

SILK ROAD

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**SILK-ROAD
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COVER STORY

**University of Naples
L'Orientale Rector Stresses
SUN's Expansion to Africa**

FICTIONAL INTERVIEW

**Giovanni da Pian del
Carpine Makes a Pioneering
Account of Mongolia**

SILKROADIA

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Shi-yong Chon

SUN Looks Forward to GA in Naples

Host Rector Tottoli Calls for
SUN's Expansion to Africa

Artificial Intelligence is a buzzword of our times, affecting almost every sector of human society and civilization, including education. There are numerous issues concerning the evolution of AI, with ethical considerations being one of the most formidable challenges, especially in the education sector.

At SILKROADIA, we never expected to face an ethical issue related to AI in our own publication, the official magazine of the Silk Road Universities Network. For this edition, we chose AI and its impact on universities along the Silk Roads as

our Cover Story theme. We asked a computer science professor from one of our member universities to write an article on the subject.

We received a 3,000-word article that addressed almost every important aspect of AI's development and its impact on university education. The article was titled "The Effect of New Technologies and AI on the Traditional Education System in Silk Road."

Unfortunately, the Turnitin plagiarism checker determined that 87% of the article had been generated by AI. Consequently, we decided not to run the article and instead feature an interview with Rector Roberto Tottoli of the University of Naples L'Orientale. It is regrettable that we cannot share with our readers an article on one of the most important issues affecting university education worldwide, including those on the Silk Roads. It is even more regrettable that we had to cancel an article submitted by a member of our community, which should be at the forefront of protecting academic integrity.

Despite this setback, the SILKROADIA editorial staff is pleased to provide arti-

cles that the SUN community will find informative and interesting. We conducted a written interview with Rector Roberto Tottoli of the University of Naples L'Orientale, co-host with SUN of the 9th General Assembly and the Academic Conference of the International Association of Silk Road Studies (IASS). These two important annual events are scheduled for November 10-13 in Naples, a city renowned for its history, culture, and diversity.

Rector Tottoli introduced the theme of the Naples meetings: “From Silk Roads to World History Civilizations: Heroes, Conquerors, and Adventurers.” He also mentioned that a special session would be dedicated to Matteo Ripa, the founder of L'Orientale University. Ripa, who spent over 20 years in China at the Qing Emperor's court, is a symbolic historical figure of the Silk Roads.

Rector Tottoli elaborated that SUN can be a promoter and protagonist of multiple activities with its member universities. He emphasized a particular focus on Central Asia, the Middle and Near East, Southeast and South Asia, with equally vital connections extended to Africa,

the Mediterranean, and East Asia. “Of great strategic interest to SUN is the involvement of African universities. In this sense, SUN can play a leading and guiding role,” he said.

In addition to preparing for the upcoming GA and IASS Conference, SUN has continued its activities, including preparations for the three major contests in photography (PHOCOS), writing (WRICOS), and speech and debate (S-DE-COS) for the academic year 2023-24. The theme for PHOCOS is “Leisure and Play,” while the theme for the poetry section of WRICOS is “Trees: Any Subjects Related to Trees.” The essay section of WRICOS offers two themes: “Trees and People along the Silk Roads” and “How is Contemporary Climate Change Affecting the Physical Landscapes and Environments along the Silk Roads?”

Award-winning entrants will receive prizes during the GA in Naples, a SUN tradition. We look forward to meeting the winners of the three contests, as well as all members of the SUN community, in the wonderful Mediterranean city in November.



Rector Roberto Tottoli

Photo by Accademia de Ile Science, Italy

University of Naples L'Orientale Rector Stresses SUN's Expansion to Africa

Roberto Tottoli also speaks on preparations for the annual SUN General Assembly



Amali Ranavi Thantrige

The University of Naples L'Orientale is one of the founding members of the SUN. Building on the long-term partnership with the university, SUN and the University of Naples L'Orientale are working together to host the Annual General Assembly and the Academic Conference of the International Association of Silk Road Studies (IASS). The SILKROADIA team found this as a great time to invite the head of the university for an interview to share its insight on partnership with SUN and information about the university, the city of Naples, and preparations for the two upcoming events.

Rector Roberto Tottoli kindly accepted our invitation and he highlighted the potential role of SUN and the partnership with his university, stating that "SUN could be promoter and protagonist of multiple activities" from Central Asia to Africa. As an academic, he encouraged young students to be hungry for everything, without limiting and preconceptions. Below are the excerpts of the interview with Rector Tottoli.



The University of Naples "L'Orientale"

Photo by Carmen Neglia, University of Naples "L'Orientale"

Q: First of all, we would like to thank you for taking the time to speak with SILKROADIA, the official online publication of SUN, before your university hosts the annual SUN General Assembly in November this year.

The University of Naples "L'Orientale, one of Italy's most prestigious institu-

tions of higher learning, is a founding member of the SUN. Could you kindly provide a brief introduction to your university?

A: University of Naples L'Orientale was founded as Collegio dei Cinesi by Matteo Ripa, a Catholic priest who had traveled to China and then started a school teaching Chinese and giving education to Chinese religious students. After that beginning, and after the unification of Italy in the second half of the 19th century, other instruction in languages and cultures related to Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe were added and, by the 20th century, L'Orientale has become the main Italian center for studying languages and cultures from all over the world and one of the major institutions in Europe in this field.

Q: Could you please tell us what had motivated your university to join SUN?

A: Our origin is strictly connected to Chinese and Asia studies and SUN represents an important network of relations

well-grounded in our history, but looking towards a future of cooperation and exchange in terms of research and education involving scholars and, above all, also students.

Q: The SUN has more than 80 member universities in 28 countries along the maritime and land silk roads. What role do you think your university could play in the SUN?

A: We have hundreds of relations with African and Asian institutions and from all the continents, and we are a leading institution in this. I would further underline that our specific feature in this is our large sector in African studies and we could contribute to enlarge the network in such a direction.

Q: The University of Naples L'Orientale plans to host the 9th General Assembly of the SUN and the academic conference of the International Association for Silk Road Studies (IASS). What encouraged you to decide to host the events?



The University of Naples "L'Orientale"

Photo by "L'Orientale" University website

<https://www.unior.it/en/university>

A: Our history and our location. I just mentioned above our century-long history. Further, Naples is in the Middle of the Mediterranean Sea and this is a time of growing connections in many fields. We are sure that colleagues and people of the SUN can find here a strong interest to a future of collaboration plus a strong relation to a past of connections.

Q: Please tell us about the preparation work for the SUN General Assembly and the IASS Conference. What would be the focus of the events?

A: The theme and focus of SUN-IASS Conference, that will be held in Napoli in November 2024 is "From Silk Roads to World History Civilizations: Heroes, Conquerors, and Adventurers." The Silk Roads served

as a critical trade and cultural exchange network for centuries, connecting East and West and shaping world history. This conference aims to explore the role of individuals and communities who helped shape the course of history along the Silk Roads. A special session is dedicated to Matteo Ripa, the founder of L'Orientale University, with a visit to Eboli, Ripa's native city: Ripa spent more than 20 years in China, at the Qing Emperor Court and can be certainly considered a symbolic historical figure of Silk Roads.

We invite scholars from various disciplines to submit papers exploring the role of heroes, conquerors, and adventurers along the Silk Roads. Possible research topics include, but are not limited to:

- Biographies of key figures associated with the Silk Roads (explorers, merchants, diplomats, military leaders)
- The impact of heroes and conquerors on politics, economics, and culture along the Silk Roads
- The role of adventurers in the discovery and expansion of trade

routes

- Myth and reality: how heroic figures have been portrayed in history and literature
- The lasting legacy of the Silk Roads' heroes, conquerors, and adventurers

Q: SUN focuses on the academic, cultural and education fields. How could SUN improve its initiatives in these fields? Do you have any suggestions for new projects the SUN might undertake in the future?

A: The Conference is intended as a starting point and not as a point of arrival. The aim is to develop international synergies among the universities of Silk Roads within the SUN. SUN can be promoter and protagonist of multiple activities with the Universities of the Network, and with a particular focus on Central Asia and the Middle and Near East, South East and South Asia, and with equally vital connections extended to Africa, the Mediterranean, and East Asia. Of great strategic interest to SUN is the involvement of African

universities. In this sense, the SUN can play a leading and guiding role.

Q: Naples is a wonderful city with great historical and cultural values. Could you please introduce the city? What is the relationship between the city and your university?

A: Naples is one of historical great capitals of Europe and one of the most vivid and rich Italian towns in terms of culture and presence in the cultural scene. In the middle of the Mediterranean, it has always been a privileged place in a larger region inhabited well before Greeks and Romans who elected it as their favorite place. From the nearby ruins of Pompei to the amazing historical downtown Naples is other Italian major towns along with Rome, Florence and Venice in attracting cultural tourism. Our institutions was born here, when Naples was capital of Bourbonic state, as a testimony of the interest in the world and other cultures in the culturally rich 18th century. This is still a fundamental aspect of the town, attracting other cultures and



City of Naples

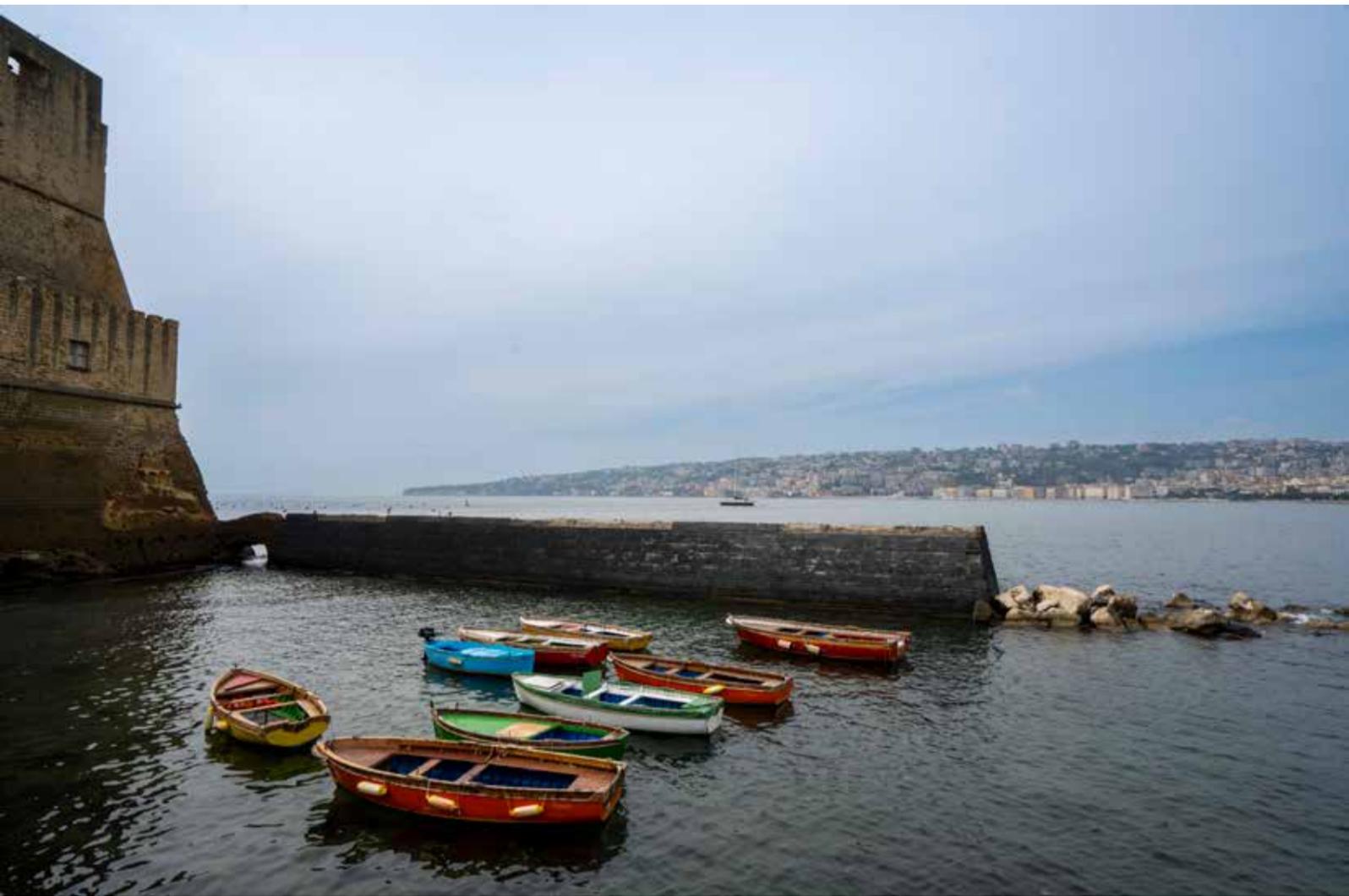
Photo by CAMPANIA.Info, Italy

<https://www.campania.info/napoli/>

traditionally hosting diversity from its origins and even beyond its natural position in the middle of the Mediterranean.

Q: Could you please tell us about your personal history and professional career?

A: I graduated in Venice studying Arabic and Hebrew and made my PhD in L'Orientale in the 1990s, then I taught three years in the University of Turin before joining L'Orientale in 2002. I have spent some time as visiting faculty in many institutions abroad, in Europe and USA. I am a scholar



City of Naples

Photo by Euihwan Cho

in Islamic studies, working on early Islamic literature and traditions and recently moving to the study of the Qur'an and Islam in the history of Europe, thanks to an important European project in connection with other European institutions.

Q: Finally, as a career educator, what advice would you like to give to the college students of today who are on the doorsteps of their professional life?

A: To enjoy of the many possibilities prompted by technology in terms of mo-

bility, access to information etc., but not to forget the relevance of history and of a wide range knowledge of everything. To be hungry for everything in terms of reading, watching, visiting, thinking and everything, without preconceptions and limits.

Amali Ranavi Thantrige is a graduate student in International and European relations at Linköping University, Sweden.



