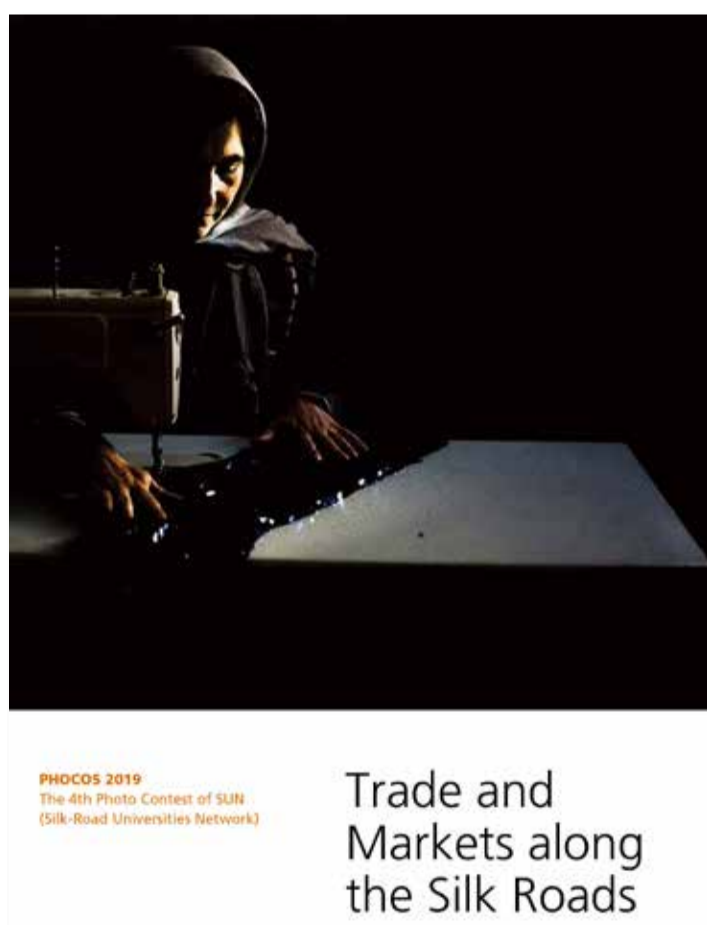
of one million Korean Won (approximately equivalent to USD \$800) by Secretary General Hwang of SUN on January 31, 2020 at the governor's office of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea. The General Assembly of IASS was held and closed with an election of Dr. Bat Ireedui, a professor of the National University of Mongolia as the President of IASS for the year 2021. It was announced by Professor Ertan Gokmen, President of IASS in 2020 that the 6th Annual International Conference and General Assembly of IASS will be held in Dubai as hosted by Canadian University Dubai in 2020. The Conference and the General Assembly of IASS were closed with a unanimous adoption of a manifesto, called "the Moscow Manifesto of IASS" the content of which was exactly the same as the one adopted at the 5th General Assembly of SUN held one week before at Almaty, Kazakhstan.

## 5th photo and writing contests

The 5th PHOCOS and WRICOS in 2019 were held successfully with the active participation of our member universities. In the PHOCOS, 60 students from 18 different universities submitted more than 200 photos with the theme ‘Trade and Markets along the Silk Roads’. Elaha Sahel from Herat University, Afghanistan won the first prize, showing the bitter life-history of womanhood. In the WRICOS, 65 students from 15 countries submitted their own creative poem about father or essay about Peace along the Silk Roads. Li Ke from Beijing Foreign Studies University, China won the Grand Prize in the poem section with her work titled ‘Bo Wang’, which stands out in its delicate



sensory expression. The Grand Prize in the essay section went to Ablofazl Amanian from Allahmeh Tabataba'i University, Iran, writing about suggestions for the peace along the Silk Roads.



**(top): Exhibition of prize-winning works of the Fourth PHOCOS was held at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, the place of the Fifth General Assembly of SUN.**  
**(bottom, left and right): The booklets for the Fourth PHOCOS and the Third WRICOS.**

# The 1st Debate Contest of SUN (DECOS)

The 1st Debate Contest of SUN (DECOS) was held at the campus of University of Bucharest, Romania from October 7 to 11, 2019. This event was adopted as an official annual event of SUN by the participants in the 4th General Assembly of SUN held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in 2018. Four universities (University of Bucharest as a host of the event; Beijing Foreign Studies University, China; Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea; and Moscow State Linguistic University, Russia) sent their representative students to the contest. Four students per university (16 students in total) participated in the contest as a team. The contest was done as a league of team competition. Professors of the University



of Bucharest contributed to the event as referees. Gold medals were awarded to the students



representing Hankuk University of Foreign Studies while silver medals to those from University of Bucharest and bronze both to those from Moscow State Linguistic University and those from Beijing Foreign Studies University. Thanks to Professor Liviu Papadima, Vice-rector of the University of Bucharest, who exerted an initiative leadership and generous supports for this event, participants were able to build friendship with students in different cultures, to have an over-night tour of the beautiful Peles Castle and its surroundings and to enjoy a wonderful farewell dinner at a special restaurant for traditional Romanian food.



