

# SILK ROAD

THE SILK-ROAD  
UNIVERSITIES NETWORK'S  
WEB MAGAZINE

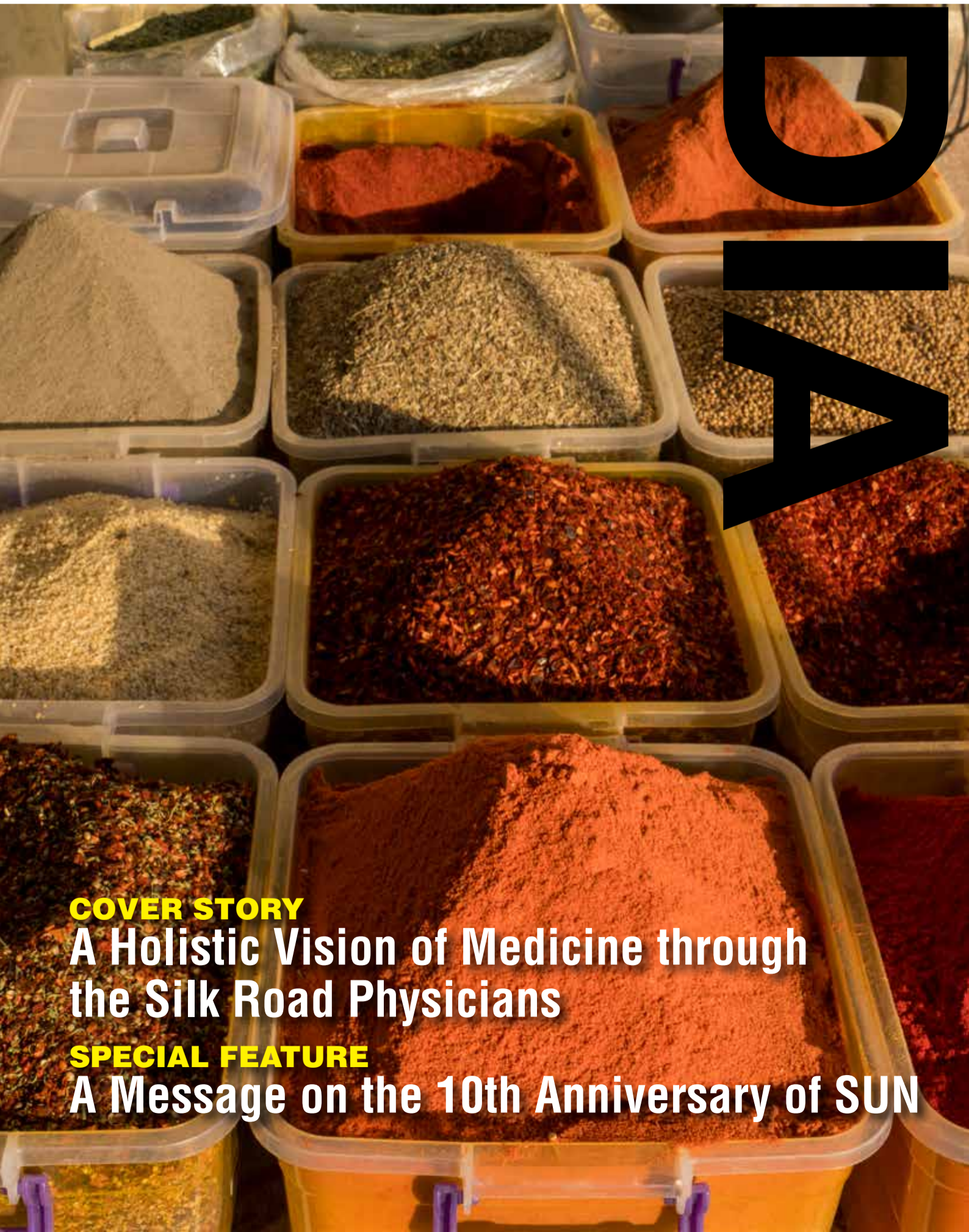
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UNIVERSITIES  
NETWORK**

# ROAD PHI



## **COVER STORY**

**A Holistic Vision of Medicine through  
the Silk Road Physicians**

## **SPECIAL FEATURE**

**A Message on the 10th Anniversary of SUN**

# **SILKROADIA**

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

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NETWORK**



## **The Office of SUN Secretariat**

Samarkand International University of Technology, 270 Spitamen Ave.

Samarkand 140100, Uzbekistan

Tel. +82-2-2173-3581 / Fax. +82-2-2173-3582

[www.sun-silkroadia.org](http://www.sun-silkroadia.org)

Request for publication of articles and related issues  
should be addressed to [sunwebzine@sun0822.org](mailto:sunwebzine@sun0822.org)

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Shi-yong Chon

# **SUN Sets Sights on Its Second Decade**

**T**he Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) successfully held its 10th General Assembly (GA) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in October 2025. This gathering was especially meaningful as SUN's largest annual event took place in one of the jewel cities of the ancient Silk Roads.

Members of the SUN community who visited the Central Asian city for the

event will long remember both the lasting impressions made by Samarkand itself and the warm hospitality extended by students and professors from the three local co-host universities -- Samarkand International University of Technology, the “Silk Road” International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, and Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages.

The Samarkand GA, accompanied by numerous other meetings and events—including the conference of the International Association for Silk-Road Studies (IASS) and multiple student gatherings—was also significant as it marked the 10th anniversary of SUN, which was founded in 2015 in Gyeongju, Korea.

Over the past decade, SUN has grown remarkably, now encompassing 87 member universities across 65 cities in 28 countries along the land and maritime Silk Roads that connect Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America. As Professor Sungdon Hwang, SUN’s founding Secretary-General, highlighted in his report to the Samarkand GA, such quantitative expansion has been matched by qualitative development. SUN has transformed itself

into a bona fide international non-governmental organization guided by its motto—Co-existence, Collaboration, and Co-prosperity—and powered by the dedication of students and professors from its member institutions.

This edition of *SILKROADIA* features a chronological overview of SUN’s major academic and cultural activities over the past decade, offering readers a clear picture of what we have accomplished in our first 10 years.

## **Global Recognition and Future Initiatives**

As the Secretary-General proudly noted, SUN has also garnered global attention. In 2018, it was invited to the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York. That same year, the Institute of International Education (IIE)—the largest U.S.-based organization in the international education sector—selected SUN as a representative case with the potential to be a “game changer” in global education for the next century.

These recognitions reflect the international community’s confidence in SUN’s

vision and capabilities.

Numerous ongoing and planned initiatives will help SUN translate its potential into concrete impact: The recreation of the overland Silk Roads once traveled by Marco Polo; the completion of the maritime Silk-Road expedition from Melaka, Malaysia, to Lisbon—the second phase of the SUN Maritime Silk-Road Expedition that began in 2017 with a voyage from Korea to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; the “Hippocrates’ Apostles” project, aimed at addressing medical disparities along the Silk Roads and restoring public trust in the medical profession; an initiative to digitally connect museums across the Silk Roads.

### **A New Era Begins in Africa**

Given these ambitious tasks ahead, SUN’s recent relocation of its headquarters and Secretariat to the campus of the Canadian University Dubai—the current chair university—is a promising development. The move, proposed at the Ninth GA in Naples and approved at the 10th GA in Samarkand, represents a strategic step toward strengthening SUN’s administra-

tive capacity as it enters its second decade.

It is also timely that the 2026 GA, which will mark the beginning of SUN's new era, will be held in Algeria. The University of Bejaia, a new member institution, has been chosen to play host to the 2026 GA in the northern Algerian city. This will mark the first time that a SUN GA will take place on the African continent, a significant result of SUN's efforts to connect all the key locations of the land and maritime Silk Roads.

We look forward to gathering in the Mediterranean city, called the "Capital of Lights." We hope It will cast a bright light on SUN's future path.