Fra' Giovanni da Pian di Carpine delivers a letter from Pope Innocent IV to the Great Khan of the Mongols. Fresco in the Council Hall of the Municipality of Magione by Gerardo Dottori, 1948.

FICTIONAL INTERVIEW

Giovanni da Pian del Carpine Makes a Pioneering Account of Mongolia



Raissa De Gruttola

Giovanni was born around 1182 in a small village named Pian del Carpine (today Magione), near Perugia, Italy. He joined the then recently established Order of Friars Minor, a group of Christian young men gathered around Francesco d'Assisi "to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of our own, and in chastity." In 1245 Giovanni was sent as a representative of the Pope to the Mongol court with the purpose of collecting information on the Mongols, establishing diplomatic relations to promote peace, and exploring the possibilities of their conversion. He arrived in Karakorum in July 1246 and assisted in the election of Guyuk Khan on August 24. In November, he left the capital city and undertook his travel back to Europe, reaching Lyon, France, in 1247. In the same year he was appointed and ordained Archbishop of Antivari in Montenegro (today Bar), and he also started writing the account of his travel to and stay at the Mongol court. This text, the *Historia Mongalorum* (History of the Mongols), is the first description of peoples and territories of Central Asia

and Mongolia made by a European author and based on direct experience. The detailed narrative and the information on the Mongol society and culture make it a very remarkable account.

Q: Brother Giovanni, you are famous for your travel to Mongolia, but what did you do before the appointment as papal legate in 1245?

A: I was born in a very small village on the Trasimeno Lake in the green region of Umbria, Italy: I would have never expected to cross Eurasia and reach the khans: you can imagine my surprise when travelling along the Silk Road or reaching Karakorum!

When I was young, in a small village near mine called Assisi, Francesco – the one that you will later call a saint! – was developing a new way of living the Gospel and, like many other boys of the area, I decided to join his new religious order, the Friars Minor, or Franciscans. I studied many foreign languages and was soon sent to Germany and Spain for adminis-

trative tasks: the Order was growing and many boys from all over Europe joined. In those years, we were scared by the news of a powerful army from Mongolia reaching Poland and Hungary, so the Pope decided to send a delegate to the Khan to know better this new people and establish a peaceful contact with them: he was very worried. I was selected to be a delegate with my confrere Stephen of Bohemia, and we left Lyon on April 16, 1245. After some days of travel, Brother Benedict the Pole also joined us, and Stephen stayed in Eastern Europe. I met the Khan with Benedict, who stayed with me during the long and difficult journey.

Q: How did it feel to travel so far from home? I imagine the amazement at the sight of new places and peoples was one of the reasons for writing down your travel account!

A: The landscape surrounding us during the travel was so different from what I was used to! I tried to look at everything and everyone with the same gaze of Saint

Francis: admiring and blessing. However, it was not always easy: differences often scared me, but it was also so enriching for me. Eurasia is a very wide and rich place! We crossed plains, deserts, mountains, rivers, underwent many climate and weather changes, met many different peoples. They all had their own customs and lifestyles, food, clothes, beliefs, social, cultural, and religious practices and rites, funerals and marriages. In particular, I was impressed by the variety of religions I found in the Mongol Empire and by the tolerance and openness the rulers showed towards other religions. Furthermore, in Karakorum, after the election of the new Khan, I learned much about the political, administrative, and military organization of the Mongols.

When I went back to France, the Pope asked me to write down everything I saw and experienced. He needed to have details on the Mongols, as everybody in Europe in those years was scared by their army and their military skills. It was a useful request for me: that travel really needed to be remembered. Some other Franciscans that travelled to East Asia and even



Routes of Giovanni da Pian di Carpine and others through Central Asia.

image from Historical Atlas, William R. Shepherd, Henry Holt and Company, 1923.

Marco Polo told me that the text was useful for them: I am glad that it was a pioneering work that challenged some stereotypes, prejudices, and fears of those times!

Q: What did you do after your return to Europe?

A: I arrived in Lyon in 1247, and I was soon appointed bishop of a diocese in Montenegro. However, the writing of my account took many days, during which I enjoyed remembering the beautiful places crossed in Eurasia, the peoples met, the

food tasted, the languages heard. It was a truly amazing experience!

Q: Thank you, Brother Giovanni, it was a great pleasure to listen to your experience! As the founder of your Order loved to say, Pax et Bonum (Peace and All Good)!

A: Pax et Bonum! May God bless you and your research in these fields: they are so important to cultural exchange!

Raissa De Gruttola holds a Ph.D. in Asian and North African Studies from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where she is currently a research fellow. Her research fields include the features of the Franciscan presence in China from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, focusing on representative missionaries and texts, including Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, Carlo da Castorano, and Gabriele Allegra. She can be reached at raissa.degruttola@unive.it.

Adilkhan Yerzhanov: An Artist of the Silk Road with a Vision for All the World



Cameron Shirvani Steiner

“Love. And lack of money. When these two things come together, the poetry begins. The conflict between the material world and the spiritual world takes place. There comes an awareness of how much a person is doomed in a modern pragmatic society.”

Adilkhan Yerzhanov

About 37,500 households destroyed. 1.5 million refugees. Somewhere between 35,000 and 157,000 killed. All these numbers, and many more personal stories, illustrate the scale of the suffering in

Tajikistan's five-year civil war between 1992 and 1997, beginning less than a year after independence from the Soviet Union (Sobiri, 2017). The clash between a government of former ruling Soviet-era communists and the Iranian-aligned United Tajikistan Opposition, a loose coalition comprised of Islamists and democrats, split the nation apart in brutal campaigns of ethnic cleansing and uninhibited civilian murders, featuring militia bombings and massacres by pro-government forces (covertly aided by Russian soldiers and intelligence). Food shortages, typhoid outbreaks within a collapsing medical system, and riots at refugee camps soon accompanied the conflict. While a fragile armistice was signed by all parties in 1997, the story of civil war has become a painful subject in both civilian and intellectual life in Tajikistan; the memory of the conflict is usually the property of the ruling authoritarian government, invoked to quell any notion of opposition. (Pannier, 2017). The civil war was one of several conflicts and crises to emerge following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Kazakh filmmaker Adilkhan Yerzhanov

was a witness to this chapter of history. Born in Djezkagan, Kazakhstan in 1982, a “closed child” who “did not like to go outside” (Kosnazarov, 2019), his family’s move to Tajikistan proved a fundamental influence on the future creative artist, raised in a childhood of regular and almost repetitive violence. His 2024 film “Steppenwolf,” set in a violent civil war that it never tries to explain or understand, portrays a mother who hires the most dangerous man around to help her find her lost son. Perhaps the film is a projection of its creator’s childhood nightmares. Indeed, Yerzhanov’s somewhat chaotic childhood of unexpected joys and tragedies makes him perhaps a perfect exemplar of the artistic environment of Kazakh cinema.

The Rise, Fall, and Rise Again of Kazakh Cinema

The history of Kazakh cinema is intertwined with the history of the Soviet Union. Following the Soviet Revolution in 1917, the new government saw cinema as a powerful tool for propaganda and education. In the 1920s, mobile filmmaking

units were sent throughout Kazakhstan to document the lives of the Kazakh people and promote Soviet ideology. These films were often silent documentaries, focusing on themes such as agriculture, collectivization, and industrial development. It would not be until 1939 that the first Kazakh feature film was finally released, the biographical *Amangeldy* – about the leader of the 1916 Central Asian revolution, though it came out as production of Lenfilm in Leningrad (Nugent, 2014).

During World War II, the Soviet film industry was largely evacuated to the capital Alma-Ata, which brought a temporary boom to Kazakh cinema. Major Soviet studios, such as Mosfilm and Lenfilm, relocated to Kazakhstan and created Alma-Ata Film Studios. A major Soviet film school, the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography also relocated; while this move was temporary, it was the alma-mater for a generation of filmmakers that would later become the “Kazakh New Wave” (Lennon, 2003).

Despite these developments, the overall production of Kazakh films during the

Soviet period remained relatively low. The Kazakh film industry was largely subordinate to the central Soviet film industry, and most films were made in Russian rather than Kazakh. Nevertheless, some Kazakh filmmakers were able to produce works that explored Kazakh culture and history, albeit within the constraints of Soviet ideology. Notable examples include the 1970 film *Kyz-Zhibek*, a musical drama based on a traditional Kazakh epic poem, and the communist-aligned films of Shaken Aimanov, who is too little-remembered but recognized today as the “founding father” of Kazakh cinema (Rollberg, 2019).

Beginning in the late 1980s, as the Soviet Union began to loosen its grip and reforms under Premier Gorbachev allowed a new wave of Kazakh cinema to emerge. This movement, known as the Kazakh New Wave, was characterized by a rejection of Soviet aesthetics and a focus on social realism. Kazakh New Wave films often dealt with sensitive topics that had been taboo under Soviet rule, such as corruption, poverty, and environmental degradation (Lemon, 2003).

A key figure in the Kazakh New Wave was director Rashid Nugmanov, whose film *The Needle* (1988) is considered a catalyst of the movement. The film is a neo-noir crime thriller that follows a former soldier who returns home to Alma-Ata to find it overrun by drugs and crime. Starring as the soldier is Viktor Tsoi, frontman of the rock group Kino and a popular figure among disaffected youth (and a prominent member of the Koryo-saram, the Korean diaspora to Kazakhstan). Nugmanov, alongside directors such as Ardak Amirkulov and Serik Aprymov, produced a wide range of films that explored the social and cultural realities of Kazakhstan in the late Soviet period, to critical and often commercial success.

The fall of the Soviet Union led to a loss of funding and resources for Kazakh cinema, arguably ending the New Wave period. What followed in the 1990s was a transition period, as many of the established filmmakers left the industry and gave way to a new generation. While free from Soviet control, this generation struggled to overcome domestic distributors' prefer-

ence for dubbed Hollywood blockbusters and Russian movies, and most of their films were little seen outside of arthouse theaters (as an illustration of this point: when you, dear reader, saw that this essay would highlight Kazakhstan cinema, how many of you first thought of Borat?)

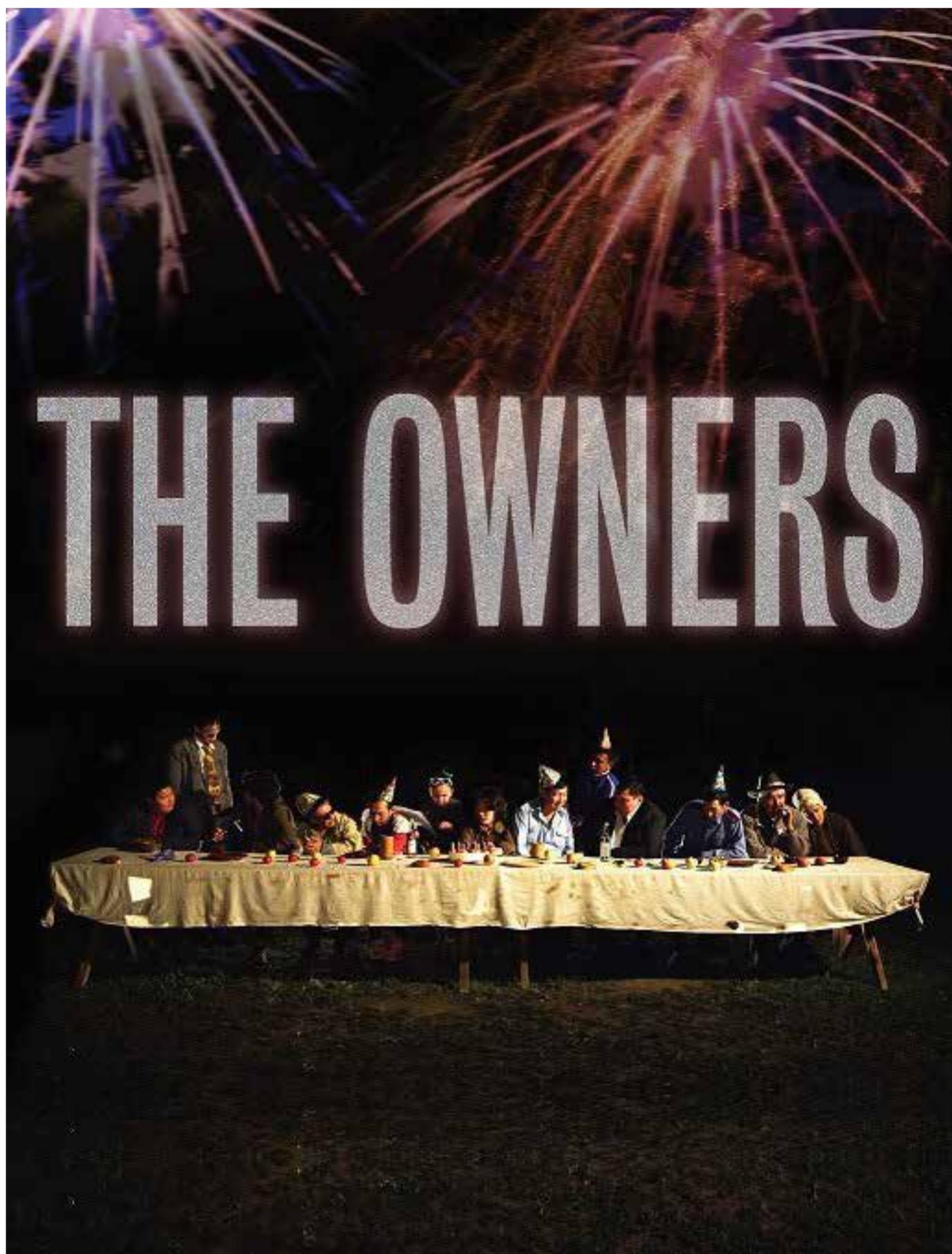
But the tides are changing – Katerina Suvorova’s documentary *Sea Tomorrow* (2016) was the first Kazakhstani film featured on Netflix Europe (Song 2022), and while light comedies and patriotic fare are the most popular films domestically, a generation of artistic filmmakers, creating outside of the state-backed studio Kazakhfilm, are making dramatic appearances at international festivals and sparking a growing, if gradually, wave of interest at home. Amongst the most noteworthy of this generation is the Partisan Movement – dissident filmmakers united by a manifesto of social-issue films made on limited budgets and without government interference (*The Artists*, 2015, pg. 71).