# Workshop for Universal Silk Roads Map

The 4th SUN Workshop for Drawing a Universal Map of the Silk Roads was held at the campus of Uzbekistan State University of World Languages (USUWL), Tashkent, Uzbekistan from September 11 to 13, 2019. It was co-hosted by USUWL and SUN and sponsored by Provincial Government of Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea. Initiated as an official five year joint research project of SUN in 2017, experts of member universities and research institutes in the diverse fields of Silk Road studies such as geography, cartography, history, archeology, and anthropology have worked together to draw a map of the Silk Roads which is free of any political, cultural, and religious biases. The workshop held at





Tashkent was the fourth one. Special thanks to generous support by Dr. Rahimov G'anisher, Rector of USUWL, ten prominent scholars from Uzbekistan, Iran, and Turkey were able to present their papers as a form of comparative study of Silk Road maps. The proceedings are available on the website of SUN ([www.sun-silkroadia.org](http://www.sun-silkroadia.org)).

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## **SUN recognizes Gyeongju as Silk Roads city**

A Certificate of Recognizing Gyeongsangbuk-do Province and Gyeongju City as a Historic Silk Road City was awarded to Mr. Chul-Woo Lee, Governor of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. The ceremony was held at the governor's office on January 31, 2020. SUN will continue the activity to discover and designate a historic Silk Road city as an important official project of SUN. City of Gyeongju, the capital of Shilla kingdom,

had flourished on the Korean peninsula having active economic, diplomatic, and cultural relationships with the Silk Road countries such as China, Vietnam, India, and Persia. City of Gyeongju is located within the area of Gyeongsanbuk-do province now and Gyeongsangbuk-do province is located within the area which was belonged to Shilla kingdom.



Professor Sungdong Hwang (second from right), secretary general of SUN, presents a certificate of recognition which states SUN's designation of Gyeongju as a Silk Roads city to Governor Chul-woo Lee (third from right) of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province in South Korea. Also present in the ceremony were SUN advisor Eui-hwan Cho (right) and Professor Su-il Chung (thrd from left).

# SUN, Seoul Design Foundation sign MOU

An MOU for mutual cooperation and collaboration between SUN and the Seoul Design Foundation (SDF) was signed on February 21, 2020 at DDP (Dongdaemun Design Plaza) where the Foundation's headquarter was located. Ms. Kyungran Choi, CEO of SDF and Secretary General Sungdon Hwang of SUN joined to sign it. Financed by the Metropolitan City of Seoul, SDF is a leading organization that promotes innovative ideas and projects of city design. The MOU will be effective for three years.

**SUN Secretary General Sungdon Hwang (third from right) and Kyung-ran Choi, CEO of the Seoul, hold together an MOU they signed at the foundation on Feb. 21, 2020. Also present in the ceremony were SDF Chairman Gang Byoung-gil (fourth from right), SUN Advisors Eui-hwan Cho (second from right) and Shi-yong Chon (right).**



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## **Events in 2020**

As the deadly COVID-19 hit the whole world, SUN was no exception from the impact of this virus. Due to COVID 19, we are considering to hold the 6th General Assembly of SUN and the 6th Annual International Academic Conference and General Assembly of IASS through online meeting. Online meeting will be our new challenge for this year.

SUN Secretariat is surveying opinions and suggestions of member institutions of SUN regarding this issues. Detailed plan for the 6th General Assembly of SUN and the 6th Annual International Academic Conference and General Assembly of IASS will be announced as soon as it is ready.

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## **Sixth photo and writing contests**

The 6th Photo Contest of SUN (PHOCOS) and the 6th Writing Contest of SUN (WRICOS) which were scheduled to be held in 2020 are on the right track although there was a slight delay in the deadline for submission. As of June 30, 2020, 92 works written in 15 languages (51 poems and 41 short essays) were submitted by student writers



**The panel of judges selects winners of the Sixth PHOCOS. (From left): SUN Secretary General Sungdon Hwang, SUN advisor Eui-hwan Cho, Professor Sangyoon Lee of Paichai University in Seoul, Professor Silas Fong of Chung-Ang University, and Ja-ho Koo, former photo editor of the Chosun Ilbo newspaper.**

of 19 universities with 14 nationalities. 275 photos were submitted by 71 students of 18 universities in 19 Silk Road countries. We expect a publication of booklets of awarded photos and writings by end of August, 2020. The award ceremonies for these two events are inevitably to be held as a virtual one during the virtual General Assembly of SUN in 2020. If the General Assembly is to be decided to be held through online.