The *SILKROADIA* staff join all members of the SUN community in taking pride in what we have achieved together over the past 10 years and in looking forward to another fruitful, radiant decade ahead.

Warmest wishes to you, your university, and your family in the Year of the Fire Horse.

# A Holistic Vision of Medicine through the Silk Road Physicians: What We can Learn from Them



[1 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tranquillo\\_da\\_cremona,\\_Marco\\_Polo\\_alla\\_Corte\\_del\\_Gran\\_Khan,\\_1863.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tranquillo_da_cremona,_Marco_Polo_alla_Corte_del_Gran_Khan,_1863.PNG)

*“Arriving at each new city, the traveler finds again a part of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places.”*



**Jonathan McFarland**

**T**he year 2025 marks fifty years since Italo Calvino's renowned work, *Invisible Cities*, was published. For this reason, I find it fitting to open this brief article with a passage from his book, as it delves into how memory, place, and desire intertwine. It also considers how these connections change through travel—whether literal or imagined—and over time. For me, the idea of the Silk Road is mythical (similarly to Timbuktu or even the library of Alexandria) and so Calvino's entangling of place, memory and time seem highly appropriate. While the Silk Road did, and does, exist, it was not a single route but rather a complex network of predominantly land-based and some maritime trading pathways. This network extended from China to Korea and Japan in the east, and linked China through Central Asia to India in the south, as well as Turkey and Italy in the west. Over thousands of years, goods such as silk, cotton, wool, glass, jade, lapis la-

zuli, gold, silver, salt, spices, tea, herbal medicines, foodstuffs, fruits, flowers, horses, musical instruments, along with architectural, philosophical, and religious concepts, were exchanged along these routes.

<sup>2</sup>

In this short essay I wish to touch upon some of the intertwined philosophical and medical ideas that were carried along the roads since in those days medicine and philosophy were not separated. Indeed, the importance of their entanglement cannot be underestimated. Many years later, at the beginning of the twentieth century the great physician, writer and medical educator, Sir William Osler commented, ‘Twin berries on one stem, grievous damage has been done to both in regarding the Humanities and Science in any other light than complement’.

My view is that this connection between

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<sup>2</sup>

(REF <https://festival.si.edu/2002/the-silk-road/the-silk-road-connecting-peoples-and-cultures/smithsonian#:~:text=Given%20the%20Silk%20Road's%20symbolic,fought%20a%20war%20over%20it.> )

<sup>3</sup>

“The Old Humanities and the New Science” published in the British Medical Journal in 1919

the two ‘berries, the sciences and the humanities, is essential since the one feeds off the other, and their relationship is symbiotic. This can clearly be seen in the thriving intellectual exchanges that took place along the Silk Road. The “holistic vision of medicine” along the Silk Road was a blend of key medical traditions from Asia, Europe, and Africa, with a focus on natural remedies, balance, personalised care, and integrating physical and environmental aspects in healing. And what were the key characteristics of this vision?

**Cross-Cultural Integration:** The Silk Road facilitated an unprecedented flow of medicinal materials, texts, and practitioners among diverse cultures, including those practicing Traditional Chinese Medicine, Indian Ayurveda, Greco-Roman, and Persian-Islamic medicine. Scholars in academic centres like Baghdad translated works from various regions into Arabic, leading to a rich synthesis of global knowledge.

**Emphasis on Nature and the Whole Person:** These traditions took a holistic view of

health, focusing on overall balance rather than just treating disease. Treatments used natural substances and lifestyle changes—like diet, massage, or acupuncture—to restore harmony within the body and environment.

**Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms:** Knowledge exchange took place through several channels: trade caravans, where merchants and envoys transported medicinal materials, spices, and treatments; translation networks that spread works like Avicenna's texts and the *Compendium of Materia Medica*; and traveling medical practitioners who observed, adapted, and integrated local healing methods into their own practices.

As the breadth is enormous in every sense, knowledge, time and space, I am going to introduce an important physician from each of the main medicines: Indian Ayurveda- Acharya Sushruta (c.600 BCE), Greco-Roman- Hippocrates (460-370 BCE), Persian-Islamic- Ibn Sina or Avicenna (980-1037CE), and Traditional Chinese Medicine- Sun Simiao.



<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/7875/sushruta-illustration/>

## Acharya Sushruta

*‘A physician who practices medicine without fully understanding the patient is like a blind man walking without a guide’*

The above quote is attributed to Sushruta (c. 7th or 6th century BCE), who was an ancient Indian physician known as the ‘Father of Indian Medicine’ and ‘Father of Plastic Surgery’ for pioneering surgical procedures. His work, the Sushruta Samhita, is regarded as the oldest text on plastic surgery and forms part of Ayurveda’s Great Trilogy alongside the Charaka Samhita and Astanga Hridaya. Ayurveda, meaning “life knowledge,” is a holistic medical

system from India's Vedic period that combines conventional medicine with spiritual practices and herbal remedies. Little is known about Sushruta personally, as his texts focus solely on medical practice; "Sushruta" itself means "renowned." He likely practiced in northern India near modern Varanasi by the Ganges River. A legendary healer, Sushruta believed health depends on harmony between mind and body, managed through nutrition, exercise, and positive thinking, though he advocated surgery for severe cases.

## Hippocrates

*'Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity'*

One of the most well-known physicians of ancient Greece and possibly of all time, Hippocrates<sup>4</sup> was born on the Aegean island of Kos during the fifth century, dur-

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**4**

In October 2026 – The Silk Road Universities Network will lead a week-long event in Athens and then on the island of Kos – The Ethical and Humanistic legacy of Hippocrates in 21st century medicine (more details to follow soon)

ἹΠΠΟΚΡΑΤΗΣ ΜΕΔΕΙΣΤΗΣ  
Grec. Chap. 28.



<https://picryl.com/media/portrait-de-hippocrate-medecin-grec-ff85a0>

ing which a plethora of great personalities lived in Athens and contributed significantly in many fields of modern science and art. Being inspired by the innovative spirit of his age, Hippocrates was able to study medicine without religious prejudice but rather as a science that prevents, predicts, diagnoses, and treats diseases

that are caused by environmental or hereditary factors. He was also successful in developing the basic aspects of many medical specialties, such as neurology, acute and respiratory medicine, and surgery and urology. Hippocrates was greatly influenced by the theory of the fifth-century philosopher Empedocles that nature was made of the four elements that are water, earth, fire, and wind, and thus the human body also consisted of four fluids or “humors” - black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood - as well as four elemental conditions (hot, cold, dry, and moist). Health was associated, according to the great physician, with a balance of all these elements.

Furthermore, Hippocrates managed to combine his principles on physical examination and his ideals on the ethical rules of practicing medicine by establishing the Hippocratic Oath. This is a one-page oath given by doctors when they finish medical school and is used by many healthcare systems as guidance on professional behavior towards their patients. It has been revised several times, with the most important update introduced in 1948 by the World

Health Organization.<sup>5</sup>

## Ibn Sina (Avicenna)

Over a thousand years ago, Nuh ibn Mansur, the reigning prince of the medieval city of Bukhara, fell badly ill. The doctors, unable to do anything for him, were forced to send for a young man named Ibn Sina, who was already renowned, despite his very young age, for his vast knowledge. The ruler was healed. Ibn Sina was an 11th century Persian philosopher, physician, pharmacologist, scientist and poet, who exerted a profound impact on philosophy and medicine in Europe and the Islamic world. In the west he was known as Avicenna.

Avicenna's Canon of medicine, first translated from Arabic into Latin during the 12th century, was the most important medical reference book in the West until the 17th century, introducing technical medical terminology used for centuries afterwards. It established a tradition of

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<sup>5</sup>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11526839/>



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Avicenna\\_Bust,\\_left\\_profile\\_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Avicenna_Bust,_left_profile_(cropped).jpg)

scientific experimentation in physiology without which modern medicine as we know it would be inconceivable. For example, his use of scientific principles to test the safety and effectiveness of medications forms the basis of contemporary pharmacology and clinical trials.