One of the founding Partisans was Adilkhan Yerzhanov.

Yerzhanov: Artist of the Absurd

Experiencing Tajikistan's civil war at a very young age substantially shaped Yerzhanov's relationship to violence, both personally and philosophically; "in your youth you do not fully realize the tragedy of the situation, many things seem funny... I can't help but look at aggression through the eyes of a six-year-old child" (Kosnazarov, 2019). This recognition of the absurdity of violence and struggle is reflected in the shared theme throughout his filmography, that being a depersonalized, detached perspective that observes how people act when pulled into intense situations, often by their own making.

Yerzhanov's first taste of recognition came with his third feature film *The Owners* (2014), a remake of sorts of his 2012 film *Constructors*, a minimalist black-and-white drama about an evicted trio of siblings who face off against a corrupt local bureaucracy. *The Owners* wildly swings in the opposite direction in appearance, with a vivid color scheme reminiscent of a painting, but the key elements of a Yerzhanov film come into view: a diso-



"The Owners" promotional poster, Short Brothers LLC

orientating tone blending pessimism and tragicomedy, a crooked and antagonistic state apparatus, and a headfirst dive into bloody, excessive violence (there are several gunfights). The film appeared as a last-minute addition to the "Special Screening" category at that year's Cannes Film Festival, marking Yerzhanov's inter-

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THE GENTLE INDIFFERENCE OF THE WORLD



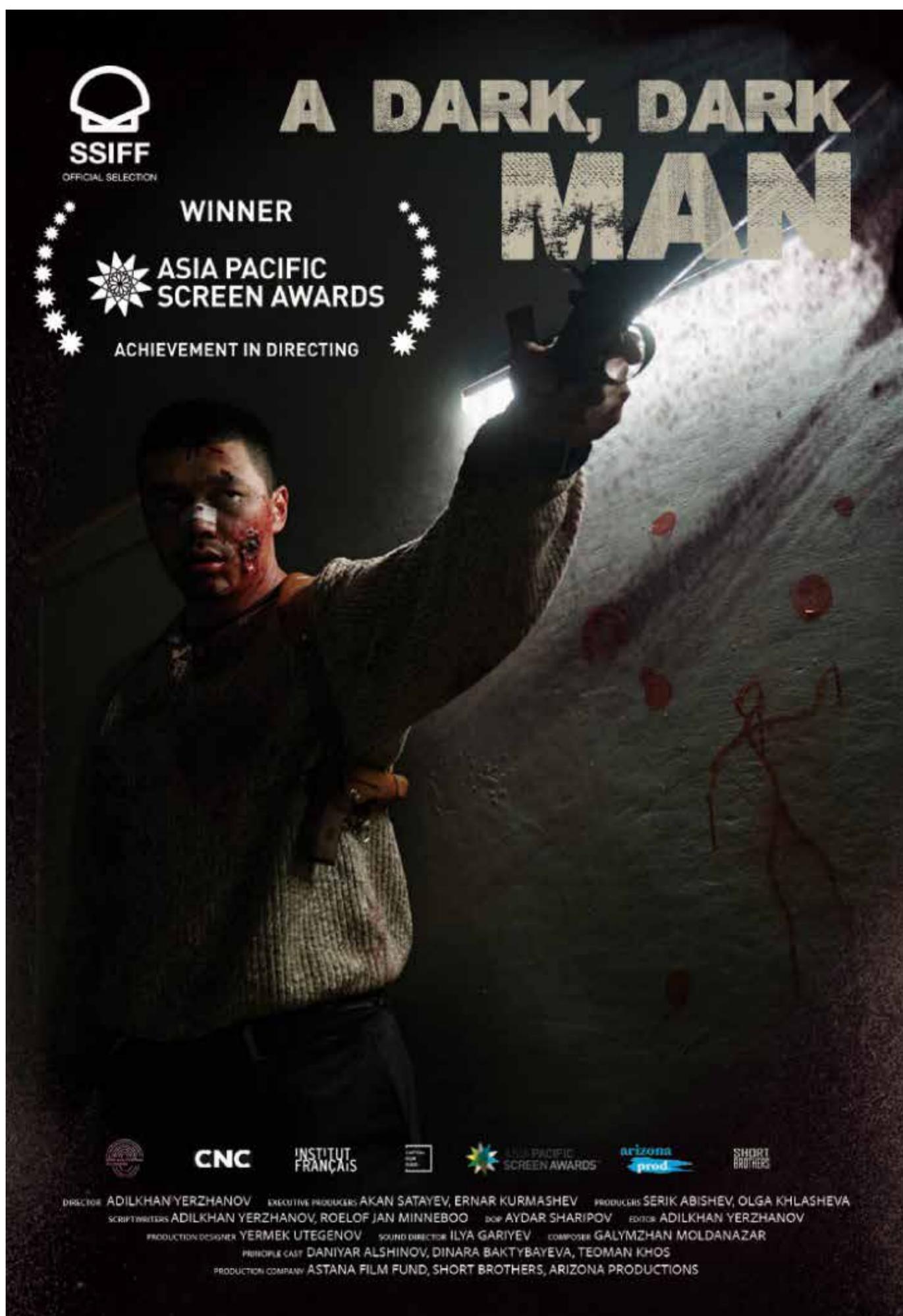
“The Gentle Indifference of the World” promotional poster,
Beta Cinema

national arrival as a true idiosyncratic vision worthy of notice (Dalton, 2014).

Yerzhanov returned to Cannes in 2018, this time in the prestigious “Un Certain Regard” selection, for the film *The Gentle Indifference of the World*, a story of two poor villagers – Saltanat and her admirer Kuan-

dyk – performing back-breaking labor in the city of Almaty to help Saltanat’s family escape debtor’s prison. When their mother is sent there anyway, and Kuandyk runs afoul of local mafioso Zambeke, the two protagonists, in classic Yerzhanov fashion, make a series of desperate decisions that don’t work out as well as hoped. While the distinctive themes of Yerzhanov’s cinema of poverty and corrupted justice remain, his filmmaking is noticeably restrained, using simple means to create lasting images and impressions. Saltanat’s only wardrobe in the film sees her switch out a warm red dress for a cooler blue dress, signifying the cold reality of the protagonists’ lives in the city.

The turn of the decade would further cement Yerzhanov in the spotlight with the back-to-back releases of *A Dark-Dark Man* (2019), which played in French theaters until the COVID-induced quarantine, and *Yellow Cat* (2020), which premiered at the Venice Film Festival (Bardot, 2020). The first of these films is a slow-burn, noir-inspired crime thriller following the investigation of a series of murders in a rural



“A Dark, Dark Man” promotional poster, Astana Film Fund

village. A city reporter, Ariana, shadows the crooked detective Bezkhata, who is accustomed to taking shortcuts (framing suspects before they “commit suicide” while in custody) and is now forced to actually conduct an investigation. The lines of mo-

rality between cops, gangsters, politicians and gamblers are deeply blurred, and the carefully framed cinematography of Aydar Sharipov underlines a twisted, ironic pessimism; in one scene, the camera focuses on a mirror reflection that Bezkat catches of himself in the act of killing a man. Yerzhanov took the prize for “Achievement in Directing” at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards for (often referred to as “Asian “Oscars”) for this dark film.

The follow-up *Yellow Cat* is similarly existentialist fare, a near-reimagining of Terrence Malik’s *Badlands* (1973) as it follows released the simple ex-con Kermek and his damsel-turned-sidekick Eva, who end up on the run after stealing a gang’s loot. It is one of Yerzhanov’s most overtly comedic films, with him observing in an interview with Nicolas Bardot that “Humor for me is a way of fighting reality” (2020), presenting the tragedy of foolish ambition as a farce.

Yerzhanov’s most recent film takes that sensibility to an almost impossible level, telling the story of a deadly school hostage situation as a slapstick black comedy.



“The Assault” promotional poster, Look Films

In “The Assault” (2022), an isolated, snow-bound town confronts a terrorist take-over of a local school, echoing the horrors of Beslan and other real-life events. With police and security professionals days away due to a winter storm, a motley and amateurish team of towns folks and teachers take matters into their own hands. In an inverse of the standard movie trope, it

turns out that a town full of irresponsible parents, petty bureaucrats, and a drunk school watchman can't actually transcend their incompetence and foibles when they try to rise to the occasion. Yerzhanov has the perspective of the terrorized child whose world was so full of violence, and who hopes the grown-ups will rescue him, and a jaded adult who knows people too well to expect them to be anything but themselves.

Karatas, the mythical remote town where Yerzhanov locates many of his films, captures an image of a specific time and place in Kazakhstan, but like small Iranian town of Koker in the films of Abbas Kiarostami, this small place is really a canvas on which Yerzhanov paints images of a broad scope of humanity. (Like Mongolian filmmaker Byambasuren Davaa, Yerzhanov and his cinematographer Aydar Sharipov also are masters at capturing the wonderful physical beauty of Central Asia.) Yerzhanov's artistic palette of tradition and modernity, life and death, hopes and fears, and tragedy and comedy renders an image of Karatas, what film critic Jessica Kiang

calls “world cinema’s smallest, wildest, weirdest crossover microcosm,” as located precisely on the Silk Road.

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Photo by Sungdon Hwang

HERITAGE

Registan Square: The Heart of Samarkand



Yu-jeong Lee

The Majestic Registan Square: A Jewel of Samarkand

Nestled in the heart of Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Registan Square stands as a testament to the grandeur and cultural rich-



Photo by Sungdon Hwang

ness of the Timurid Empire. This historic square, renowned for its stunning Islamic architecture, is not only a symbol of Samarkand's glorious past, but also serves as a vibrant cultural hub that continues to attract scholars, artists, and tourists from around the world. In this article, we will explore the historical significance, architectural brilliance, and enduring legacy of Registan Square.

Registan Square's origins date back to the 14th century, during the reign of Timur (Tamerlane), the creator of the Timurid Empire. Timur envisioned Samarkand as a thriving cultural and intellectual center located along the Silk Road. The term "Registan" translates to "sandy place" in Persian, a nod to its original use as a marketplace and public gathering space. Over

time, this central square became the epicenter of Samarkand's social and cultural life.

The most prominent structures in Registan are the three majestic madrasahs: Ulugh Beg Madrasah, Sher-Dor Madrasah, and Tilya-Kori Madrasah. Each madrasah, with its own unique architectural style and historical context, reflects the zenith of Islamic art and learning.

1. Ulugh Beg Madrasah

Built between 1417 and 1420 by Ulugh Beg, Timur's grandson, this madrasah is one of the oldest structures located in the square. Ulugh Beg was not only a ruler, but also a renowned astronomer and mathematician. His madrasah served as



an educational institution where scholars from across the Islamic world gathered to study astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy. The façade of Ulugh Beg Madrasah is adorned with intricate geometric patterns and exquisite calligraphy, showcasing the harmonious blend of science and art.

2. Sher-Dor Madrasah

Constructed between 1619 and 1636, Sher-Dor Madrasah is distinguished by its striking lion and sun motifs, a rare feature in Islamic architecture. The name “Sher-Dor” translates to “having tigers,” which symbolizes strength and power. The vibrant mosaic work and elaborate tile designs of this madrasah are a testament to the artistic prowess of Persian craftsmen. The building’s unique iconography and lavish decoration reflect a period of cultural renaissance in Samarkand.

3. Tilya-Kori Madrasah

Completed in 1660, Tilya-Kori Madrasah served a dual purpose as both a madrasah and a grand mosque. The name “Tilya-Kori” means “gilded,” aptly describing



Photo by Sungdon Hwang

the extensive use of gold leaf within its interior decoration. The mosque's prayer hall is particularly stunning, with its deep blue and gold embellishments, creating a celestial atmosphere. The madrasah's design demonstrates the Timurid architects' mastery in creating spaces that inspire

spiritual and intellectual reflection.

Registan Square has played a pivotal role in the cultural and intellectual life of Samarkand for centuries. During its peak, the madrasahs of Registan attracted some of the brightest minds of the Islamic world, fostering advancements in various fields of knowledge. The square served as a melting pot of ideas, where scholars, poets, and artists exchanged knowledge and creativity.

Today, Registan Square is a UNESCO World Heritage site, recognized for its outstanding universal value. It continues to be a focal point for cultural activities and celebrations in Samarkand. The annual Sharq Taronalari (Melodies of the East) music festival, held in Registan, draws performers and audiences from around the globe, celebrating the region's rich musical heritage.

Registan Square is more than just an architectural marvel; it is a living testament to the enduring legacy of the Timurid Empire. Its magnificent madrasahs stand as symbols of the rich cultural and intellectual heritage of Samarkand. For visitors, Reg-



Photo by Sungdon Hwang

istan offers a glimpse into the past, where the brilliance of Islamic art and science converged to create one of the most beautiful and historically significant sites in the world.

As we admire its intricate designs and grand structures, we are reminded of the timeless beauty and profound legacy of this extraordinary square.

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The Sao Truc – Vietnamese Melodious Flute



Amali Ranavi Thantrige

The flute plays a significant role in the traditional music of many Asian countries. The flute has an especially unique relationship with farmers and “paddies,” many of whom used to play the flute when watching their paddies at night before going off to bed (Stephen). As part of the Asian community, Vietnam also has its very own kind of flute, called the ‘Sao,’ which is known for its enchanting notes and gentle melody. In fact, this traditional flute of Vietnam has been known for years for its soothing Sao tone, which is capable of conveying emotions through voiceless narratives. Its origin and historical background have a lot to say about how it remains as an inescapable part of not only

Vietnam's extensive cultural heritage, but also in world music (Vietnam Traditional Instruments).