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## **SUN GA and IASS Conferences put off**

The General Assembly of SUN and the Annual International Academic Conference of IASS in Dubai which were scheduled to be hosted by, and held at, Canadian University Dubai in 2020 is going to be rescheduled to be held in early 2022 so that it can be held during the period of World Expo in Dubai which was rescheduled to be held from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

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## **SILKROADIA gets a new editor-in-chief**

The SUN Secretariat has appointed Shi-yong Chon, a veteran journalist, as new editor-in-chief of SILKROADIA, the biannual web

magazine of SUN. Chon replaced D.A.P. Sharma, who was responsible for the past two issues of SILKROADIA. Chon, who has been advisor to SUN since its inauguration, has been in journalism in South Korea for more than 35 years. Most recently, he was the managing editor, the chief editorial writer and chief operating officer of The Korea Herald, the leading English-language newspaper in Korea. He studied public administration at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, and journalism at Yonsei University graduate school and the journalism school at Columbia University in New York.



**The editorial team of SILKROADIA: (From left) SUN Secretary General Sungdon Hwang, Art Director Eui-hwan Cho, Editorial Assistants Amali R. Thanthrige and Ji-won Lee, and Editor-in-Chief Shi-yong Chon**

# SUN welcomes new members

Since its establishment in 2015, SUN has been expanding steadily, with its members standing at 79 universities and research institutes in 62 cities of 28 countries along the Silk Roads. Among these are five which have recently joined the network.

There are two members from Afghanistan - Kabul University and Herat University. The University of Trieste from Trieste, Italy; Technical University of Cluj-Napoca from Cluj-napoca, Romania; and Canadian University Dubai, United Arab Emirates, also become members in 2019.



**Abdullah Faiz, Chancellor of Herat University**



**Hamidullah Farooqi, Chancellor of Kabul University**



**Vasile Țopa, Rector of Technical University of Cluj-Napoca**



**Roberto Di Lenarda, Rector of University of Trieste**



**Karim Chelli, President of Canadian University Dubai**

# USSUN NEWS

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**The United Students of the Silk-Road Universities Network (USSUN) is an organization of student representatives from each member university of SUN. It engages in various activities to promote the missions and goals of SUN. The following is a summary of USSUN's activities since the second half of last year.**



**O**n October 10, 2019 USSUN Secretariat organized a cultural tour for 40 international students from China, Korea,

Russia, Spain, and Afghanistan in the ancient city of Qazvin in Iran.

The first session of the academic sessions discovering the Silk-Roads cities was held on October 20, 2020. Professor Dr. Dae-seong Yu from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies led the discussion.

USSUN Sectary General Maryam Bolouri participated in the first international symposium on the Silk Roads in Qazvin which was held at IKIU university from November 10-11 where she presented the USSUN and its goals to the international students of IKIU. One of main purpose of this presentation was to introduce the future cultural and academic events of the Secretariat and collect the contact details of international students who participated in the program in order to exchange further information about the available opportunities while expanding the USSUN network.

On November 17, 2019 USSUN held the second session under the theme of Uzbek cities along the Silk Roads where Dr. Guli Yuldasheva from Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences made a presentation about the Uzbekistan cities along the Silk Roads.

The USSUN annual reports of the previous years (2016-2018) was also presented allowing participants to have an idea about USSUN's work.

The third session of exploring the cities along Silk Roads was held on January 19, 2020. In this session, Dr. Amir-Ahmadian from Allame Tabataba'i University spoke about the Iranian cities along the Silk Roads. USSUN secretariat staffers also discussed the details of the registration in PHOCOS and WRICOS.



On February 16, 2020 the fourth session of the cities on Silk Roads was held under the theme of Afghanistan along the Silk Roads and the presenters were visiting Afghan professors, Naweedullah Danishyar from Al-Beroni University, Somaieh Rahimzadeh from Herat University, and Nematollah Wahedi from Allameh Tabataba'i University.



**D**ue to COVID -19 outbreak USSUN members were not able to engage in many activities. However, on April 30, 2020 USSUN secretariat tried to help students by making an English tutorial video for the USSUN students about how to participate in the PHOCOS and WRICOS contests. The video was posted on different social media platforms.

**F**rom May 1 to May 27, 2020 USSUN designed an event to collect students' messages to elevate the spirits and encourage students in their fight against COVID-19 collaborating with the SUN Secretariat's movie coordinator Hyelin Hwang. We made two 10-minute videos, in which international students from five continents shared encouraging and positive thoughts for all the people in the world.