Uniquely, Avicenna is the rare philoso-

pher who became as influential on a foreign philosophical culture as his own. He is regarded by some as the greatest medieval thinker. Another innovative aspect of Avicenna's Canon is its exploration of how our body's well-being depends on the state of our mind, and the interaction between the heart's health and our emotional life. This connection was seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, with doctors describing increases in heart damage due to the psycho-emotional pressures. Avicenna's advocacy for an interrelated, organic and systems-based understanding of health gives his thought universal and ongoing relevance.<sup>6</sup>

## Sun Simiao

Sun Simiao's legacy is deeply rooted in the field of TCM pharmacology. His two seminal works together contain more than 6,500 medical formulas. These formulas represent an amalgamation of medical

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<sup>6</sup>  
<https://theconversation.com/avicenna-the-persian-polymath-who-shaped-modern-science-medicine-and-philosophy-142667>



<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E5%AD%99%E6%80%9D%E9%82%88.jpeg#file>

wisdom, not only from celebrated practitioners of his time and those who came before him, but also from ordinary citizens across diverse regions. This includes ethnic minorities within China and even individuals from foreign lands, showcasing Sun's inclusivity and his quest to capture the broadest possible range of healing

knowledge.

Many of these formulas have stood the test of time, continuing to be widely used by modern practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine. This is a testament to the enduring relevance and efficacy of Sun Simiao's work.

Sun Simiao's contributions to pharmacology did not stop at compiling and presenting these formulae but he also studied the medicines, describing the properties, optimal collection times, and processing methods of around 800 different types of medicines. These medicines encompass a wide variety of sources, including herbs, minerals, and animal parts. A prime example of Sun's detailed work is his study on the rehmannia root, where he differentiated between the raw and processed forms, each of which possesses distinct medicinal properties. This careful, meticulous approach was applied to all the medicines he studied, leading to a rich and nuanced understanding of their various uses and effects. Moreover, Sun Simiao showed his remarkable organizational skills by classifying these medicines into 65 different cat-

egories, a move that enhanced the accessibility of his work. Beyond his technical contributions to Traditional Chinese Medicine, Sun Simiao is also renowned for his profound influence on the ethical practice of medicine. His text, *On the Absolute Sincerity of Great Physicians* (often referred to as the Chinese Hippocratic Oath) highlights his belief in the moral obligations inherent to the medical profession, and is still required reading for Chinese physicians. Sun Simiao emphasized the importance of virtue, stating, ‘If one does not embrace virtue with good behavior, longevity will remain beyond his reach even if he takes the best medicine and supplements.’ His life was a testament to these values; he was known for his dedication to his patients, offering treatment free of charge to those who could not afford it, and prioritizing their wellbeing over personal gain.

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<https://www.meandqi.com/blog/sun-simiao-the-king-of-medicine>

# Conclusion

Instead of looking at these ancient traditional lines of medicine as being non-scientific and non-aligned with EBM (Evidence Based Medicine), we should consider them with a more open mind to see how their more holistic vision of medicine can be transferred the 21st century to contribute a more human-based-medicine. The words of Sushruta written, or spoken, around 3,000 years ago still ring true; a physician needs to understand his patient. Or at least, try to. This has become even more important now since the AI revolution, which will affect all of society, but with medicine topping the list. We must, therefore, safeguard the ‘human’ in medicine, ‘For medicine is not an applied science, but a practice based on human interaction and an engagement between people. It is a combination of craft and performance. Medicine relies on doing things with people and to people.’<sup>8</sup>

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**8**

Roger Kneebone <https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.k5326>

**Dr. Jonathan McFarland** is currently an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain, and also serves as an Associate Professor at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. He is the President of the international organization The Doctor as a Humanist, where he is actively engaged in promoting a humanistic approach to medicine and healthcare.

# THE ROLE OF SPICES IN THE SILK RODS



**Dr. Dayalan Duraiswamy**

**I**ndia, renowned as the “land of spices,” has historically been central to the global spice trade. Its fragrant and flavourful spices have not only influenced culinary practices around the world but have also been pivotal in historical occurrences such as exploration, colonization, and cultural exchange. Indian spices such as pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, clove, and others played a crucial role in the Silk Road by

serving as an essential economic driver, promoting cultural interactions, and shaping global history. Their significant worth in culinary practices, medicinal applications, and religious ceremonies rendered them a vital commodity that stimulated trade between India and Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe. Spices were utilized not only as foodstuff and for their aromatic qualities but also in therapeutic ointments and potions, thereby aiding the dissemination of medical knowledge, including the principles of Ayurveda from the Indian subcontinent.

Spices represented a highly sought-after luxury commodity that stimulated economic activity and facilitated wealth accumulation throughout the extensive network of the Silk Route, thereby enhancing the profitability of their trade. These trade routes served as melting pots for diverse cultures, with spices being a significant item exchanged alongside ideas, languages, culture, traditions, religion, philosophy, art, architecture, and technologies. The exchange of spices contributed to the dissemination of culinary traditions



**Black Pepper**



and the incorporation of new flavours into diets across various continents. Furthermore, spices were emblematic of wealth and power, as their ownership signified elevated social status. The Indian products like black pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, perfumes, cassia bark, spices, metal, medicines, hide, ivory, sandalwood,



**Cardamom**



Cinnamon

muslin cloth, silk, pearl, aquamarine beryl and other semi-precious stones, etc., had considerable demand in the Western world (Miller; Cappers; Keay).

Archaeological and literary sources offer substantial evidence concerning the significance of the spice trade from India, its global demand, and the commercial network linked to these commodities. The *Periplus Maris Erythraei* from the 1st century CE and the writings of Ptolemy from the 2nd century CE indicate that, in addition to various items exported from India to Western nations, the most notable products include spices and pepper.

According to Strabo, the vessels transporting oriental merchandise from Muziris, the historic seaport located in southern India, average 120 annually. The intense social demand for these oriental products is aptly illustrated by Pliny's reference to the Roman Senate debates regarding the outflow of gold caused by the consistent importation of pepper and various spices from the East. Tiberius (14-37 CE), the Roman emperor expressed his anguish over the huge amount of Roman wealth pouring into the foreign lands including India and complained about it to the Senate (Majumdar, 274). These statements have been well attested by the occurrence of numerous hoards of Roman aurei, solidi and denarii at a number of places, particularly in the Peninsular India. Substantial hoards have been reported from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and coastal Andhra Pradesh. The exports from Muziris, as noted in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, prominently featured pepper, other spices, and pearls.

*Akanāṇūru*, an early Tamil literature of the *Saṅgam* period (c. 2nd cent BCE to 2nd

cent CE) states that the splendid ships of the *Yavanas* (foreigners), bring gold and return with pepper.<sup>1</sup> *Puṛanāṇūru*, another *Saṅgam* literature states, “Each and every house in Muciri was filled with a heap of paddy and other materials brought by the boats (*ampi*) after selling fishes. Mingling crowd of a boisterous river-bank where the sacks of pepper were heaped up. The gold (gift things) brought in the splendid ships (*kalam*) were brought to the river bank by local boats (*tōṇi*)” (*Puṛanāṇūru*, verse 343). *Silappatikāram* (The Story of the Anklet), the Tamil epic of post-Saṅgam period (c. 2nd-5th century CE), referred to Muziris as a vibrant trade destination and also an important stopover along the spice route. It was the place where the foreign traders would arrive in their ships to barter their gold to buy pepper. Since barter trade was time-consuming, they lived in the city and their lifestyle was “exotic” and also a source of “local wonder”.