As noted earlier, the Sao was widely used by farmers back in the 11th century according to historical resources. People mainly used it during their day-to-day farming activities and on occasion as a part of relaxing and entertaining. However, this was not just an amusement of the general public, but also was a feature of royal court music during the Ly Dynasty (1010-1225), where this soothing tone would be performed for the emperor and his courtiers. This very fact displays the Sao's fundamental role in Vietnam's culture and society.



Sao Truc (Bamboo Flute).

Image from Vietnam Traditional Instruments



**Vietnamese
traditional music
performance.**

Photo by Hoang
Dinh Nam, 2010 AFP

The Sao was not performed alone at court; there was a presence of other musical instruments in an ensemble. Vietnamese folk music stories present how the Sao paired with other conventional instruments such as drums and flutes producing a finessed sound. Among other items, the Đàn Nguyệt (moon-fashioned lute), Đàn Đáy (long-necked lute), and Trống (drums), were played along with the Sao (Voice of Vietnam). Nevertheless, it is said that the Sao could stand out with its versatility and silvery-like sound. Furthermore, stories also claim that the Sao was often used to play solo melodies such as ‘nhac solo’. These were performed during various events including traditional ceremonies, weddings, and royal visits. Beyond these performances, the Sao seems to have played a role in the Vietnamese Opera,



Sao player Mao Meo, Photo by Ha Ngan.

The Voice of Vietnam (VOV World), 2016

called Hat Tuong. In these performances, the Sao performers offer musical accompaniment to their fellow singers and dancers while also adding emotional depth and refinement to the dramatic performances and increasing the audience's engagement.

The Sao Truc is called in English the “bamboo flute,” which gives makes clear some of its instrumental nature and features. Although it has a special place in court, that does not mean that the Sao is a luxury item. This elegant musical instrument is made from one whole piece of bamboo, which is very common in many Asian countries, consisting of six holes on top and one on the bottom, and the player uses fingers to produce various notes ac-

cordingly. One interesting and unique fact is that when playing the Sao, there will be a mixed feather-soft airy sound which relaxes many souls.

Becoming a Sao player might appear as an easy task as it can be produced by anyone with a bamboo piece. However, many Vietnamese stories highlight Sao players' dedication and rigorous practice as they must master breathing skills, finger dexterity, and embouchure (how to handle facial muscles, lips, and jaw), when playing the Sao in order to bring together the harmonies, excellent tones, and dynamics.

Although historically the Sao was mostly used by farmers or villagers, its uniqueness and ability to add variations when accompanied with other instruments has made the Sao an irreplaceable part of Vietnamese culture. As such, the Sao has been included in Mid-Autumn performances and even contemporary songs due to its great popularity. Furthermore, there are colleges and institutes that teach Sao Truc, which has opened doors to spread the story of Vietnamese traditional music.

Sao may look like a simple musical in-

strument to the modern eye. However, once people learn about it and hear its melodious tune, they will feel its embrace of Vietnamese traditional and contemporary music, creating a legacy of Sao for the coming generations. The Sao Truc can be seen as primarily a part of Vietnamese music, but it also represents the interconnection of socio-cultural areas along the Asian routes on Silk-Roads. Bamboo flutes hold a key place in traditional music in many countries, including Sri Lanka, India, China, and Iran, reminding us that it was not just trade, religion, and politics that spread along the Silk Roads, but also the spread of musical harmony and pure refreshment which has influenced each country's socio-cultural co-existence. If you are looking to embark on your next summer destination, this could be your sign to visit Vietnam, and to make sure to listen and enjoy some real-life Sao performances during your trip.

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The Chicken Roads: Tracing the Journey of Ancient Chickens from Central Asia to the World along Silk Roads

A Testament to Vibrant International
Exchanges on the Silk Roads



Ga-ram Lee

As every human knows, chickens are one of the most important animals in the world today. In 2022, there were 27.6 billion chickens alive, compared to around 8 billion humans, meaning that there were about 3.5 chickens for each to one person. Furthermore, worldwide, approximately 64 billion kilograms of eggs are consumed annually, which translates to over 1.2 trillion eggs entering human stomachs each year.

Chickens not only supplement our nutritional needs as a food source, but also hold economic value on farms and provide employment opportunities. Moreover, they play a crucial ecological role in maintaining soil health and aiding in organic matter decomposition. Lastly, from a cultural perspective, they contribute to the development of diverse culinary traditions and food cultures as versatile ingredients. Despite such importance, the chicken's origins and the process of their spread remain a puzzle in Eurasian animal history.

Spread of chickens along ancient Silk Roads

Recent research suggests that the Silk Roads, which played significant role in the exchange of goods between ancient East and West, also facilitated the global dissemination of domesticated chickens, which now have become one of the important sources worldwide.

Dr. Robert N. Spengler and his team at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History analyzed eggshell fragments found in Central Asia. They con-

cluded that chickens were domesticated and bred in southern Central Asia from around 400 BCE to the medieval period and spread widely through the ancient Silk Roads. Contrary to the previous belief that people in ancient Central Asia primarily raised sheep, goats, and cattle, this research revealed that chickens also held an important position in their livelihoods and economies.

Research methods and key findings

The lack of consensus on chicken domestication mainly has been due to research challenges such as difficulties in identifying chicken morphology, lack of precise dating, and poor preservation conditions of thin bird bones.

The researchers of this study employed an interdisciplinary approach, combining morphological identification, peptide mass fingerprinting, and ancient DNA analysis to accurately identify chicken eggshell fragments from 13 archaeological sites spanning from 400 BCE to 1000 CE. The research team identified the origin of these

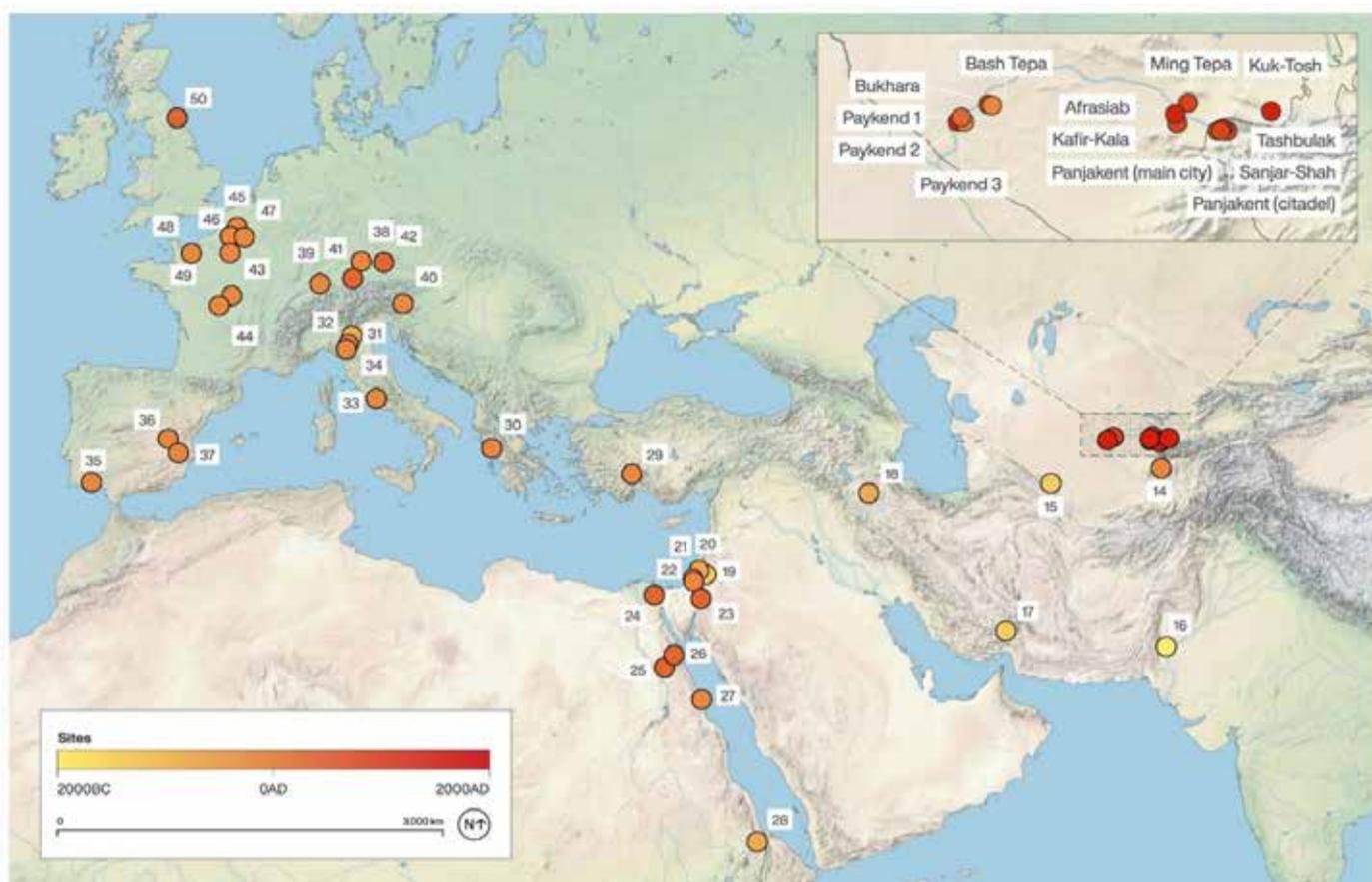
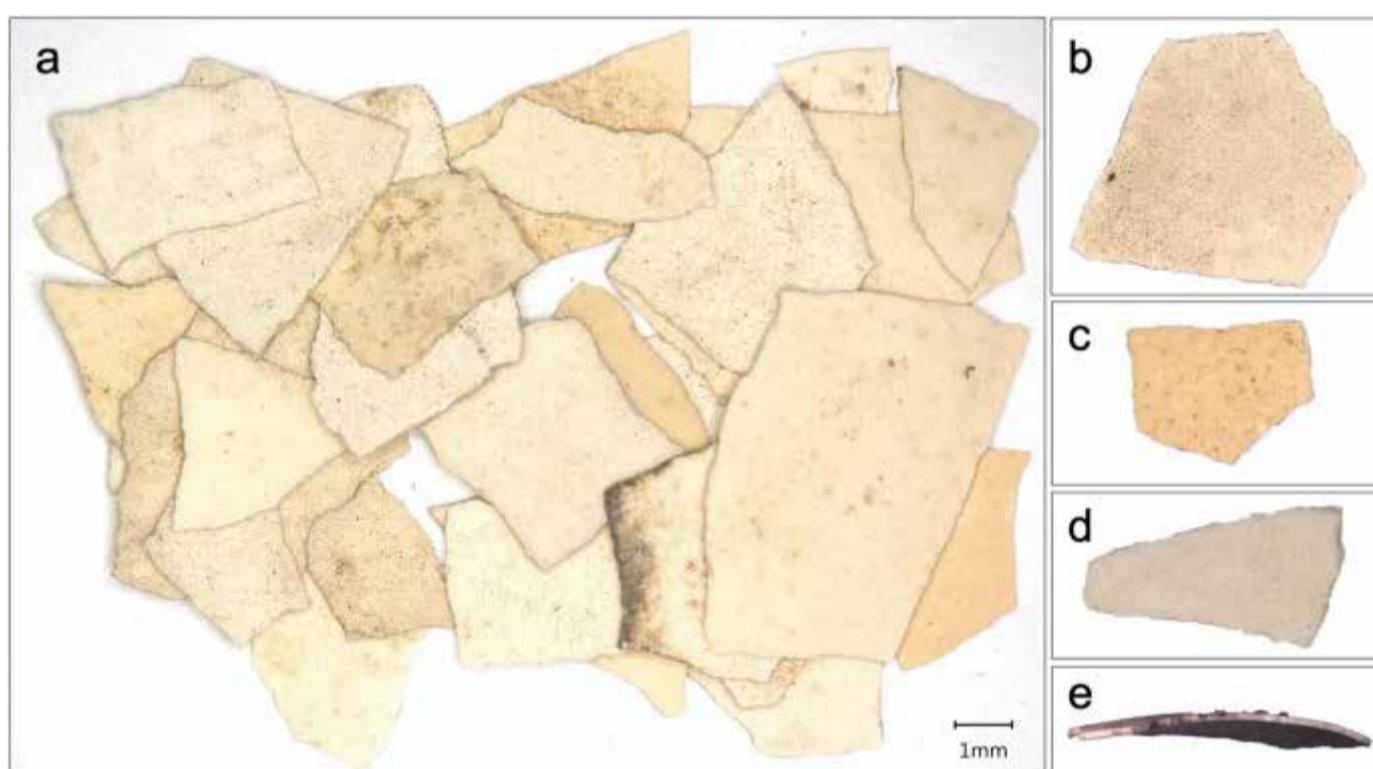


Image of key data points to the dispersal of chicken

Image from Peters et al.



Images of eggshells including:

a Eggshells from the Bash Tapa FS2 sample

b an eggshell from the Paykend FS8 sample (midden)

c an eggshell from the Baykend FS15 sample (rabat)

d an Afrasiab eggshell

e a Tashbulak eggshell. Images from Peters et al.

sites' eggs through biomolecular analysis (ZooMS), which analyzes protein components in bones, skin, and shells of animals, unlike genetic analysis using DNA, by collecting thousands of pieces of eggshells

from these sites.

The research team stated that the abundance of eggshells in the sediment layers of these sites suggests that chickens were not laying eggs seasonally like wild chickens, but rather were laying a significant number of eggs regularly. This indicates that chickens were already being domesticated for egg production at that time, providing the first clear evidence of such practices.

Conclusion: Silk Roads serve as Chicken Roads

In conclusion, the characteristics of domesticated chickens, capable of laying many eggs regardless of the season, would have been highly attractive to people of that time. The research results indicate that domesticated chickens capable of laying many eggs were being raised by around 400 BCE in Central Asia and spread widely along the Silk Roads, becoming the economically important animals we know them nowadays.