On May 23, 2020 the fifth session exploring the cities along the Silk Roads was held under the theme of cities of China (Xian, Zhengzhou, and Hexi Corridor) along the Silk Roads where three respected professors from different cities of China - Dr. Song Jianbo, Dr. Qin Xiaoxia and Dr. Liu Yan - shared their valuable knowledge with the students.

Most recently, USSUN held the sixth academic session about the cities on the Silk Roads on June 28, 2020, focusing on the cities of Turkey along the Silk Roads. During the session three presenters from Istanbul, Professor Akalin, Ankara, Dr. Gul Fidan, and the UK, Dr. Ozyakar, made presentations.

United Students of Silk-Roads Universities Network-USSUN  
Proudly Presents

THE 6TH SESSION OF  
**DISCOVERING THE SILK-ROADS**  
**TURKEY**

**The Invited Speakers:**

**ISTANBUL**  
Cüneyt Akalın  
Marmara University

**TRABZON**  
Ayşe Gül FİDAN  
Ankara University

**ANTAKYA**  
Ahmet Furkan Özyakar  
University of Exeter

**Participation is Free**

**Event link**  
<https://meeting.atu.ac.ir/ch/ussun>

**SUNDAY  
28 JUNE  
2020**  
(16:00-18:00) IRDT  
(20:30-22:30) UTC

Logos: Istanbul University, United Students of Silk-Roads Universities Network (USSUN), Silk-Roads Universities Network (SUN)

# NEWS FROM **MEMBER UNIVERSITIES**

## **Samarkand Institute of Veterinary Medicine**



### **SIVM expedites international exchange programs**

By this period of 2020, 8 professors and teachers of the institute went on foreign trips. Contracts, agreements, and memoranda were signed with 66 foreign partners, and 19 foreign professors and official delegations

visited the institute.

The head of the institute visited the Latvian University of Natural Sciences and Technology to sign an agreement between the two partner universities on the opening of the bachelor's degree program "Food Quality and Innovation" from the 2020-2021 academic year on the basis of a joint program (Double Degree). Participated in a cooperation meeting.

An agreement was reached to send professors and teachers of the institute for lectures, training and internships, to jointly create a new generation of textbooks and manuals, as well as to conduct research.

On May 12, 2020, Tennessee State University and the Samarkand Institute of Veterinary Medicine conducted an online conversation through the Zoom program.

During the meeting, it was agreed to establish an "Intensive English Center" for professors and teachers of specialty subjects at SamVMI from the 2020-2021 academic year. The project is funded by the American Councils for International Education (UniCEN) (Central Asia University Partnerships Program).



## UrFU Scientists Create Personal Electrochemical Analyzers

# Ural Federal University

## Shifts to distance learning

Ural Federal University (UrFU), which is home to more than 35,000 students, has completely switched to distance learning due to restrictive measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Since January, the university has transferred all UrFU students from China to distance learning. Teachers prepared assignments and sent them to students online, and the students sent their homework back. This allowed us to figure out the proper ways for distance education technology, which is now used by all students.

Today, all 35,194 students of UrFU have now been transferred to distance learning. It's a long time since digitalization processes

have been introduced at the university, it is actively engaged in the creation of learning management systems, online courses, electronic educational resources, but it cannot be said that all materials for all courses were fully prepared for remote work. The transition to a new training format on such a large scale does not happen in one click – this is a stressful process, but so far everything is going well.

## **UrFU Scientists create personal electrochemical analyzers**

Scientists of the Chemical-Technological Institute of Ural Federal University won a grant from the Russian Science Foundation. RSF supported a research project that will help solve the problems of a comprehensive pre-



symptomatic diagnosis of socially significant diseases. Modern diagnostic laboratories use instrumental biochemical methods of analysis: enzyme immunoassay, a method based on a polymerase chain reaction, serological, as well as bacterial culture methods with colony counting.

It is planned to develop a portable electrochemical analyzer that allows you to determine glucose, cholesterol and the antioxidant status of the body according to the results of the analysis of one drop of biological fluid, without the use of enzymes, as well as a thin-layer electrochemical immunochip for the enzyme-free determination of infectious agents and tumor markers.