According to historical records, there

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*yavaṇartantaviṇaimāṇṇaṅkalam*

*poṇṇōṭu vantukariyōṭu peyarum*

*vaḷamkeḷu muciri ---Akanāṇūru, Verse 149, lines 7-11*

was significant demand for cinnamon in Rome, with one Roman pound of premium quality cinnamon priced at 1,500 denarii. The earliest evidence of pepper in the West was discovered in the nostrils of Ramses II's mummy from around 1200 BCE. This serves as the initial evidence of potential contact between Egypt and India, although the specific route remains uncertain. The exports of Indian spices are referenced in the writings of Ibn Khurdadhbeh (850, *The Book of Routes and Kingdoms*), al-Ghafiqi (1150), Ishak bin Imaran (907), and Al Kalkashandi (14th century) (Donkin, 92).

Marco Polo, a Venetian merchant, explorer, and writer who travelled through Asia between 1271 and 1295, frequently referenced spices in his travel memoirs, written around 1298 CE. He noted that in Hangzhou (China), a staggering 10,000 pounds of pepper were imported into that densely populated city each day. Polo also recounted extensive plantations of pepper, nutmeg, cloves, and other precious spices that he observed growing in Java and the islands of the China Sea, as well as the plentiful supply of cinnamon, pepper, and

ginger found along the Malabar Coast of India. The circumstantial evidence indicates that Polo's narratives contributed to a rise in the international spice trade during the 13th and early 14th centuries CE.

For the Chinese explorer, the city of Calicut, which was a thriving trading port that engaged extensively in spices under the Zamorin's rule, served as a notable base for conducting trade across the Indian Ocean and the Middle East. Zheng He (1371-1433/1435 CE), the fleet admiral of China's early Ming dynasty and one of the most renowned navigators in history, visited Calicut (Kozhikode) on the Malabar coast numerous times. It is reported that he led seven naval expeditions in the Indian Ocean primarily to acquire pepper and other spices. According to various accounts, Zheng He's first voyage commenced in 1405, departing from China and navigating through Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and reaching as far as Iran and eastern Africa, ultimately arriving at the shores of Mogadishu.

The immense wealth and demand generated by the spice trade resulted in centu-

ries of rivalry among various powers, including Arab traders and colonial powers such as the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British, who vied for dominance over the trade routes of the Indian Ocean.

The international spice trade not only enabled the exchange of goods but also created numerous opportunities for the dissemination of religion, ideas, culture, customs, technology, language, philosophy, and knowledge of art and architecture between India and other nations.

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**Dr. D. Dayalan** is the ex-Director of the Archaeological Survey of India and presently the Archaeological Advisor, Gov't of Tamil Nadu.

**INTERVIEW**

# **Building a Bridge across Civilizations - from Ancient Silk Roads to Silk Road Virtual Museum: past, present and the future pathways**

Dr. Richard T. Griffiths photo by Euihwan Cho





**Maryam Bolouri**

This interview is with **Dr. Richard T. Griffiths**, Emeritus Professor of International Studies at Leiden University and the academic director of the Silk Road Virtual Museum. Silk Road Virtual Museum is an online museum that enables one to learn the history, culture, and trade of the ancient Silk Road without even leaving the comfort of his or her home. It brings together stories, photos and web exhibitions that show how the countries of the Asian continent, the Middle East, Europe and Africa were once connected in terms of trade and culture. This argument treats the scholarly context and methodological consideration and pedagogic matters of this innovative project in digital heritage and historical interpretation. The interview is carried out by Maryam Bolouri, a scholar who works within the field of higher education, in the internationalization sphere, international curriculum design, and cross-cultural academic development. Her research is on

the role of the university in globalization of the university and how intercultural learning can be brought to signify something important.

This interview is presented in two parts; part one covers *Background, Academic Dimensions, and Digital Heritage and Pedagogy*, while part two focuses on *Technology and Innovation, Internationalization and Global Connectivity, and Personal Reflections and Future Directions*.

## Part I

### **Building a Bridge across Civilizations:**

#### **How the Silk Road Virtual Museum Came to Life**

**Q: Maryam**

**It's truly a pleasure to have you with us today. Thank you for joining me. So let me start with the big question everyone is curious about: How did the idea of the Silk Road Virtual Museum first emerge? It's such an ambitious project, where did it all begin?**



Concept sketch of the early Silk Road Virtual Museum (April 2019), showing the proposed gallery branches—from music and theatre to architecture and popular culture—radiating from a central ‘market’ space that symbolised cultural exchange

## **A: Professor Griffiths**

Well... the short answer is that it grew slowly, almost accidentally, from many different strands of my work.

**Q: Accidentally? Please tell me about the long answer.**

**A:** The longer story begins back in the early 1990s. At that time, I was involved in setting up EU Studies Centers in Urumqi, Lanzhou, and Xi’an. Travelling along parts of the historical Silk Roads during those years left a deep impression on me. The landscapes... the cultural diversity...

and despite all the differences, there was this remarkable sense of continuity in how people adapted to their environment. Those experiences stayed with me.

**Q: I can imagine. That region has a way of staying in your heart.**

**A:** Exactly. But it wasn't until 2019 that I wrote down the first proposal. I imagined crossing boundaries of space, time, and culture, not in a superficial way, but through carefully constructed environments. A visitor could choose an epoch, pick a language, and essentially travel through reconstructed scenes: markets, harbors, city streets, religious spaces... even performances.

I had no idea back then how much of that would later become possible.

**Q: Wow... that sounds like a true digital humanities vision long before it became fashionable.**

**A:** Perhaps. Then my involvement with MOOCs played a major role. It convinced

me that online communities are real, with genuine engagement. At the same time, my research on the Belt and Road Initiative deepened my thinking about Eurasian interconnections. And when my formal research support at IIAS ended, I found myself drawn back to the cultural, historical, and human threads of the Silk Roads. In fact, the first working prototype completed in 2022. It had only one exhibition, but that was the moment I realized: this is possible. From there, the museum expanded naturally exhibition by exhibition, culture by culture, until it became what you see today.

**Q: It's such a privilege to hear the story directly from you. That was fascinating, Professor. Building on what you've just shared, I'd love to understand the deeper motivation behind the project. What needs did you hope the museum would address?**

**A:** Well, Maryam, much of my work has been about connections, economic, political, and cultural. But I became increas-

ingly troubled by how public discussions reduce everything to binaries: East/West, Christian/Muslim, and China/USA. The real Silk Roads were never like that. They were vibrant, messy networks, trade, pilgrimage, scholarship, art, full of cooperation and conflict happening side by side. So the museum grew from a wish to create a space where cultures could meet again without ideology or confrontation. No politics, just objects. Things people used, treasured, exchanged. I believe objects awaken curiosity, and curiosity is the best antidote to fear.”



Prototype interface for the Silk Road Virtual Museum (April 2022), allowing visitors to choose their journey by era, mode of travel, and preferred language. It reflects the project’s early ambition to create personalised, multilingual paths through Silk Road history.

**Q: What a rosy picture!**

**A:** Well, just before 1500, before the colonial networks! We deliberately stopped at around 1500 CE. Before that, the Silk Roads were genuinely multipolar and balanced. After 1500, global power structures shifted dramatically. Keeping the museum pre-1500 preserves that unique world. In that sense, it's a small peace project, not naïve, but hopeful. It showcases the human capacity to connect.

**Q: Professor, given the immensity of the Silk Roads, what has been most challenging about translating all this into a digital museum?**

**A:** Ah, Maryam... the biggest challenge is conceptual. The Silk Roads cover continents, religions, dynasties, languages. The temptation is always to tell a story, but I resisted that. A story has a plot. The Silk Roads don't. They're a network, not a narrative. So... the real question became: how do you help visitors feel comfortable when there is no 'main story' guiding them? I

start each exhibition by reading a lot. I've built a modest library by now. I read until I can almost feel the culture. Only then do I choose objects. Selecting objects is deceptively hard. They must be visually clear, no tiny coins, no massive monuments. Each piece has to support a coherent impression without overwhelming people. The practical challenges, licensing, image quality, metadata, are manageable, yet the conceptual challenges... are harder.