Notably, Dr. Spengler's study is the first to confirm evidence of chickens' non-sea-

sonal egg-laying traits in archaeological records. It provides an important clue for better understanding the reciprocal relationship between humans and domesticated animals along the Silk Roads, or perhaps we could call them ‘The Chicken Roads’ from now on.

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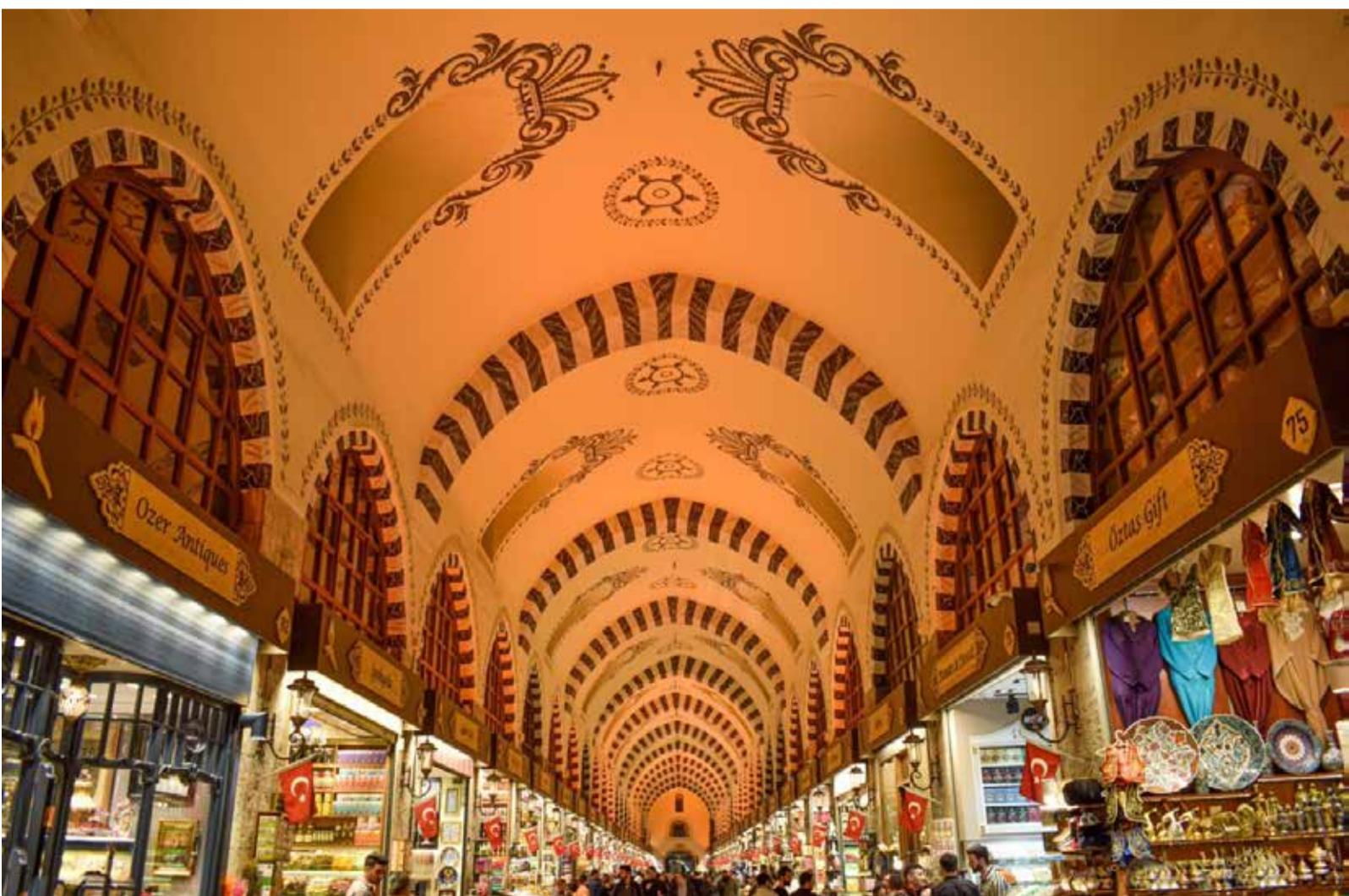
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The Spice Bazaar in Istanbul: A Historical and Cultural Nexus of the Silk Roads



Sercan Yeşilköy



Main street view of the Spice Bazaar. Photo by Ben_Kerckx

The Spice Bazaar in Istanbul, also known as the Egyptian Bazaar (Mısır Çarşısı), is one of Turkey's most celebrated covered markets. This vibrant marketplace is not only a hub for commerce but also a living testament to Istanbul's rich historical tapestry, deeply intertwined with the legacy of the Silk Road. Overflowing with an array of exotic spices, herbs, and goods, the bazaar encapsulates centuries of trade, cultural exchange, and culinary tradition.

Extraordinary Characteristics:

Historical Roots and Strategic Location

Constructed in 1660 as part of the New Mosque complex, the Spice Bazaar was initially intended to support the mosque's financial needs. Situated in the Eminönü district, adjacent to the Golden Horn, its location was strategically chosen to maximize trade opportunities. The bazaar quickly rose to prominence as a central marketplace for spices, herbs, textiles, and other goods arriving from the East via the Silk Road.

Commonly referred to as the Egyptian Bazaar among locals, the name stems from



Possibly Mimar Sinan (left) at the tomb of Suleiman the Magnificent, 1566 manuscript. Photo by Wikipedia

its historical funding by taxes levied on goods imported from Egypt, a significant source of spices and other products during the Ottoman era. This connection to Egyptian trade solidified its name and reinforced its role as a critical hub in the region's trade networks. The Spice Bazaar designed by the court architect Koca Kasım Ağa, a protégé (Mentor) of the legendary

Mimar Sinan(The greatest ottoman architect), the Spice Bazaar is an architectural marvel. The L-shaped building, adorned with a series of domes and vaults, exudes grandeur and invites visitors into its bustling corridors. The bazaar houses over 85 shops, each offering a distinct array of products ranging from spices, herbs, nuts, dried fruits, and sweets to textiles, ceramics, and souvenirs.

The Gateway of the Silk Roads

The Silk Road, an extensive network of trade routes connecting the East and West, was pivotal in fostering economic and cultural exchanges across continents. Istanbul, formerly known as Byzantium and lat-



Products of the Spice Bazaar. Photo by Wikipedia



The traditional Ottoman delicacy, baklava, maintains its enduring popularity, unchanged from previous times.

Photo by Meruyert
Gonullu

er Constantinople, was a crucial juncture on this route. The Spice Bazaar epitomizes this connection, serving as a significant distribution point for goods transported along the Silk Road. Navigating through the Spice Bazaar is a sensory journey like no other. The air is infused with the rich aromas of spices such as saffron, cumin, sumac, and turmeric. Vendors eagerly offer samples of lokum (Turkish delight), dried apricots, and various nuts, enhancing the market's vibrant atmosphere. The vivid colors of spices and sweets create a visual feast, while the sounds of haggling and bustling crowds add to the dynamick ambiance.

The Spice Bazaar transcends its role as a marketplace; it is a cultural cornerstone reflecting Turkey's rich culinary heritage and the cultural amalgamation facilitated by the Silk Road. The spices and herbs available in the bazaar have been integral to Turkish cuisine, influencing traditional dishes such as kebabs, pilafs, and mezes. The market also showcases traditional Ottoman sweets like baklava and Turkish delight, iconic symbols of Turkish gastronomy. Additionally, the bazaar serves as a living museum, offering visitors a glimpse into the traditional trade practices that have endured through centuries. The interaction between merchants and buyers, the art of bargaining, and the display of goods in ornate, eye-catching manners evoke the historical trade practices of the Silk Road era.

Contemporary Relevance

In the modern era, the Spice Bazaar continues to thrive, attracting millions of visitors annually. It remains a vital part of Istanbul's cultural and economic landscape. Despite the advent of modern supermar-



Entrance of the Spice Bazaar.

Photo by Tolga
Ahmetler

kets and global trade, the bazaar retains its charm and authenticity. It stands as a symbol of the enduring legacy of the Silk Road and the historical significance of Istanbul as a global trade nexus. The Spice Bazaar in Istanbul is more than just a market; it is a historical and cultural landmark that encapsulates the essence of the Silk Road. Its rich history, architectural beauty, and sensory delights offer a unique glimpse into the past, while its continued vibrancy highlights the enduring legacy of this ancient trade route. As one navigates through its bustling corridors, it is easy to

imagine the centuries of trade and cultural exchange that have passed through this iconic marketplace.

The Spice Bazaar is not just a marketplace, but a journey through time, where the past and present coexist. Every corner of the bazaar tells a story of a bygone era, of traders and travelers, of cultural exchanges and culinary traditions. It is a place where history is not just remembered but lived, a place where every spice and herb, every sweet and textile, carries with it the essence of the Silk Road. For those seeking an authentic experience of Istanbul's rich heritage, the Spice Bazaar offers an unparalleled journey through the heart of the city's historical and cultural nexus.

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Diwali Festival Boasts Indian Heritage



Yu-jeong Lee & Gopi Krishna

The Festival of Lights Illuminates India's Cultural Heritage

Diwali, also known as Deepavali, is one of the most important festivals in India, celebrated with grandeur and enthusiasm by millions of people across the country and around the world.

Often referred to as the Festival of Lights, Diwali symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. This ancient Hindu festival, with its rich history and deep cultural significance, brings together families and communities in a vibrant display of lights, rituals, and festive cheer.

The origins of Diwali are rooted in vari-



Photo by Times of India

ous historical and mythological narratives, reflecting the diverse cultural tapestry of India. One of the most popular legends associated with Diwali is the return of Lord Rama to his kingdom, Ayodhya, after a 14-year exile and his victory over the demon king Ravana. The people of Ayodhya, overjoyed by Rama's return, illuminated the city with oil lamps, marking the first celebration of Diwali.

Another important source story is that of Lord Krishna's triumph over the demon Narakasura, which signifies the victory of good over evil. Additionally, Diwali is linked to the worship of Goddess Lakshmi, the deity of wealth and prosperity. It is believed that on this auspicious day, Laksh-



Photo by Gopi Krishna

mi emerged from the ocean of milk during the churning of the sea (Samudra Manthan) and visits homes to bless devotees with prosperity and happiness.

Diwali is celebrated over five days, each with its own unique rituals and customs:

1. Dhanteras: The first day of Diwali, Dhanteras, is dedicated to the worship of Dhantari, the god of health and Ayurveda. On this day, people clean their homes and purchase new items, especially gold and silver, as a sign of good fortune.

2. Naraka Chaturdashi (Choti Diwali): The second day, also known as Choti Diwali, commemorates Krishna's victory over Narakasura. It is a day of early morning ritu-



Photo by StockImageFactory.com

als, including a ceremonial bath and the lighting of lamps to ward off evil spirits.

3. **Lakshmi Puja:** The third day is the main day of Diwali, dedicated to the worship of Goddess Lakshmi. Homes are adorned with colorful rangolis, oil lamps, and candles. Families come together to perform Lakshmi Puja, a ceremony seeking her blessings for wealth and prosperity. Fireworks light up the night sky, symbolizing the joy and festivity of the occasion.

4. **Govardhan Puja:** The fourth day marks Govardhan Puja, which celebrates Lord Krishna's lifting of the Govardhan Hill

to protect villagers from torrential rains. Devotees create small mounds of cow dung, representing Govardhan Hill, and offer prayers and food to Krishna.

5. Bhai Dooj: The final day of Diwali, Bhai Dooj, is a celebration of the bond between brothers and sisters. Sisters perform the aarti ceremony and apply a tilak on their brothers' foreheads, praying for their long life and well-being, while brothers give gifts and promise to protect their sisters.

Diwali is not only celebrated in India but also by the Indian diaspora around the world, including countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, and beyond. In recent years, Diwali has gained international recognition, with public celebrations and events organized in cities like New York, London, and Sydney, bringing together people of different cultures and backgrounds.

The festival also holds economic significance, as it is a peak shopping season in India. Retailers and businesses offer special discounts and promotions, contributing to a surge in consumer spending. The



Photos by Gopi Krishna

exchange of gifts and sweets, coupled with the festive atmosphere, strengthens social bonds and fosters a sense of community.

While Diwali is a time of joy and celebration, it also brings attention to environmental and social issues. The excessive use of fireworks contributes to air and noise pollution, leading to health concerns, especially in urban areas. In response, there has been a growing movement towards eco-friendly celebrations, promoting the use of green crackers, organic rangoli colors, and the reduction of plastic waste.

Moreover, Diwali emphasizes the importance of charity and compassion. Many individuals and organizations take this opportunity to support the underprivileged, distributing food, clothes, and other essentials to those in need, embodying the true



Image by Canva

spirit of the festival.

Diwali, with its profound cultural, religious, and social significance, continues to be a beacon of light and hope for millions. It is a celebration that transcends regional and religious boundaries, bringing together people in a collective expression of joy, gratitude, and unity. As Diwali lights up homes and hearts, it serves as a reminder of the enduring values of love, compassion, and the eternal victory of light over darkness

The 2024 Diwali festival is set to take place from November 1st to 5th, offering a five-day celebration filled with vibrant rituals and customs. This year presents a unique opportunity to immerse yourself

in the rich traditions and cultural heritage of India. Why not consider participating in the Diwali festivities? Experience firsthand the joy of this luminous festival, share in the festive spirit with family and friends, and marvel at the enchanting displays of lamps and fireworks that light up the night. Diwali is more than just a festival; it is a time to recharge your positive energy and embrace the hope and optimism that it brings.

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Bacalhau à Brás Symbolizes Portugal's National Identity



Yu-jeong Lee



Bacalhau a bras.