## «ФАРАБИ ӘЛЕМІ»

атты студенттер мен жас ғалымдардың халықаралық ғылыми конференциясы  
Алматы, Қазақстан, 6–9 сәуір 2020 жыл

International Scientific Conference of Students and Young Scientists

## «FARABI ALEMI»

Almaty, Kazakhstan, April 6–9 2020

**Al-Farabi KazNU held online international conference of students and young scientists “Farabi Alemi” and contest “Best Young Scientist”**

## Al-Farabi Kazakhstan National University

### Continues to pursue sustainable development agenda

With regard to the activities undertaken in the efforts to prevent the outbreak of the COVID-19, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University has shifted to telecommuting, making use of modern information and communication technologies

The IV scientific seminar "Education and Science for Sustainable Development" held online, dedicated to the International Day of Human Space Flight on April 12, with the support of the UN Information Office.

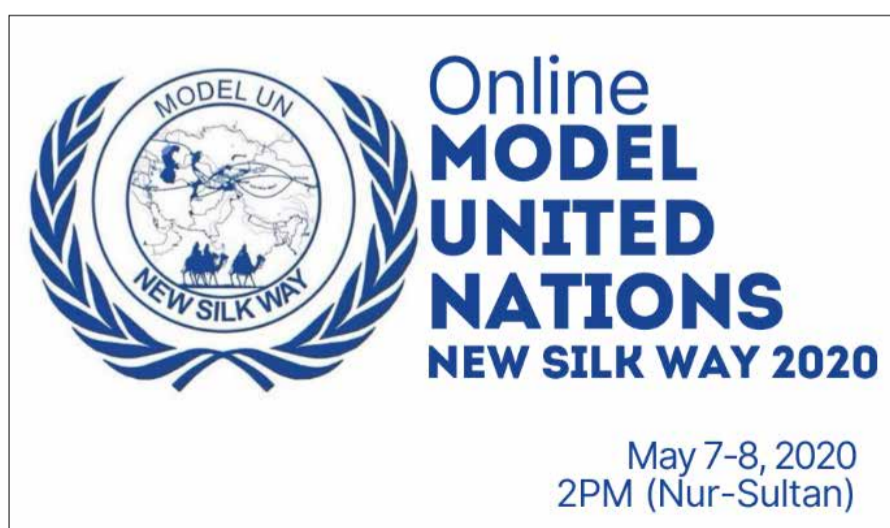
KazNU will continue to manage the Global Hub of the UN Academic Impact on Sustainable Development program.

According to the decision of the United Nations, Al-Farabi KazNU will continue to lead the Global Hub of the UN Academic Impact Program on Sustainable Development for the fourth consecutive term. This indicates a high international recognition of the success of the leading Kazakh University, which makes a significant contribution to the implementation of sustainable development Goals, Kazinform reported in the press service of the University.

### **Online meeting with the writer**

Al-Farabi KazNU successfully implements the project «100 Books», aimed at the formation of important moral and spiritual landmarks for students, introducing them to literature and reading. During its implementation, the University has developed good traditions of conducting creative meetings with famous writers and poets.

For the first time, the International Conference «Model UN – New Silk Way» was held in an online format. The event dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the founding of the UN and the end of the World War II, was organized by Al-Farabi KazNU with the support of the



**International Online Conference «Model United Nations – New Silk Way»**

United Nations Information Bureau and the Representative Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan in Almaty.

# Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH)

## The SDSN Black Sea Youth Network

On April 2020, the SDSN Black Sea Youth Network, based at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, was activated as part of the actions of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) to promote solutions for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for the Wider Region of the Black Sea (SDSN Black Sea).

Since October 2018, the Aristotle University



of Thessaloniki has been the permanent headquarters of the SDSN Black Sea Network. In the context of the operation of this network, AUTH sought to give an active role to its students, developing an initiative to create a corresponding hub for the SDSN Youth Network.

SDSN Youth networks operate worldwide and aim to inform, raise awareness and activate young people towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030. The SDSN Youth Network at AUTH has another goal; the expansion of the network to the rest of the Balkan and Black Sea countries that are members of the SDSN Black Sea Network.

## **AUTH is launched into space**

With the stamp of the European Space Agency (ESA), AUTH becomes the first Greek university to develop its own satellite in orbit, 400 kilometers above the earth, under the "Fly Your Satellite!" Program.

The technical proposal submitted by the student team of Space and Aeronautics Aristotle Space & Aeronautics Team (A.S.A.T.), on behalf of AUTH, in the framework of the project "AcubeSAT", in October 2019, was selected in the third phase of the program "Fly Your Satellite!" and the "CubeSat" type satellite of the Aristotle University is expected

to be launched in space at the end of 2022. The evaluation and selection was made by experts from the European Space Agency. The other two groups selected are SOURCE from the University of Stuttgart (Germany) and UCAnFly from the University of Cadiz (Spain).