**Q: Given all this diversity, Professor, how do you maintain cultural balance across so many regions?**

Early mock-up of the Silk Road Virtual Museum gallery (April 2022), combining iconic Chinese artworks with the first concept of an on-screen interpreter—guiding visitors through exhibitions in English or in the local language. This prototype explored how a virtual guide might personalize the museum journey.



**A:** Well, Maryam, the first truth is simple: we work with what survives. Most surviving objects come from elites, courts, temples, tombs. So we never claim to represent an entire society. What we can do is place a wide range of cultures side by side, China, India, Persia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, even West Africa, and let them speak visually to one another. The museum doesn't teach; it invites. Visitors wander, compare, and make their own connections. Nothing is imposed. Interpretation emerges naturally. Because we avoid polemics or attempts to rewrite the past, cultural sensitivities usually resolve themselves. Respect for the objects, and for the institutions that safeguard them, is always our foundation.

**Q: Professor, with such a rich foundation already in place, how do you envision the museum evolving in the future?**

**A:** Digital museums have an extraordinary power: they democratize heritage. They allow small, local, even marginalized histories to enter a broader global

conversation. One possible future step is to include community or personal histories, imagine a family archive becoming part of the shared cultural memory. That kind of inclusion changes everything. Another key direction is preservation; Digital surrogates of endangered sites, whether due to conflict, climate change, or simple neglect are no longer optional. They're essential. They provide the groundwork for future restoration. The museum will keep expanding, but always within its core boundaries: pre-1500, material culture, and academic integrity. And, ideally, it will grow into a collaborative platform, a space



The first fully functioning exhibition space of the Silk Road Virtual Museum (September 2022). This inaugural prototype marked the transition from concept to working digital gallery. Three further exhibitions were created over the following twelve months, establishing the foundation of the museum.

where many institutions curate and contribute their own exhibitions.

That's the future I hope for.

**Q: Professor, shifting now from the museum's evolution to its academic impact, what academic conversations does the museum contribute to?**

**A:** The museum really sits at the crossroads of several fields. Most directly, it contributes to connected histories and speaks to world history, art history, archaeology, and increasingly to digital humanities. And digital humanities has matured into a serious methodological field, not merely a technical add-on. There's another contribution the museum makes, at first unintentionally, now deliberately: it demonstrates that scholarly insight can emerge from visual environments. In our academic habits, text usually leads image. Here, image leads text. Experience precedes explanation.

**Q: That's powerful. This attitude is indeed thought provoking.**

**A:** Yes, and that supports the comparative methods essential to Silk Road research. Visitors recognize patterns, style, technique, material, long before encountering the scholarly commentary.

**Q: Professor, as someone whose work spans several disciplines myself, I'm curious, how has interdisciplinary input shaped the project?**

**A:** It begins quite simply: with reading across fields. Archaeology gives me chronology and context; art history offers stylistic understanding; history provides the political landscape; linguistics clarifies names and terminology; religious studies unlock symbolism; and anthropology supplies the interpretive tools traditional narratives sometimes lack.

You know, there are the specialists. Their comments are often transformative. A ceramicist will notice a kiln signature I overlooked. An archaeologist will insist a seemingly ordinary object is actually rare. An art historian will spot a motif that travelled across regions. A conservator will

explain a restoration choice that alters meaning. These insights accumulate, silently, steadily, and they refine the entire museum.”

**Q: I believe, interdisciplinarity is the essence of the Silk roads, enriched by all those sagacious scholars all through the roads.**

**A:** In truth, the Silk Roads were interdisciplinary long before we invented the term. The museum simply followed their lead.

**Q: Professor, with such a vast cultural landscape, ethical concerns must inevitably arise. How do you navigate these when presenting cultural heritage online?**

**A:** That’s an important question and one where clarity truly matters. The museum follows a few straightforward principles. First, we respect the object. It must be shown accurately, no embellishment, no creative reconstructions. Then, we respect the culture. We avoid imposing interpreta-

tions the object cannot sustain. Third, we respect the institutions that care for these objects. Every source is cited clearly and transparently. And equally important, we avoid narrative overreach. The museum doesn't moralize, correct, or rewrite the past to suit modern preferences. It simply presents what is known, and openly acknowledges what isn't. Digital projects can unintentionally foster a sense of ownership over images. I try to avoid that completely. The museum is always a guest in the collections of others. Its purpose is to help visitors approach those collections with fresh curiosity, not to replace them



**Q: Thank you, Professor. That's wonderfully clear. Shifting now to the pedagogy section, how can educators use the museum?**

**A:** One of the most effective strategies is asking students to design their own exhibitions. It pushes them to research context,

select and justify objects, create references, and think visually about presentation. It also benefits students who express themselves more naturally through design or narrative than through prose. A virtual exhibition allows those strengths to surface and, once completed, becomes a resource for others. I consider it one of the most exciting pedagogical uses of the platform.



A small symbol with a big story - representing curiosity, collaboration, and discovery.

## Part II

# **Beyond Boundaries**

## Critical Issues and Forward Pathways for the Silk Road Virtual Museum

**Q: Moving into the ethics and responsibility dimension of your work, what responsibilities come with digitalizing cultural heritage?**

**A:** Digital heritage is not an alternative to scholarship. It is a doorway to it. First, Respect, restraint, and honesty. Then, do not claim to speak for a culture. Do not revise objects to fit modern agendas. And cite your sources meticulously.

**Q: Turning now to tools and infrastructure, what technologies support the museum?**

**A:** We use exhibition platforms, interactive tools, and 3D architectural models, some ready-made, some custom-made. Technology is useful only if it remains invisible and never overshadows the objects. The 2022 prototype taught me that environments can enhance understanding, but clarity matters more than spectacle. Today we use technology sparingly, to create qui-



**A museum is not walls, but the stories its objects carry.**

et, coherent spaces for reflection.

**Q: And looking ahead, what roles might AI and VR play?**

**A:** AI already helps quietly — improving searches, cleaning metadata, and finding hard-to-reach materials. VR is appealing but costly, and because openness is essential, it cannot limit access. VR may have a role, but never at the expense of inclusivity.

**Q: In the scenario of the cancellation of funding or technical support, the electronic projects are under the threat of extinction. What do you consider to be the most significant sustainability threats of the Silk Road Virtual Museum, and how would you imagine the sustainability of such a large-scale platform in the long run?**

**A:** Costs exist, hosting, software, imagery, storage, and for now, I cover them myself. The goal is for users to become “Friends” of the museum and contribute modestly;

even a fraction doing so would secure it. Ultimately, institutional stewardship could ensure continuity beyond my own involvement.

**Q: As someone who works at the intersection of global engagement and curriculum design, I wonder how digital heritage can reshape university life?**

**A:** Universities are under enormous pressure to “internationalize,” yet travel budgets shrink, geopolitical tensions rise, and student mobility is unevenly distributed. Virtual museums offer a practical solution: they bring global collections to students rather than requiring students to chase them across borders. They also democratize access; a student anywhere can work with the same material at the same depth. And when students create exhibitions, that shift, from passive to active engagement, is educationally transformative.

**Q: I’m interested in how digital platforms handle diverse perspectives. How can the museum integrate local voices**

**while still preserving scholarly coherence?**

**A:** Local perspectives are essential, but they must be grounded in documented sources. Contributions are welcome when supported by verifiable references, allowing multiple interpretations to coexist while maintaining scholarly integrity. One long-term hope is that museums and scholars across the Silk Road regions will contribute their own exhibitions, Tibetan textile specialists, Thai Dvaravati experts, Iranian miniature scholars, Indian temple art researchers. The museum becomes richer when more hands shape it.

**Q: And, the questions of many! What comes next?**

**A:** Two developments are central. First, multilingual versions, not just translations, but culturally sensitive versions that meet visitors where they are. With new tools, this is now feasible in ways it wasn't before. Second, a broader collaborative framework in which institutions, scholars, and even student groups curate their own



**More than artifacts - windows into lives long past.**

rooms. The museum becomes a shared space rather than a single-author project. In fact, the field is constantly evolving. A newly excavated shipwreck, a tomb mural, a rediscovered manuscript, a single unusual motif on a ceramic bowl — any one of these can redirect an exhibition or inspire a new one. The museum is structured to respond, not to freeze itself in place.