Photo by Proformabooks

A Culinary Symbol of Portugal's Rich Heritage

Portugal, renowned for its stunning landscapes, rich history, and vibrant culture, boasts a culinary tradition deeply rooted in its past. Among the myriads of Portuguese dishes, Bacalhau à Brás stands out as a quintessential example of the nation's gastronomic identity. This beloved dish, made with salted cod (called "bacalhau"), onions, and potatoes, encapsulates the essence of Portuguese cuisine and serves as a symbol of the country's culinary heritage.

The history of Bacalhau à Brás is intertwined with Portugal's long-standing relationship with codfish. Dating back to the 16th century, Portuguese fishermen embarked on perilous journeys to the North Atlantic, where they discovered abundant codfish in the waters near Newfoundland. The process of salting and drying cod enabled these early fishermen to preserve their catch for long periods of time, making Bacalhau (salted cod) a staple in Portuguese diets.

Bacalhau à Brás is believed to have orig-

inated in Lisbon, specifically in the Bairro Alto district, known for its bustling taverns and vibrant nightlife. The dish is named after its purported creator, Brás, a tavern owner who is said to have perfected this recipe. Over time, Bacalhau à Brás has evolved and spread throughout the country, becoming a cherished dish in Portuguese homes and restaurants alike.

At its core, Bacalhau à Brás is a simple yet flavorful dish that highlights the versatility of salted cod. The primary ingredients include shredded Bacalhau, thinly sliced onions, and finely chopped potatoes, often cut into matchstick-sized pieces. These components are sautéed together in olive oil until they reach a harmonious blend of textures and flavors.

The addition of eggs, gently scrambled into the mixture, provides a creamy consistency that binds the ingredients together. Freshly chopped parsley and black olives are typically used as garnishes, adding a burst of color and freshness to the dish. Some variations may include ingredients such as garlic, bay leaves, or a splash of white wine, enhancing the complexity of



Dried cod.

Photo by ©2foodtrippers

flavors.

Bacalhau à Brás is more than just a culinary delight; it embodies the cultural and historical narratives of Portugal. The ever-presence of Bacalhau in Portuguese cuisine is often attributed to the Catholic practice of abstaining from meat on certain days, which led to the creation of numerous Bacalhau-based dishes. Today, there are said to be over 1,000 recipes for Bacalhau in Portugal, with Bacalhau à Brás being one of the most popular.

This dish also reflects the Portuguese spirit of adaptability and resourcefulness. The use of readily available and preserved ingredients like salted cod and potatoes



Photo by Natalia Mylova

demonstrates how Portuguese cuisine has evolved in response to historical and economic conditions. Bacalhau à Brás is often served during family gatherings, festive occasions, and traditional celebrations, reinforcing its role as a symbol of unity and shared heritage.

In recent years, Bacalhau à Brás has gained international recognition, finding its way into the menus of Portuguese restaurants worldwide. Its appeal lies in its comforting flavors and the simplicity of its preparation, making it accessible to home cooks and professional chefs alike. Culinary enthusiasts have experimented with modern twists on this classic dish, incorporating contemporary ingredients and

techniques while maintaining its traditional essence.

In Portugal, Bacalhau à Brás continues to be a favorite among both locals and tourists, often featured in culinary festivals and cooking competitions. The dish's enduring popularity is a testament to its timeless appeal and its deep-rooted connection to Portuguese identity.

Bacalhau à Brás is not just a dish; it reflects Portugal's rich cultural tapestry and historical legacy. Its origins in the maritime traditions of Portuguese fishermen, its evolution through centuries of culinary innovation, and its status as a beloved national dish highlight the profound relationship between food and cultural identity. As Portugal continues to celebrate its culinary heritage, Bacalhau à Brás stands as a delicious reminder of the country's enduring traditions and the unifying power of food. For anyone seeking to experience the heart of Portuguese cuisine, a taste of Bacalhau à Brás is essential, offering a flavorful journey through Portugal's storied past and vibrant present.

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SUN NEWS

The 9th General Assembly of the Silk Road Universities Network (SUN) in Naples: An Event Not to Miss

The 9th General Assembly of the Silk Road Universities Network (SUN) and the International Association of Silk Road Studies (IASS) Conference will be hosted by the University of Naples L'Orientale and SUN in Naples, Italy. The General Assembly and International Conference of IASS will be held together as in-person, three-day event from November 10th to 13th, 2024. The theme and the schedule for the 9th General Assembly is still being finalized. To stay informed on the latest updates, please regularly check the SUN official website: www.sun-silkroadia.org

2023-2024 WRICOS, PHOCOS, S-DECOS: Themes and Submission Details

The Silk Road Universities Network (SUN) has announced the themes for its annual contests, PHOCOS, WRICOS, and S-DECOS, for the academic year 2023-2024. Each contest focuses on a unique aspect of cultural and intellectual exploration, inviting participants to engage creatively and critically with the given themes.

PHOCOS: “Leisure and Play”

The theme for this year’s PHOCOS contest is “Leisure and Play.” Participants are encouraged to explore the various dimensions of leisure activities and the significance of play in different cultures, especially within the context of the Silk Roads. This theme offers a broad canvas for creative expression, allowing entrants to delve into historical, cultural, and contemporary perspectives on leisure and play. The submission deadline is September 13, 2024 and results will be announced October 16, 2024.

WRICOS: “Trees: Symbolism and Environmental Impact”

WRICOS features two distinct categories this year. For the poetry section, the theme is

“Trees: Any Subjects Related to Trees.” Poets are invited to reflect on the symbolic, cultural, and ecological significance of trees. In the essay section, participants can choose between two themes:

“Trees and People along the Silk Roads” – an exploration of the historical and cultural connections between communities and trees along the ancient trade routes.

“How is Contemporary Climate Change Affecting the Physical Landscapes and Environments along the Silk Roads?” – an analysis of the impact of climate change on the natural landscapes and ecosystems in these regions. The submission deadline is September 13, 2024 and results will be announced October 16, 2024.

S-DECOS:

Theme Under Discussion

The theme for S-DECOS is still under discussion. Details will be announced soon, and participants are encouraged to check the official website for updates.

Submission Guidelines of three contests:

All submissions for PHOCOS, WRICOS, and S-DECOS must be made via the official SUN

website. Detailed information about the contests, including submission deadlines and entry requirements, can be found at www.sun-silkroadia.org. Participants are urged to keep an eye on the website for any updates or changes to the contest schedules.

The SUN contests offer a unique platform for students, scholars, and creative minds to showcase their talents and contribute to the rich tapestry of Silk Road cultures and histories. Don't miss the opportunity to participate in these prestigious competitions and share your insights with a global audience.

Prize and Awards Ceremony:

The awards ceremony for the PHOCOS, WRICOS, and S-DECOS contests will take place at the 9th General Assembly in Naples, Italy. All prize winners will be invited to attend the General Assembly to receive their awards and participate in the event.

USSUN NEWS

2024 first OT

At our first meeting, the OT session, we had time to introduce the purpose and principles of SUN. The Silk Road University Network serves as a pivotal point in opening new paths of communication and cooperation, future creation, and peace and harmony through education, research, and the exchange of academia and culture related to the Silk Road. USSUN, an autonomous student organization under SUN, is an international organization within our uni-



versity. In particular, the professor in charge gave a detailed explanation about the purpose and orientation of USSUN, which allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of this activity. Additionally, we took time for each team—PF, RS, and PR—to introduce themselves, which helped us to understand the overall activities. It was a time filled with anticipation for our future activities.

USSUN-HUFS OT

As a major project for the 2024-1 semester, we decided to hold an online club fair that can operate at all times through the Metaverse instead of attending the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies club fair. We created a metaverse exhibition hall and held an expo unique to USSUN-HUFS. This project is an exhibition hall created through the efforts of the PR team, PF team, and RS team. The exhibition hall offers a look at five cities under the theme of 'Cities on the Silk Road and relics within those cities.' Cities such as Xi'an, Karakorum, Melaka, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Safra Blue were selected for the exhibition. The exhibition hall consists of a total of three halls, and there are quizzes in between, making it a fun experience. Those who haven't participated yet will have a great experience if they do. If you go to

the USSUN_HUFS Instagram and click the link tree link, there will be a Zep link, so please participate!



Images by USSUN HUFS



Images by USSUN HUFS

Walking on the streets of Central Asia

On May 5, I visited the streets of Central Asia. Interestingly, if you go to the streets of Central Asia, the most common thing you see is the name 'Samarkand.' Especially, you can see many such signs on the streets of Uzbekistan. There are very few Uzbek restaurants that do

not have the name 'Samarkand' in their name. That's how much Uzbek people think of the city of Samarkand and how proud they are of its food.

A restaurant I've been to is called "Uzbekistan Grand Samarkand." The Uzbek flag hanging on the right side of the restaurant is an impressive feature. If you go inside, you can see paintings of the remains of Samarkand, traditional Uzbek clothing, and bowls containing traditional patterns. Unlike some Middle East cultures, Uzbekistan's bowl patterns are more influenced by Persia and are more colorful despite being in the same Islamic sphere.

The foods I ordered were 'Shaslick', 'Samsa', and 'Borcsh'. Borsch and samsa have a strong appetizer feel. Borsch is a soup made with beet and various vegetables and meat. It is especially delicious if you put sugar-free yogurt inside. Borsch can be eaten not only in Uzbekistan, but also in various countries of the former Soviet Union, including Russia and Kazakhstan. The food culture is similar in Uzbekistan and other



countries of the former Soviet Union because it served as a cultural melting pot. This culture originated in what today is modern Ukraine so if its origin is strictly examined. It is interesting that you can study culture and history with food.

'Samsa' is made by putting meat or pumpkins inside bread. The shape of the bread is slightly different depending on the region and the person making it. Still, the most common shape is a triangle. Many people order meat samsa, but personally I'm used to meat bread so I think the best variety of samsa is pumpkin bread. If you visit, make sure to try it.

"Shaslick" is a skewer dish. You can see that



most Uzbek restaurants sell beef or lamb. The reason is that Uzbekistan is a Muslim country where most of its people believe in Islam and pork is considered taboo. That's why Uzbek restaurants recommend eating lamb. It will be a different experience for many.

If you visit an Uzbek restaurant, I recommend to drink a fruit juice called 'Kompot'. Uzbekistan's fruit is famous for its deliciousness. It doesn't rain in the summer, so the juice is alive, sweet, and delicious. After eating fruit in the summer, the remaining fruit in the fall is boiled and made into a drink. Fruit juice made in this way is delicious and good for your body. In particular, the apricot juice tastes unique, so I hope you try it.

The streets of the Dongdaemun district in Seoul are very representative of Central Asia, particularly Uzbekistan, which was influenced by the former Soviet Union. Not only restaurants but also bakeries and grocery stores in Uzbekistan are strongly represented. If you want to experience something unique, make sure to visit the streets of Central Asia and visit Uzbekistan's restaurants.

Debate On The Chinese Belt And Road Initiative

At the end of May, 2024, a debate was held under the theme “Does China’s Belt and Road Initiative have a positive effect on the harmony of the Silk Road?” Based on the data each side researched, we chose either a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ position to talk about our thoughts. Most members answered ‘yes’ to the topic, citing economic growth, promotion of infrastructure development, and cultural exchange in developing countries. On the other hand, the members who answered ‘no’ expressed a negative stance on the Belt and Road policy because they put too much debt and economic burden on the participating countries. Members in different positions also engaged in activities such as refuting each other's arguments and asking questions about each other's issues.

How and Why Could the Walls Of Hanyang Wall Be Preserved?

The Hanyangdoseong is the historic defensive wall around the capital once known as Hanseongbu, now part of Seoul. It is said that

the length of the capital city was 18.6 km, and the population was about 100,000 people at the time the wall was constructed in the 1390s CE. In modern times, portions of the capital city walls were restored to create a new path and you can enjoy wonderful scenery along the fortress defenses. Originally, the castle was built with dirt, but it was rebuilt with stone during the King Sejong era (1419–50 CE). Within 3 km of the fortress, it was a green belt during the Joseon Dynasty. This means that the area within 3 km of the exterior of the fortress was reserved as open space without settlements. So, when did people start living there? It was after the 'Dunjeon' was carried out. 'Dunjeon' was an arrangement in which the soldiers stationed at a military base were also provided land on which to farm so as to provide their own subsistence. Working as farmers in times of peace and warriors in time of conflict, soldiers began to live there.

The Joseon Dynasty had relatively little experience of war, so the height of the wall reflected the desire to maintain the dignity of the capital rather than the role of resisting an enemy. It would have had to be much higher if it had been prepared for war. After the Yi In-jwa's Rebellion against King Yeongjo (1728 CE) era', the wall became a featured element of the defense system to strengthen the protection of the cap-

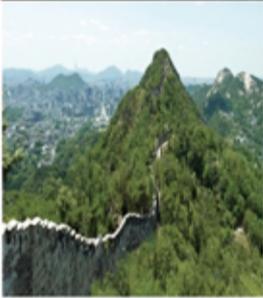
ital. About 30 military families settled and lived there. Due to the difficulty of farming, exclusive rights called 'Majeon' were granted to various commercial and industrial activities during the Joseon Dynasty so that residents could live. In addition, by granting 'Hunjo' at the same time, peach trees were planted and the lives of the residents were stabilized, with many villas created.

The function of the wall was primarily to protect the city from enemies and secondarily to qualify it as a true city. The wall itself prevents people's movement and passage was limited to only the eight gates, and this made it difficult for the city to expand and develop. In March 1908, portions of the walls at the Heunginjimun Gate (also known as known as Dongdaemun or "the Great Eastern Gate") were demolished to install a tramway. The demolition of the wall was typical of the development of many industrializing cities. The total length of the Hanyang Fortress is 18.6 km, of which 13.7 km was preserved in a large proportion. In the case of Seoul, a city with hundreds of thousands of people becoming a city with 10 million people, more than half of the wall still could be preserved. How was this possible? It could have been safely preserved because the wall was not used for combat or war. Seoul was said to have a dual structure of the wall. It is composed of

the first 'Hanyang Fortress' and the second 'Eternal Fortress'. In fact, wars actually broke out in the outskirts of the city, such as 'Bukhan Fortress', 'Namhan Fortress', and 'Haengju Fortress'. Though many cities were forced to fight against an enemy right at their city gates, the Korean capital wall was not destroyed because it was surrounded by a sort of natural fortress, the mountain which formed a strategic advantage to block the enemy from entering.