The satellite designed and built by A.S.A.T. is called "AcubeSAT". Its purpose is to conduct an experiment of a biological nature, which will study the effect of the space environment on cells similar to those of the human body, with the aim of drawing conclusions that will be used to create biopharmaceuticals and biofuels. Professor Kyriakos Yakinthos (Department of Mechanical Engineering of AUTH) is the Scientific Director of A.S.A.T., and Professor Alkis Hatzopoulos (Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering of AUTH) is in charge of the AcubeSAT project team.



# Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

## HUFS Celebrates 66th Anniversary and completion of Smart Library

On May 15, at the Seoul Campus smart library, HUFS held a ceremony to mark the 66th Anniversary of HUFS and the completion of the Smart Library. The ceremony has been previously postponed once due to the COVID-19 situation and was carried out on a small scale for safety concerns. Kwak Sun-joo (Dean of Administrative Support) presided over the Smart Library completion ceremony, which began with a progress report. Chairman Kim Chong-Chul and HUFS President Kim In-chul offered opening remarks, which were followed by celebratory remarks from HUFS Alumni Association President Min Dong-Seok, FILA/Acushnet Chairman Yoon Yoon-soo, Member of the National Assembly of Korea



Ahn Gyu-baek, Chair Professor Park Jin, Mayor of Dongdaemun-gu Ryu Duk-rul, and Chair of Dongdaemun-gu Council Kim Chang-gyu.

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## University of Coimbra

### Ranked as top university in Portugal

According to the second edition of the ranking "The University Impact Rankings" by Times Higher Education, released in April 2020, the University of Coimbra was considered the best institution in Portugal and the only one in the worldwide top 20 in terms of compliance with the third Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations: Good Health and Well-being. Among 620 universities around the world, the University of Coimbra occupies the 17th place.

In addition to SDG 3, on Health and Well-Being, the University of Coimbra was also the Portuguese institution to lead SDG 14, on Life Below Water (33rd place out of 242); SDG 1, on Eradication of Poverty (38th place out of 372) and SDG 9, related to Industry, Innovations and Infrastructure (41st place out of 494).

In the global ranking of "The University Impact Rankings", which analyzes the fulfillment of all the UN SDGs, the University

of Coimbra is also the best Portuguese institution and the only one in the top 100, occupying the 62nd position, among 766 institutions worldwide.



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## Moscow State Linguistic University

### **Celebrates anniversaries in on-line events**

The biggest event for the world and the Russian Federation is the 75th anniversary of the end of WW2 to which the Soviet Union contributed immensely having suffered tremendous losses. The university celebrated online during the coronavirus lockdown. The rector addressed faculty, staff and students, honored the memory of MSU veterans, and opened a new exhibition dedicated to the tragic and glorious victory at the MSU main building. Students posted a most touching video singing in online

2020 is the year of our University's 90th anniversary. The university planned a lot of related events throughout the year, but there was a change of plans. On April 23-

25 the annual international conference “Authentic Dialogue between Russia and the Francophone World in the Context of Culture, Language, and Literature” to mark the anniversary was for the first time held in online mode on [trueconf.linguanet.ru](http://trueconf.linguanet.ru) and brought together over 100 participants. The university was honored to hear welcoming remarks of the most respected members of diplomatic community in Moscow as well as distinguished scientists.

On June 6 the university held the Russian Language Day which was set by the United Nations on the birthday of Alexander Pushkin, Russia’s prominent poet and the greatest contributor to the emergence of the modern Russian language. This event means a lot this year being the first celebration after signing in June 2019 a Memorandum of Understanding between the UN and MSLU regarding cooperation in the field of preparing candidates for participation in UN competitive language exams.

# Canadian University, Dubai

## COVID-19 response

All classes and university services for students moved online: To ensure no disruption of classes and services while making all the necessary efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the university is now offering university services online

Virtual Events:

## 10th Graduation Ceremony | Class of 2020

Canadian University Dubai made history on June 5th as it became the first university in the world to display images of its graduating class on the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa. The virtual graduation ceremony took place in the presence of His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan, Minister



of Tolerance, as well as the university's chancellor, president, faculty members and students under the theme of 'The Beauty of Endurance', and was live streamed on the university's website through YouTube and Facebook. This never- before -seen event was a reminder to its 2020 graduates that the future is bright after the university had to postpone its graduation ceremony this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also a way to bring its graduates together virtually after months of social distancing.

### **Student life & engagement, athletics and sport**

Online engagement activities such as informational videos, CUD's got talent (dance & music competition) and e-games to boost the student morale during this time. Kahoot trivia games, online gaming tournaments, weekly exercise & fitness videos social media platforms and online music & dance competitions have been a hit during this time of social distancing.