**Q: Do you feel we have left out anything, or is there something about yourself you would like our readers to reflect on?**

**A:** The museum is not an argument; it is an invitation. It asks for curiosity, nothing more. If it helps even a few people

approach another civilization with interest instead of fear, it has fulfilled its purpose. And..., on a personal note, building the SRVM has been my own invitation to remain curious, to explore archives, shipwrecks, and forgotten collections, and to meet people and ideas I never expected. If visitors find even a fraction of the surprise and quiet recognition I've experienced, the project has done its job twice over.

**Q: Thank you so much for sharing your insights, experiences, and reflections with us. Your thoughts have offered a rare and valuable perspective, and we are truly grateful for the time and care you devoted to this conversation.**

**Professor Griffiths:**

Thank you.

**Maryam Bolouri**, is an Iranian scholar who works within the field of higher education, in the internationalization sphere, international curriculum design, and cross-cultural academic development. Her research is on the role of the university in globalization of the university and how intercultural learning can be brought to signify something important.



Dr. Sungdon Hwang

**“Nothing but  
Wonder and  
Gratitude”**

**A Message on the  
10th Anniversary  
of SUN**

**SUN** has turned 10 years old. As one of its founders, I am filled with deep emotions. When SUN was born a decade ago, there were many expectations, but also concerns about the future of this organization. Over the past 10 years, SUN has grown into a promising international organization with 87 member universities across 28 countries and 65 cities along the land and maritime Silk Roads connecting Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America. This growth has been possible thanks to the sincere support, care, and dedication of many people. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude and respect to them.

Reflecting on the past decade, significant accomplishments have taken place through SUN. The establishment of the International Association for Silk-Road Studies (IASS) has provided a framework for regular academic exchange among scholars in the Silk Road region. Over the last 10 years, more than 1,000 scholars active in this area have communicated with each other. There are over 800,000 students in the member universities of SUN. To pro-

mote mobility and mutual understanding among these students, the United Students of SUN (USSUN) was established, facilitating various cultural exchange programs and Silk Road exploration programs, with more than 2,000 students having participated in these programs over the past decade.

SUN's activities have garnered global attention. In 2018, we were invited to the UNAOC (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations) General Assembly at UN Headquarters, allowing us to promote SUN's activities worldwide and build consensus. That same year, SUN was selected by the IIE (Institute of International Education), the largest international organization in the education sector in the US, as a representative case that will be a game changer in education for the next 100 years. Additionally, we have recently received proposals from several countries to relocate SUN's headquarters to their nations, which is a truly delightful and grateful development.

However, as I think about the next decade ahead, I see that there are several

tasks that need to be strengthened, further developed, and newly challenged. Above all, we must significantly enhance student mobility among member universities. Particularly, students from SUN member universities should be able to freely attend lectures, earn credits, and obtain joint degrees at other SUN member institutions. For this, stable scholarship funds and systems need to be established.

We must also activate various forms of joint research among scholars from SUN member universities. This issue should be a key strategic agenda for IASS moving forward, requiring the collective effort and cooperation of all.

We must not lose our courage to continuously discover and pursue civilization-al challenges that are directly connected to the reason for SUN's existence. Projects such as the recreation of the overland Silk Road once traversed by Marco Polo, the completion of the maritime Silk Road exploration from Melaka, Malaysia, to Lisbon, still two-thirds remaining, the "Hippocrates' Apostles" project aimed at addressing the serious "Medical Divide"

occurring along the Silk Road and restoring public respect for the medical profession, and initiatives to connect museums along the Silk Road online for sharing the legacy of human civilization are just a few examples.

Based upon unanimous decision by the participants in the 9th and 10th general assemblies of SUN in Naples and Samarkand, the headquarter and the Secretariat Office of SUN are now relocated to the campus of Canadian University of Dubai. A new era of SUN awaits us. I am sure the future of SUN will be filled with more wonders and gratitude to those who contribute to producing them. According to my experience of SUN for the last 10 years, SUN must be a plant that grows with care, support, and participation by the rectors, professors and students of member universities. It is my pleasant duty to serve you all.

**Sungdon Hwang, Ph.D.**

Secretary-General of SUN



Sujung Cua

**Bridging Cultures  
and Ideas:  
Reflections on  
Collaboration and  
Connection Along  
the Silk Road**

**T**he Silk-Road University Network (SUN) has established a reputation as an international academic organization created with the aim of restoring and connecting universities located on the land and sea routes of the ancient Silk Road. The Silk Road's original driving force was to contribute to world peace and the development of civilization. Presently, SUN is composed of 81 institutions in 63 cities in 28 countries from Mongolia to Italy. I had the honor of attending the 10th General Assembly of SUN this October.

Throughout the last year, I have been working alongside Dr. Ronald Steiner at Chapman University as the Assistant English Editor of *Silkroadia*, SUN's web magazine that publishes diverse stories surrounding culture, heritage, and travel on the Silk Road written by students and professors of SUN member universities. Working on this journal allows me to learn more about the deep history of the Silk Road and the ways in which SUN member universities are following its legacy of connection, collaboration, and cultural exchange.



**Sujung Cua with Prof. Ronald Steiner in Samarkand**

Photo courtesy of Sujung Cua

This year's 10th General Assembly was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, which historically served as a central trade hub and crossroad for world culture along the Silk Road. Today, Samarkand carries a rich history and beauty through sites like the Amir Temur Mausoleum, Registan Ensemble, Siab Bazaar, and Shah-i-Zinda.

The first day of the conference commenced at the Silk Road Conference Center by Minyoun, where the welcoming ceremony took place. First, each participating university was represented by its flag and a faculty delegate. The professors donned

their regalia, which symbolized their school's participation in the network, filling the room with vibrant colors and academic pride. There were cultural presentations, including a performance on/about traditional Uzbek clothing. The theme of this year's conference was the use of technology for peaceful and sustainable tourism along the Silk Road in the era of artificial intelligence. Many guest professors lectured on their research relating to these themes, such as climate change, humanity in healthcare, and how students, professors, and universities can coexist with the development of AI.

The student representatives also participated in a workshop to discuss AI's role in higher education. In this conversation, we debated the uses, necessity, and power versus fears of AI, which was interesting as some students are studying artificial intelligence while others are only familiar with accessible regenerative models. This discussion sparked discourse about whether AI is replacing humans or will always only be a tool for us, as well as the idea that AI technology is leading us to become less



Sujung Cua at Shah-i-Zinda

independent in our own power of knowledge.

On our final day, we explored the cultural and historical sites of Samarkand. Shah-i-Zinda, meaning the ‘living king,’ is a beautiful mausoleum for Qutham ibn Abbas, a cousin of the prophet Muhammad,

showcasing the incredible work of Timurid architecture, including elaborate blue tilework, carved terracotta, and mosaics. Siab Bazaar is Samarkand's largest and oldest bazaar (market), known for being a vibrant hub for traditional and local goods, including spices, fresh produce, flatbread, fried fruits, and souvenirs.

Each day, we were treated to an abundance of delicious traditional Uzbek food like Plov (pilaf) or samsa (a pastry filled with meat), with fresh fruits and vegetables, cheeses, and salad. During these meals, I was able to bond with the other students from Tajikistan, Italy, Algeria, India, and many other countries around the world. The most memorable part of my experience in Uzbekistan was the people; I formed long-lasting friendships with like-minded future leaders and created memories beyond the academic conference that I will never forget. I experienced firsthand the spirit of the Silk Road by connecting culturally, academically, and, most importantly, at a basic human level, accepting differences and advancing our personal intentions.