Hanyang Doseong Study Booklet

1. Introduction to Hanyang Doseong and Naksan Section
2. Structure of the Hanyang Doseong Wall
3. Episodes related to Hanyang Doseong
4. Hidden secrets about Hanyang Doseong
5. Tips for visiting Hanyang Doseong



1. Introduction to Hanyang Doseong and Naksan Section

The photo above is a panoramic view of Hanyang Doseong, the ancient fortress of Hanyang, the capital city built during the Joseon Dynasty. This 18.6km long fortress wall runs from Namsan Mountain through Dongdaemun, Sungnyemun, Donuimun, and Seodaemun. It plays an important role in understanding Seoul's history and culture. Hanyang Doseong was built by King Taejo of the Joseon Dynasty in 1396 and was used as a boundary to defend the capital and indicate its legitimacy. It also plays a symbolic role in representing the legitimacy of the Joseon Dynasty.



The photo below shows the Naksan section of Hanyang Doseong, which is a course between Hyehwamun and Heunginjimun. This section is located to the east of Hanyang Doseong. It allows you to compare the appearance of the walls from different periods and offers various scenic views as you pass by Jangsu Village.

Função e Importância das Pedras Inscritas:

- **Rastreabilidade:** As gravações permitem identificar a proveniência de cada pedra, ajudando a alocar e gerenciar recursos de forma eficiente.
- **Controle de Qualidade:** Cada pedra era gravada com o nome da pessoa responsável pela extração ou do órgão governamental, garantindo responsabilidade e controle de qualidade.

Registros Históricos: Esses marcadores são evidências históricas valiosas que registram as pessoas e organizações envolvidas na construção da muralha e suas contribuições.

Função de pedra das Pedras Inscritas

As Pedras Inscritas tinham o nome da autoridade responsável pela extração, ou por vezes o nome do funcionário envolvido na extração, bem como um número que indicava em que ordem a pedra seria utilizada. Por exemplo, a marca "Seongbu" indica que a pedra foi extraída sob a gestão de Seongbu.

Modernas:

As pedras continuam sendo descobertas durante os trabalhos de restauração em Hanyang Doseong. Elas são usadas para manter a precisão histórica nas restaurações.

- As marcações permitem que os pesquisadores compreendam as técnicas de construção e os sistemas de gestão da Dinastia Joseon, determinando quando e como seções específicas da muralha foram construídas.

As Pedras Inscritas de Hanyang Doseong são mais do que apenas um tipo de material de construção. Elas são um valioso patrimônio histórico que proporciona um vislumbre da vida das pessoas e do sistema administrativo do país durante a Dinastia Joseon.

5. Dicas para Visitar Hanyang Doseong

A seção Naksan de Hanyang Doseong é mais fácil que outras áreas, tomando-a adequada para iniciantes. No entanto, o passeio é longo, por isso é recomendável calçar sapatos confortáveis, vestir roupas adequadas e levar bastante água.

NEWS FROM **MEMBER UNIVERSITIES**

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

The “European Language Label 2021-2022” was awarded to the School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki for its innovative methods of language teaching and learning

The School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has been offering Modern Greek language courses to foreigners and expatriates since 1970. It offers courses for special purposes, as well as teacher training seminars. It participates in research projects and educational cooperation programs with national and international institutions. It also organizes examinations for the acquisition of the certificate of proficiency in the Greek language.

The “European Language Label 2021-2022” was awarded to the School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thes-



The School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

saloniki, for the implementation of the project “New without Borders / World in Order”. The European Language Label is a distinction awarded to institutions and individuals who succeed in developing tools and teaching methods that can become good practices and be adopted in language environments other than the ones they have developed. The award highlights, once again, the strong teaching and learning practices implemented at the School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

More information about the School of Modern Greek Language:
<https://smg.web.auth.gr/may2019b/en/>

The Student Team “SeaCare” of AUTH ranked among the top five in the Global Innovation Final Competition “Invent for The Planet 2024”

An innovative idea of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki’s student team “SeaCare” has emerged, on a global level, as one of the top five solutions to address the topical issue of incidental catches.

The students stood out among 618 students from 19 universities around the world to take part in the “Invent For The Planet 2024” competition.

The team from AUTH has proposed a solution to a significant problem that threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands of marine organisms, including dolphins, small whales, turtles, seals, and sharks. Many of these marine species, several of which are under protection, are often at risk of unintentional entanglement in fishing nets. Within 48 hours, the team managed to



“Invent For The Planet 2024” competition and the student team “SeaCare” of AUTH.

coordinate and propose an innovative device that utilizes photo-acoustic waves to deter large marine species, without impacting the fish that fishermen intend to catch.

The first Greek student experiment on a REXUS rocket flight took place on Tuesday 12 March 2024, at 7:15 in the morning (Greece time), in northern Sweden (Kiruna), by the student team BEAM 3rd Gen of AUTH.

The aim of the DROPSTAR experiment (Study of Oil Droplet Coalescence in Emulsions in Microgravity) was to produce an emulsion and study its behaviour throughout the flight of the REXUS rocket. In particular, the mechanism of emulsion droplet coalescence in microgravity was investigated.



The BEAM 3rd Gen team of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The REXUS/BEXUS project is implemented under the bilateral Agency Agreement between the German Aerospace Center (DLR) and the

Swedish National Space Agency (SNSA). The Swedish share of the payload is made available to students from other European countries through a collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA).

The seven-member BEAM 3rd Gen team of AUTh was created in August 2020 and consists of students from the Departments of Physics and Electrical & Computer Engineering at AUTh.

For more information about BEAM 3rd Gen team of AUTh:
<https://beamproject.gr/beam-3rd-gen/>

The University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Viet Nam National University (USSH, VNUHCM)

USSH, VNUHCM Cultural Week 2024: “Toc Xanh Vat Ao” Cultural Festival

On March 24th, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Viet Nam National University (USSH, VNUHCM) held the opening ceremony for the “Song Doi” (Twin Waves) Cultural Week 2024 and the Vietnamese Cultural Festival “Toc Xanh Vat Ao” (Green Hair and Lapel) Season 4. The event was coordinated with 20 specialized units and held at the Dinh Tien Ho-



The opening ceremony of "Toc Xanh Vat Ao" Cultural Festival

ang campus. This season's "Toc Xanh Vat Ao" theme commemorates the 280th anniversary of Vo Vuong Nguyen Phuc Khoat inventing the "ao dai ngu than" (five-panel ao dai) (1744-2024), a precursor to the modern ao dai, the signature national garment of Viet Nam.

During the festival, young attendees enjoyed performances of traditional costumes, traditional oral art forms, and exhibitions of artifacts and reconstructed costume products. Additionally, the festival featured the largest vintage fair to date, with 25 cultural units and over 30 experience booths. These units came from all over the country, each specializing in different fields, creating a colorful picture in the preservation, promotion, and enhancement of Vietnam's traditional cultural values. Thousands of young people interested in the rich history and culture of Viet Nam came to experience the fes-



Solo performance of the two-stringed fiddle

tival.

The “Toc Xanh Vat Ao” event holds significance in spreading the essence of Vietnamese culture to the youth. In addition, it’s also an opportunity to showcase the Vietnamese national spirit, a place for exchange and sharing love for the great values of Vietnamese culture.

As part of the festival, the gala night on March 24 created a special impression, concluding with the “Green Hair and White Robe” festival with a fashion show gathering many models and beauty queens.

The “Song Doi” Cultural Week and “Toc Xanh Vat Ao” festival, in general, are pivotal activities in the academic year 2023-2024 of the University. The cultural week runs continuously from March 24 to March 31 with three main activities: the “Toc Xanh - Vat Ao” Vietnamese Cos-

tume Festival, “Phim Viet Nhan Van” (Vietnamese Film Week), and the Online Photo Contest “Net Viet” (Vietnamese Traits).



People enjoying "Toc Xanh Vat Ao" Cultural Festival



Beauty queens and models proudly wearing Vietnamese costumes

University of Coimbra (Portugal)

UC creates new gene therapy research center to advance treatments for severe and untreatable diseases



'GeneT: Center of Excellence in Gene Therapy in Portugal'

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'GeneT: Center of Excellence in Gene Therapy in Portugal' is the country's first research and innovation center in the field of gene therapy and has secured €38 million in European and national funding over six years.

GeneT was officially launched on 2 February 2024 and is coordinated by Luís Pereira de Almeida, Professor at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Coimbra, who also serves as President of the Center for Neuroscience and Cell Biology and Coordinator of the Center for Innovative Biomedicine and Biotechnology.

For more information see <https://noticias.uc.pt/en/articles/uc-creates-new-gene-therapy-research-centre-to-advance-treatments-for-severe-and-untreatable-diseases/>

General Library of the University of Coimbra receives donation of 102 books on 'Yi Jing'

The General Library of the University of Coimbra (BGUC) has received a significant addition to its collection - a donation of 102 books on 'Yi Jing' (also known as the I Ching) from Henrique Duarte, a professor at the University Institute of Lisbon, who has donated his personal library on the ancient Chinese oracle.

Duarte's collection contains a rich variety of material, including various translations, contemporary analyses and diverse approaches to astronomy, acupuncture, mathematics and



Yi Jing's books

© UC | BGUC

other subjects. The collection is a testament to his many decades of dedicated study and research, culminating in the translation of the Yi Jing from its original Chinese characters.

This remarkable catalogue is now available at BGUC for those interested in Eastern philosophy.

For more information see <https://noticias.uc.pt/en/articles/general-library-of-the-university-of-coimbra-receives-donation-of-102-books-on-yi-jing/>

The British University in Dubai (BUiD) (United Arab Emirates)

The British University in Dubai (BUiD) celebrates its 18th graduation ceremony

Under the Chancellorship of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, and CEO and Chairman of the Emirates Group, the British University in Dubai (BUiD) celebrated the graduation of its eighteenth cohort of graduates at the Cultural and Scientific Association. The ceremony was attended by the University's Council members, academic and administrative



BUID's 18th graduation ceremony

staff, and family and friends of the graduates. Since its inception in 2003, BUID has offered postgraduate programmes on the Masters and doctoral levels, and its first Bachelor's programme was offered in 2018. Last year, BUID celebrated the first cohort of undergraduates from two programmes, Business Management and Computer Science – Artificial Intelligence. This year BUID is celebrating the first cohort of undergraduates from the Electromechanical Engineering programme.

The British University in Dubai launches Master of Science (MSc) in Cybersecurity

The British University in Dubai (BUID) has launched a new Master's programme: MSc in Cybersecurity. The launch event was held at BUID campus. Professor Khaled Shaalan, Head of Programme, introduced the programme and highlighted the diversity of career paths



Master of Science in Cybersecurity (MSc) launching event

available for the graduates in various sectors, including oil and gas, hospitality, energy, transportation, retail, manufacturing, defence, aviation, ICT, telecommunications, and banking/financial industries. Graduates can also pursue further studies by undertaking a PhD, which will pave the way for a research career in academia or industry.

The programme provides students with a holistic coverage of cybersecurity, from governance and policy to penetration testing and digital forensics. The programme offers a wide range of learning opportunities in a stimulating learning environment.

The British University in Dubai hosts the 20th European, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Conference on Information Systems (EMCIS 2023)



The 20th European, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Conference on Information Systems (EMCIS 2023)

The British University in Dubai in collaboration with Dubai Block Chain Centre organised the 20th European, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Conference on Information Systems (EMCIS 2023) on 11-12 December 2023.

The conference, held at the BUiD campus, received more than fifty research papers from around the world.

The EMCIS is an annual research conference, which addresses Information Systems (IS) regionally and globally. It aims to bring together researchers, academics, and professionals from around the world to exchange innovative ideas covering technical, organisational, business and social issues in the application of information technology.

The British University in Dubai host the fourth TEDx Talk event

The British University in Dubai (BUiD) organ-



The fourth TEDx Talk event

ised its fourth TEDx Talk at the Radisson RED Hotel in Silicon Oasis with the theme 'Diversity matters'. Six speakers representing staff and students discussed various issues surrounding diversity, sharing their personal experiences and unique perspectives.

Professor Abdullah Alshamsi, BUiD's Vice Chancellor, welcomed the audience and said, "We are very proud to organise our fourth 'TEDx The British University in Dubai'. We at BUiD believe strongly in disseminating knowledge and we share the same goals as the TED organisation of spreading worthy ideas. We hope that through this event, we are able to challenge conventional thinking and inspire change."