# Persepolis: Ancient Persian capital founded by Darius the Great

By Maryam Bolouri

Persepolis is the Greek name of one of the ceremonial capitals of the ancient Achaemenid Empire, founded by Darius the Great (522-486 BCE). It was built to showcase Persian wealth and power, and also served as a seat of the Government for the Achaemenid Empire. The site was excavated by German

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archaeologists Ernst Herzfeld, Friedrich Krefter, and Erich Schmidt between 1931 and 1939. The remaining parts of the palaces are astonishing even today, and UNESCO registered this ancient site as a World Heritage Site in 1979.

Two of the most interesting facts about this capital, with all its jaw-dropping monumental centers, pillars, palaces, mascots, reliefs, and statues are as follows: First, you cannot find any relief of wars or prisoners in that era of history fraught with stories of this kind. Second, its architecture was earthquake-proof, although no cement had been used during the construction.

The Apadana is the oldest phase in the development of Persepolis, constructed in the first half of the 6th century BC as part of the original design by Darius the Great. This photo shows a bas-relief from the Apadana depicting Medes bringing their gifts to the king. The East Stairs of the Apadana at Persepolis show people from different ethnic groups bringing tribute to the Achaemenid king. The reliefs were made in the last years of the sixth and early years of the fifth century, probably crafted by Greek artists.

Stairways and interior stone walls of Persepolis are all covered with detailed



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carvings. Many reliefs feature people carrying objects, headed by a Mede or Persian nobleman. One question that usually comes to visitor's mind is "who are they and what are those objects?" The French archeologist, Roman Ghirshman, who devoted his professional life working on historic sites of Iran, discovered the answer. He explained that these men were "Tribute bearers" from many nations under Darius' command, carrying a tribute to him on the day of Norooz, the beginning day of spring. Each group is usually guided by a Mede or Persian nobleman. The headdress of each Tribute bearer is the key to his identification.

The relief, which has miraculously survived the loot of Persepolis by the soldiers of Alexander the Great in 330 BCE, consists of three parts: northern walls featuring Persians, central walls featuring soldiers and

eastern walls representing other nations.

The most splendid design is on the southern wall of the eastern stairs of the Apadana at Persepolis; all the nations of the Persian Empire can be found in a prescribed arrangement. Twenty-three nations are represented in costumes expressing their origin. The first of the tribute bearers are Medes, which were related to the Persians. As Medes were considered to be the Persians' closest relatives, they are arranged in the first place of the queue. The Medes wear horsemen's dress and cloaks. Their turbans share similarity with the Turkish baslik, though with a typical round cap. Their presents are a pitcher, bowls, a sword, rings, a cloak, a coat, and trousers (see below).

With such lavish decoration, it's no wonder the ancient ruins of the Apadana still impress visitors.

**Maryam Bolouri** is Ph.D. candidate of applied linguistics in Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran.

# **The Valley of Stars: World Heritage Site on Iranian Island**

**By Maryam Bolouri**

Stars Valley is a valley located on Qeshm, an Iranian island in the Strait of Hormuz in Hormozgan Province. It is regarded as the wonder of Qeshm Island. Located in the north of a village called Berkeh-ye Khalaf, renowned as the cleanest in Iran, as the villagers clean it once or twice a week.

There are different views about the origins of this highly-visited geo-site. Some locals believe that millions of years ago, a meteor fell on this area and the colluded stones and soil froze and formed the unique and jaw-dropping structure of this valley. “Stars Valley”, or in the original vernacular "Estala Kafte", has its roots in this belief. However, other residents of the Island passionately



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believe that Jinns and Ghosts live there. This is partly because of the petrifying howling that can be heard at night as the winds blow through the bizarre layers of the natural columns and hat-like cap rocks of the Valley.

Scientifically, geologists state that rainstorms, winds, and gravity eroded the various structures of the rocks differently. Soft bottom layers have been washed away by rainfall and the remaining resistant cement layers form the shape of a pillar or needle. Some layers took on the shape of a hat, protecting their pillars from further erosion.

Given how these features were formed, some layers are fragile and stepping on them can cause narrow cracks. If visitors avoid trampling on the upper portions of



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these structures, we can better protect this geological heritage for future generations.

Stars Valley is open to visitors from morning till sunset, though closed on Saturdays. The best time to visit this site is before sunset (before the ghosts' passing time!). You can easily book a reasonably-priced tour to discover this mysterious wonder. Just bear in mind that it is a two-hour walk among canyon-like stones, so you need a pair of comfortable shoes and a supply of water. If you are still ambivalent about visiting, I recommend watching the surrealist movie, "A Dragon Arrives" (2016), which was shot in the Valley. The surreal but actual landscape portrayed in this fantastic, mockumentary film may stir your sense of adventure and discovery.