Collectively, we reflected on the Silk Road's original intent through our conversations of current and future world challenges, such as AI technology and climate change, ultimately nurturing cultural exchange, economic advancement, and world peace. I look forward to meeting them again next year at SUN's 11th General Assembly. As I navigate through my undergraduate years, I am honored to have experienced new traditions, met remarkable people across cultures, and deepened my passion for travel through Chapman's connection with the Silk Road University Network. SUN's dedication to restoration and connection between vast communities among universities and cultures has broadened my horizons, inspiring me to see collaboration as a bridge for understanding and shared growth across global perspectives.

**Sujung Cua** is a Chapman University student with a Political Science major and a minor in Women and Gender Studies.



**Staff at the 9th SUN General Assembly in Naples in 2024**

Photo by Euihwan Cho

# SUN Staff & Students Sharing Their Remarkable Experiences with SUN

**BY Amali Ranavi Thantrige**

Following the 10th Anniversary of Silk-Road Universities Network, the webzine decided to listen to former and also current coordinators, students, and also award winners of the SUN. We thank our interviewees for accepting our invitation and sharing their stories with us. Among different interesting experiences, Yujeong Lee, a current coordinator of SUN, emphasised the development of a ‘sense of pride’ as a ‘citizen of the Silk Roads.’ Meanwhile, Balanca, a former member of USSUN (the student body of SUN), expressed her gratitude to SUN for allowing her to discover the beauty of cultures and countries while forming long lasting friendships. Last but not least, a former coordinator of SUN, Hwang Hye-lin, shared her thoughts highlighting how her time at SUN allowed her to broaden her perspective, develop her values, and become a better person. She also said that creating an alumni network and/or community would keep the spirit of SUN alive even among former members. Below you can read the full interviews.

**Q: Yu-jeong Lee, thank you very much for accepting our invitation for the interview. Would you like to introduce yourself to our readers?**

**A:** I have been serving as a SUN Coordinator since 2023. At first, I applied simply because I wanted to gain practical experience working within an international organization. However, as time passed, I gradually came to understand the historical and cultural significance of the Silk Roads. Experiencing diverse cultural and human exchanges firsthand allowed me to see the world through the lens of the Silk Roads, which became a source of great joy and inspiration for me.

Through this journey, I developed a strong sense of pride and responsibility as a “citizen of the Silk Roads.” The role of coordinator is no longer just a task for me; it has become an essential part of my life. Creating meaningful connections among people linked by the Silk Roads and growing through that process has been deeply fulfilling.



Yu-jeong Lee enjoying the beauty of Uzbekistan culture during the 10th GA of SUN, 2025. Photo by Euihwan Cho

**Q: As a coordinator of SUN you must have opportunities to be involved in diverse international projects. Could you please share your experiences along with what was the most challenging part of work?**

**A:** The most challenging aspect of my work was preparing for the Annual General Assembly. I had to communicate continuously with students, professors, and representatives from member universities, while coordinating various components to ensure the success of the event. From program design and schedule coordination to participant management, budgeting,

and documentation, every task was closely interconnected. Finding myself working with a sense of focused yet enjoyable tension was one of the biggest challenges I experienced.

However, collaborating with so many people to solve problems along the way made the process extremely rewarding. When the Assembly finally concluded successfully, I felt a profound sense of accomplishment. This experience taught me valuable lessons about organization, responsibility, and the true meaning of international cooperation.

**Q: With years of experience you may have thoughts and or suggestions for improvement. What would be them and how would you like to contribute to the task?**

**A:** Moving forward, I hope to encourage more proactive student participation. Rather than waiting for SUN to offer activities, I would like to see students speak up, propose new ideas, and take initiative through their own actions.

To support this, I aim to create more spaces where students can freely share their thoughts and develop their own projects, while providing active guidance as a coordinator. I believe that such changes will help transform SUN into an even more dynamic and student-centered network.

**Q: Thank you very much, Balanca, for joining us. How would you describe your experience with SUN as a student and participant in the PHOCOS (The Photo Contest of SUN)?**

**A:** The Silk-Road Universities Network is an international organization founded on the exchange of diverse cultures. Being part of this organization is an honor for me.

Taking part in SUN's initiatives and events makes you feel like a citizen of the world; it allows you to grow and to discover new cultures.

Today, more than ever, it is essential to be a global citizen and to explore different cultures through art, writing, photography, and all forms of culture.



**Winners of the Photo Contest of SUN, 2023**

**Q: Could you please share your favorite and or best memories of SUN?**

**A:** Thanks to SUN, I have discovered countries, met people, formed friendships, and stimulated my artistic and creative sensibilities. I will always be grateful to the Silk-Road Universities Network for the wonderful experiences it has allowed me to have. I can't wait to attend the next General Assembly and share great moments with friends and colleagues from all over the world!

**Q: Thank you very much, Hyelin, for accepting our invitation for the interview.**

**Would you like to introduce yourself to our readers?**

**A:** It's been a while, SUN!

I'm Hyelin, and I had the pleasure of being part of SUN in 2019–2020. My time with the organization was brief but incredibly formative, and I'm grateful for the chance to reflect on it.

During that year, I worked on creating visual content, website renewal, and traveled to the General Assembly in Kazakhstan. Until then, “Silk Road” was just a term in textbooks, but thanks to SUN, it became real through the people and cultures I met. Connecting with friends from Kazakhstan and other Silk Road regions broadened my perspective and encouraged me to approach challenges with more confidence and curiosity.

**Q: Could you please share your favorite and/or best memories of SUN?**

**A:** One memory that stands out is a video project during the pandemic. Students from around the world sent messages and

home videos, each filmed differently with varying screen sizes and sound volumes. Editing them together and adding captions was challenging, but it was deeply moving to see people from so many places sharing encouragement and support. Bringing all these clips together gave me a strong sense of fulfillment and showed me the power of collaboration across borders.

**Q: Based on your experience you may have thoughts and or suggestions for improvement. What would they be?**

**A:** Looking back, working on projects with international peers was a new challenge for me. At first, communicating in formal settings felt intimidating, but over time I discovered my strengths and areas for growth, which naturally built my confidence. That growth continues to support my work with international partners today.

I also realized that most interactions between countries occurred during official events. Perhaps creating an online community or an alumni network could help

maintain connections and allow future members to benefit even more from international exchange. This might be a way for the organization to continue expanding its impact.

**Q: Would you like to leave a message for SUN and current members of SUN?**

**A:** Although my time with SUN was short, it was meaningful. It helped me broaden my perspective, develop my values, and build a foundation for the future. I hope the organization continues to grow and thrive, and it would be wonderful if future members can have similarly enriching experiences.

I sincerely thank everyone who has kept the organization thriving for 10 years and wish SUN continued success in the next decade.

**SPECIAL FEATURE**



# **CHRONOLOGY**

## 2014-2025



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## 2014

- Nov. 4            Symposium on the Silk Roads studies at the National Assembly, Republic of Korea
- Nov. 28          Established Organizing Committee for the inception of SUN

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## 2015

- Feb. 2            MOU signed between Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) and the Provincial Government of Gyeongsangbuk-do for co-hosting the Inaugural General Assembly of SUN as part of Gyeongsangbukdo's Silk Road Festival 2015
- Apr.- Jun        Visited prospective member universities in Mongolia, China, Russia, India, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, and Oman
- Jul. 13-15       First meeting of the International Organizing Preparatory Committee for Inaugural General Assembly of SUN at HUFS, Seoul, Republic of Korea
- Aug. 21-24      Inaugural General Assembly at the city of Gyeongju, Korea
- Oct. 21          MOU signed among HUFS, the Provincial Government of Gyeongsangbuk-do and SUN regarding financial support for the activities and operations of SUN.
- Dec. 31          Obtained a legal entity of SUN in Korea

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## 2016

- Jan. 16          Designated Silk Road Zone at Seoul campus of HUFS
- Mar. 16-20      Preparatory meeting between National University of Mongolia (NUM) and SUN Secretariat for establishing the Silk-road Digital Library at NUM
- Apr. 5-9         Conducted a field trip for the 3rd General Assembly at the National University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