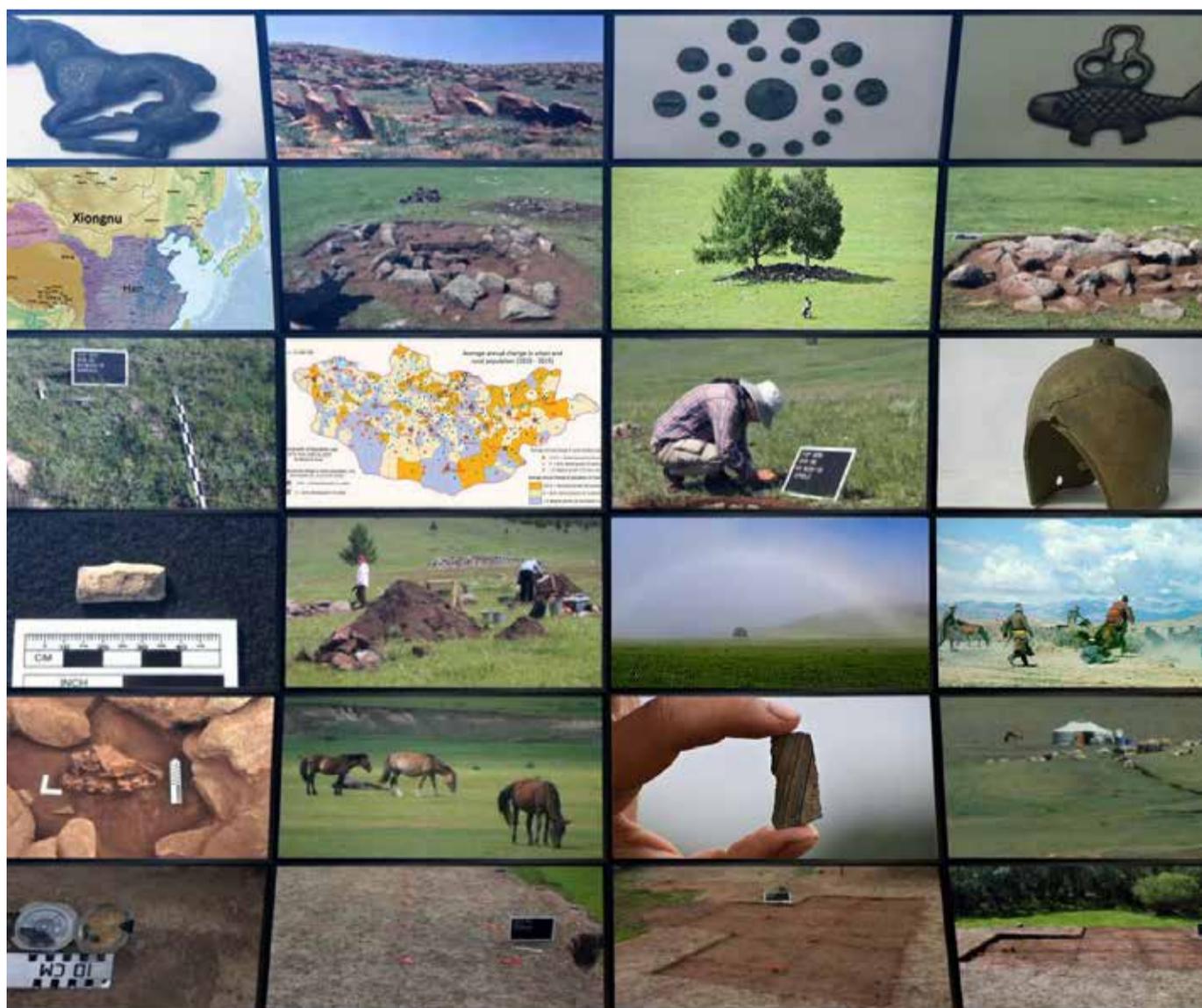
With this fourth event, BUiD continues its commitment to playing a meaningful role by engaging the local community and wider society with thought provoking ideas.

National University of Mongolia (NUM), Mongolia

NUM Launches First Mongolian MOOC on FutureLearn Platform

The National University of Mongolia (NUM) has successfully launched its first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on the FutureLearn platform. The course, titled “Archaeology of Past Nomads on the Mongolian Steppe,” was developed by a senior lecturer Jargalan Burentogtokh from the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at NUM. The course went live on April 23, 2024.

The course is part of NUM’s broader initiative to leverage digital platforms for education-



NUM's Mongolian MOOC on FutureLearn Platform

al purposes, providing high-quality learning experiences to students worldwide. By offering courses online, NUM not only promotes Mongolian culture and history but also contributes to the global educational landscape, enabling students from diverse backgrounds to gain access to specialized knowledge and expertise that might otherwise be out of reach.

Feedback from learners has been overwhelmingly positive. Those enrolled find the lessons engaging, appreciate the well-crafted introductions, and are particularly fascinated by the study of khirigsuurs, historic Bronze Age stone monuments. Many have shared their own insights and expressed amazement at such large-scale monuments created by nomads. The interactive nature of the course has fostered a dynamic learning environment, with active discussions and the sharing of supplementary articles and information to explore the reasons behind various archaeological findings.

For more information, visit
<https://www.futurelearn.com>

NUM Opens International Exam Test Center

On February 21, 2024, the National University of Mongolia (NUM) inaugurated the 'NUM Test



Opening ceremony of International Exam Test Center



NUM's International Exam Test Center

Center' at the Foreign Language Center of the School of Science, NUM. The opening coincided with the celebration of World International Mother Language Day. Among its offerings, the center introduced the Test of Mongolian as a Foreign Language (TOMFL), an international exam designed to assess proficiency in speaking, listening, writing, and reading Mongolian. This test can be taken online from anywhere in the world.

In addition to the TOMFL, NUM's new center provides multi-level courses in various languages and is equipped with modern facilities that meet international standards. It offers testing for globally recognized exams such as TOEFL, IELTS, and PTE. This initiative is part of NUM's Strategic Plan to enhance language skills and prepare specialists who meet global standards. The center supports students in successfully passing international exams, participating in short-term and long-term exchange programs, 2+2 programs, and pursuing studies and research at foreign universities.

For more information on the NUM Test Center, please visit the official website at <https://sas.num.edu.mn/mn/?p=1987>

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies celebrates its 70th anniversary with a spring festival -- 'Bloom: 'Bloom a Dream'

- Planning a festival to celebrate the school's 70th anniversary and to enjoy pride and youth as a HUFS student
- Close cooperation between the University administration, student council, and Dong-daemun Police Station provides an example of a safe festival
- Remembered as a 'festival' in the true sense of the word enjoyed not only by members of the HUFS but also by residents of the local community



HUFS held a spring festival, 'Bloom: 'Blooming a Dream'.



HUFS students enjoying the stage performances

This spring festival commemorates our university's 70th anniversary and is filled with a variety of programs to help young people explore and realize their dreams. On the first day of the festival, a special lecture was given by former Second Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Min Dong-seok and Professor Kim Bong-hwan of Seoul National University's Graduate School of Public Administration under the theme of "Dream," and an outdoor movie screening was held in the lawn plaza. In addition, a one-day class in which students directly participated and a flea market with local small business owners were also introduced. On the second day of the festival, the various dreams and talents of the participants filled the campus through performances made by students and clubs. The special stage to support the students' dreams also received great cheers.

In particular, the Seoul Campus Student



HUFS students enjoying the festival

Council cooperated closely with the University administration in the process of planning this spring festival, conducted preliminary safety inspections through consultation with Dongdaemun-gu Office and Dongdaemun Police Station, and developed a safety plan with cooperation from the Seoul Metropolitan Government Disaster and Safety Management Office and Dongdaemun Fire Department. We have established and prepared every possible measure for the 'safety' of students, including establishing a handling system and emergency contact network in the event of a safety incident, securing entry/exit and emergency exits, limiting the number of visitors to the performance hall, and arranging a medical room.

Even on the day of the festival, we established a cooperation system with the Dongdaemun Police Station to conduct safety inspections and formed a festival safety volunteer



Students enjoying festival stages

group of about 100 students and faculty to provide CPR training for emergency situations and prepare an incident response manual to create a safe festival environment. We put all our efforts into doing this. Thanks to this, about 12,000 people participated in the festival, and students and local residents were able to safely enjoy the festival together.

Lee Ji-yeon, Dean of Student and Human Resources Development at the Seoul Campus, said, "This year is a significant year as Hankuk University of Foreign Studies celebrates its 70th anniversary. We are working with the Dongdaemun Police Station at the university headquarters level to ensure that this spring festival ends well as an event to enjoy youth and pride as a foreign university student. Not only did we cooperate closely, but I think it set an example for an accident-free festival, including the student council's safety management guidelines,"

he said.

The Seoul Campus Student Council said, “This spring festival was able to be completed successfully without any safety incidents through the high sense of order among the HUFS students and cooperation with the University headquarters and local governments.” They added, “From now on, it will be an event that HUFS members and local residents can safely enjoy together.” “We promise to continue to present ‘the HUFS and only’ festivals” he said.



Students taking photos with HUFS mascot 'BOO'

Write for us

SILKROADIA is the official webzine of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN). We have more than 800,000 subscribers including professors, researchers, students, presidents, rectors, and chancellors of universities & research institutions located along the land and maritime Silk Roads. We welcome your articles and images on any of the topics related to the Silk Roads. The topics are those mentioned below but not limited to:

Culture on the Silk Roads: religion, local cuisine, artwork, jewelry, toys, pottery, dance, music, musical instruments, traditional / contemporary dress, types of dwelling, festivals, rituals, weddings, funerals, taboos.

Heritage on the Silk Roads: archaeological / historical heritage sites, literature, paintings, statues and sculptures.

Travel on the Silk Roads: natural wonders, markets, hotels, caravanserais, transportation.

Any interesting and diverse stories about people, places and events in your area, including the life of ordinary people and interview.

*All articles and images shall be original and not infringe upon copyright rules. The working language is English and contributors' contact information must be included.

Please send to sunwebzine@gmail.com



SILKROADIA seeks student reporters

SILKROADIA is looking for students who are willing to write articles about the Silk Roads and other topics of their interest.

What SUN student reporters do?

- Report Silk Roads-related activities and events in their country
- Report important activities and events in their university
- Work on articles or images as requested by the SUN Secretariat

Qualifications

Students of the member universities of SUN

Must be fluent in English

Must send at least two writing samples in English to sunwebzine@gmail.com

SUN student reporters are usually expected to work for one semester.

What they get

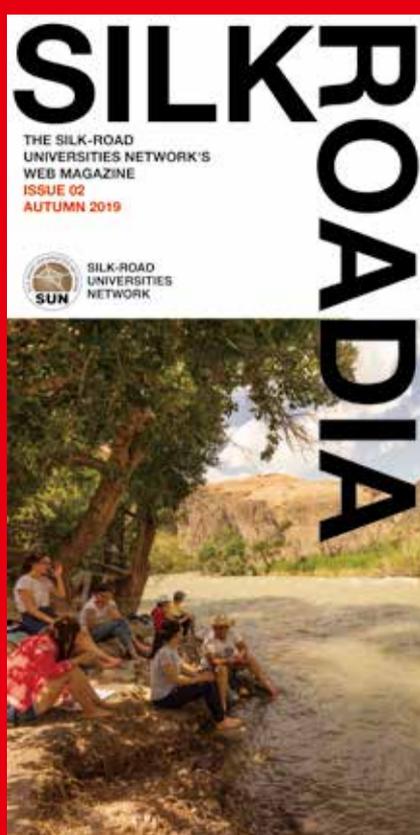
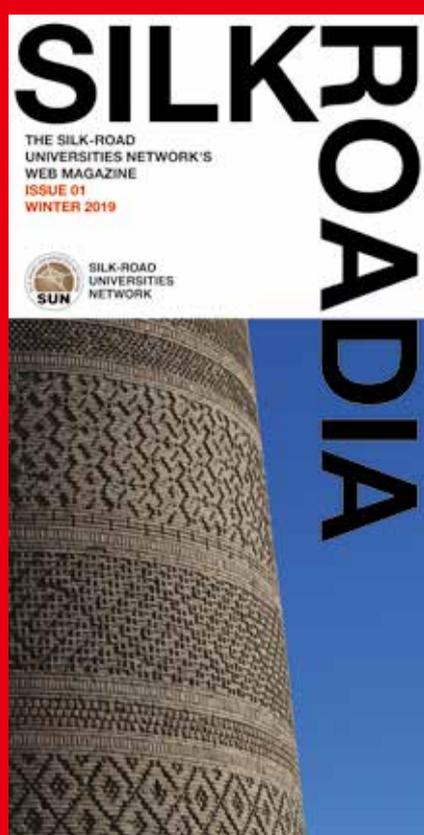
Articles and images published on SUN webzine and website.

Receives the official certificate from SUN

The student, who is annually selected as the best reporter by the SUN secretariat, will be invited to attend the annual General Assembly of SUN with full coverage of the air travel and accommodations.

How to apply

Contact us at sunofficial0822@gmail.com



Advertise on **SILKROADIA**

**The official webzine of SUN
to carry advertisements from
next issue**

SILKROADIA, the official webzine of the Silk-Road Universities Network, is a biannual publication which was launched in 2019. All the editions published so far are available at the SUN website.

As the official publication of SUN, **SILKROADIA** aims to serve as an effective medium of communications among the SUN Family members and between SUN and the outside world.

In order to fulfill its mission, **SILKROADIA** features a variety of interesting, informative and insightful articles and images, most of them provided by professors and students of the SUN member universities and institutes. The contents vary from in-depth academic articles and com-

mentaries authored by experts to easy-to-enjoy stories on heritage and travel on the Silk Roads. We are proud of having published genuinely original contents – like the imaginary interview which highlighted people like Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, the legendary travelers and adventurers who are identified with the ancient Silk Roads.

Such an abundance of interesting contents on **SILKROADIA** draws a lot of readers from around the world. The webzine already boasts of a regular audience of about 800,000 people, including the faculty members and students of the 82 member universities and institutes in 65 cities of 28 countries along the Silk Roads. This is one of the reasons we began thinking about the potential of **SILKROADIA** as a potential place for advertisements.

Carrying advertisements on **SILKROADIA** has two objectives: First, advertisement revenue will certainly help SUN stand on its own financially, which has become more urgent in the wake of the ceasing of support from the Gyeongsangbuk-do Provincial Government. Second, advertisements on **SILKROADIA** will help the webzine raise its standard to a higher level. Good publications draw good advertisers and a genuinely popular publication cannot go without advertisements.

It is against this backdrop that **SILKROADIA** will carry advertisements from the next issue, which is expected to be published around June 2021. The first potential advertisers could be member universities and institutes of SUN who wish to promote their academic programs, exchange of students and other international programs and events. The advertisement pages of course will be open to those outside SUN, including educational associations, organizations and companies.

Details, including the rates and formats, will be released soon, which will be delivered to member universities and institutes and outside organizations through the official communication channel of the SUN Secretariat and **SILKROADIA**.

We expect active support from SUN members. Thank you.

Ad rates (tentative)

Page size	Price	Submission due
Full page	USD 500	TBA
1/2 page	USD 300	TBA
1/4 page	USD 200	TBA