# **Pandemics on Silk Roads - *A lonesome mulberry tree***

**By Elia Albiñana Català**

This mulberry tree has seen me grow. It has seen my parents grow. It has seen my grandparents grow. It has seen many families in my small town grow. Now, here it stands. Alone, old, eminent, powerful. It observes from its pedestal, with its tired eyes, how everything changes.

It remains silent. Sometimes the density of its branches – old and intrinsic, complicated – and the depth of its roots, the memories it treasures in its bark, reminds this old mulberry tree that it has lived too long.

Some centuries ago, the existence of this mulberry tree represented the economic wealth of the small town where I live, Carcaixent, located in the county of La Ribera.



Silk was the main industry of my village; the landowners took pride in being the owners of hectares, lands, states, and orchards, all covered under the veil of the leaves of these trees. The landscapes of the region, its architecture and iconography, were shaped around these trees, which surrounded the fields. The mulberry tree is the cornerstone of the silk making process, and the historical and patrimonial richness that the leaves of this tree preserve is beyond comparison. Those same leaves are the nourishment of the silkworm, the main character, the one who initiates the silk process. They show us the cycle of life. We follow the trail they draw; we are awakened by the memory of a millenary and magical route. The Silk Road.

However, time passed by, and the production of silk was gradually disappearing from this area of the Mediterranean. Little by little, the architecture and iconography of the area was replaced by another tree, the orange tree. In deathly silence, the prominence of the mulberry tree disappeared, its business became invisible. Until the point came where these trees are barely seen in this region.

However, a new tradition was born around these trees. For a while now, the mulberry trees have gained a historical, traditional, and even recreational value. This tradition consisted in educating children to collect a few leaves from the tree and feed the silkworms they had stored in empty shoe boxes, so that they could watch the worm turn into a cocoon and later into a butterfly. In a sense, the worms taught the children all the work behind the silk production process, as they once did for their ancestors. This tradition has been passed down through grandparents, parents, grandchildren... so on, for years. But recently, this practice is slowly disappearing.

Today hundreds of these mulberry trees, just like this one, are scattered around the Valencian countryside, almost abandoned, alone and worn out by the hard work they

have been doing for years. They no longer hear the conversations of the collectors, the voices of the landowners, or the laughs of children who played with them.

And time passes by, time passes by, time passes by.

**Elia Albiñana Català** studies translation and inter-linguistic mediation at University of Valencia, Spain.

# **Kompia bun originates from Fuzhou, China**

**By Adam Huang Tung Kai**

Malaysians are known worldwide for the love of food, and we often brag about having the best food in all of Asia, if not the world. To me, this is not an overstatement as we can easily get access to different types of cuisines just a stone's throw away from where we stay.

I would relate the wealth of delicacies in Malaysia to the nation's diverse culture. (Same idea as last sentence), Roti Canai, Nasi Lemak, and Char Kuay Teow each represents the traditional food for the major ethnic groups in Malaysia, i.e. Indian, Malay, and Chinese. For most Malaysians, it is common to see eating Roti Canai in the morning, Nasi Lemak and Teh Tarik for lunch, Char Kuay Teow in the evening, and Satay for supper.

This assimilation of food culture could not be made possible without Malaysia's strategic location in the ancient Silk Road. In particular, the majority of Chinese people had used the maritime Silk Roads to go southbound. With their arrival at the new land, they brought with them their hometown dishes, and the dishes eventually took their roots in the Malaysian culture ever since.

Here, I wish to introduce one of such

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dishes– the Kompia. Kompia is essentially a cookie-like bun. It is baked in a traditional Chinese oven, where the maker would slap the dough to the wall of the oven. After around 15 minutes, the Kompia would be ready. At this point of time, the taste of Kompia would be the best as it is amazingly crispy. The sesame sprinkled on top of Kompia would further enhance its smell. In some variation, it would be stuffed with meat and served with homemade gravy.

Kompia has its origin in Fuzhou, Fujian Province in China, and the recipe was brought along with the people of Fuzhou dialects (“Foochow”) when they arrived in Malaysia. In Malaysia, the Foochows reside mostly in Sibu, Sitiawan, and Yong Peng. Due

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to the limited localities of residence, Kompia was not as famous as other Chinese dishes. However, it is wildly popular among the Foochow community and most have it as a daily staple.

Perhaps, Kompia may never be the mainstream food representing Malaysian Chinese. However, to me, it suffices to see Kompia as a symbol of cultural and historical connection between the Foochows in Malaysia and China. After all, this might be the reason my Foochow ancestors brought along Kompias with them before they board the ship, destined for them to start a new life in a new land with a completely different culture.

**Adam Huang Tung Kai** is a student at the Department of Law, University of Malaya, Malaysia

## Write for us

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