- Apr. 14 MOU signed between Korea Academy of Korean Studies (KAKS) and SUN for collaboration on academic affairs on Silk Road
- Aug. 8-12 The 2nd General Assembly of SUN at HUFS in Seoul and courtesy visit to Governor of Gyeongsang buk-do province in Andong, Korea
- Aug. 9 Award ceremony of the 1st Photo Contest of SUN (PHOCOS 2016)

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## 2017

- Jan. 25-26 Supported a conference on “Silk Road Transportations and Diplomacy” organized by Alameh Tabatabai University at Chabahaar in Iran
- Apr.1-Nov.11 PHOCOS 2017 and the 1st Writing Contest of SUN (WRICOS 2017)
- Jun. 19-22 Jointly organized conference on “The Spread of Iron Civilizations along the Silk Road and Methodologies for Mapping a Standard Map of Silk Road”, Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Jun. 19-22 Launched a 5-year research project named “An International Joint Research for Having a Standard Universal Map of the Silk Roads,” Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Jul. 5-7 Organized a conference on “Education of Silk Roads at the Schools of Humanities and Liberal Arts in Universities along the Silk Roads,” Seoul, Korea, jointly with HUFS and QS
- Sep. 17 The 3rd SILKROADIA Philharmonic Orchestra Concert, Seoul, Korea
- Oct. 10 Kick-off Ceremony for the Expedition of Maritime Silk Road by Ship, Seoul, Korea
- Oct. 12-Nov. 6 Expedition of Maritime Silk Road by Ship from Korea (Pohang) to Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City) through Manila (the Philippines), Melaka (Malaysia), Bangkok (Thailand), and Cambodia (Shianoukville)

- Nov. 8-12 The 3rd General Assembly of SUN, jointly with National University of Social Sciences and Humanities at Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam
- Nov. 10 The 3rd Annual International Conference by IASS and the Silk Road Students Festival at the National University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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## 2018

- Mar.8-10 Sponsored conference on "Silk Road Heritage and Diplomacy" co-organized by Allameh Tabatabai University and Chamron University at Ahvaz in Iran
- Jun. 7 Ceremony to dedicate the statue of Hippocrates to the Chair University of SUN which is HUFS in Seoul, Korea
- Jul. 2-4 Introduction of SUN to the Global Silk Road Cities Mayors' Forum at Astana in Kazakhstan
- Aug. 16-18 Introduction of SUN to the UNESCO Conference at Karakorum, Mongolia
- Aug. 29-Sep.1 The 4th General Assembly of SUN at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy, with the events including:
- UPSUN Workshop
  - The function of USSN Secretariat is transferred to Allameh Tabatabai' University, Iran, from SUN Secretariat for a trial period of one year until the end of 2019.
- Sep. 13-15 The 4th Annual International Conference of IASS at Gyeongju, Korea
- Nov.19-20 Introduction of SUN to the UN [the 8th UNAOC (UN Alliance of Civilizations) Global Forum at UN Headquarter, New York, U.S.A.]
- Dec.9-10 The 2nd Workshop to draw a Standard Universal Map of the Silk Roads at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

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## 2019

- Jan. 1 SUN was selected by IIE (International Institute of Education) as a case of game changer for the next millennium in global education and introduced in an article of the centennial issue of the IIE Networker Magazine
- Apr.30- May 2 Supported international conference on “People and the Environment along the Silk Roads” organized jointly by Allameh Tabataba’i University and University of Guilan at the campus of University of Guilan, Iran
- May 15-16 Introduction of SUN to the Asian Civilizations
- Jun. I Dialogue Conference and Parallel Panel: “Safeguarding the Diversity of Asian Civilizations” and UNESCO at Beijing, China
- SILKROADIA VOL. 1 NO. 1 was published
- Set. 18-21 The 5th General Assembly of SUN at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Sep. 26-28 The Annual International Conference of IASS on “Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Languages, and Ideas” and the 5th General Assembly of IASS at Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow, Russia
- Oct.7-11 DECOS 2019 (The 1st International Debate Contest of SUN) at University of Bucharest, Romania.
- Nov.10-11 Supported International Symposium on “Silk Road: The Road of Peace and Development” organized by Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin, Iran
- Nov.27-29 Supported the International Workshop for Drawing a Standard Universal Map of the Silk Roads held in celebration of the opening of the Silk Road Research Center at Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

SILKROADIA VOL. 1 NO. 2 was published

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## 2020

- Jan. 31 SUN recognized Gyeongsangbuk-do province and Gyeongju city as a “historic place of Silk Road Heritage.”
- Feb. 21 SUN signed MOU with the Seoul Design Foundation
- Jun.-Jul. SILKROADIA VOL. 2 NO.1 was published
- Aug. – Sep. PHOCOS 2020  
WRICOS 2020
- Dec. 3 The 6th General Assembly of SUN held online  
SILKROADIA VOL. 2 NO. 2 was published
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## 2021

- Jan - May WRICOS 2021  
PHOCOS 2021
- Jun. SILKROADIA VOL. 3 NO. 1 was published
- Sep. The 7th General Assembly of SUN was held online jointly with the National University of Mongolia
- Dec. SILKROADIA VOL. 3 NO. 2 was published
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## 2022

- Feb. -Jun. S\_DECOS 2022  
PHOCOS 2022  
WRICOS 2022  
Celebrate the 1600th Anniversary of VENICE SUN organized video, T-shirt, and essay contest jointly with the Ca' Foscari University of Venice
- May The 8th General Assembly of SUN was held Online jointly with the Canadian University of Dubai
- Jun. SILKROADIA VOL. 4 NO.1 was published
- Dec. SILKROADIA VOL. 4 NO. 2 was published

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## 2023

- Feb. The 8th General Assembly of SUN was held in Dubai, UAE jointly with the
- Jun. SILKROADIA VOL. 5 NO. 2 was published  
Canadian University of Dubai from Feb 13 to 15
- Nov. The 6th Annual International Academic Conference of IASS held virtually, Nov. 24 - 25
- Dec. SILKROADIA VOL. 5 NO. 2 was published

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## 2024

- Jun. SILKROADIA VOL. 6 NO. 1 was published
- Sep. The WRICOS 2023-2024  
The PHOCOS 2023- 2024
- Nov. The 9th General Assembly of SUN was held in Naples, Italy jointly with University of Naples L'Orientale
- Dec. SILKROADIA VOL. 6 NO. 2 was published

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## 2025

- Jun. SILKROADIA VOL.7 NO. 1 was published
- Oct. The 10th General Assembly of SUN was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

# TEN YEARS, ONE NETWORK: A PHOTOGRAPHIC RETROSPECTIVE

By Amali Ranavi Thantrige

Inauguration of SUN, 2015, in Gyeongju, Korea





**Student participants at the 2015 inauguration ceremony**

**2nd General Assembly of SUN in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 2017**





**4th General Assembly of SUN in Venice, Italy, 2018**

**5th International Academic Conference of SUN - IASS in Moscow, Russia, 2019.**





**Recipients of the PHOCOS and WRICOS awards during the 5th General Assembly of SUN**



**1st Speech & Debate Contest of SUN, Romania, 2019**

**7th General Assembly of SUN was held virtually due to the outbreak of COVID-19, 2021**





**Participants of the 7th GA of SUN, 2021**

**The 8th (Online) General Assembly of SUN - 2022**





**SUN advisors during the 8th GA of the SUN in Dubai, UAE - 2023**

**Participants of the 8th GA of SUN, Dubai, 2023**





**Cultural Performances at the 9th General Assembly of the SUN, in Naples, Italy - 2024**

**World Smart Sustainable Cities Organization (WeGO) signed MOU with SUN during the 9th GA of SUN in Italy**





**10th General Assembly of SUN held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in October, 2025**

# Umid Khamdamov, the New Uzbekistan, and a Patriarchy without Men



Cameron Shirvani Steiner

*“The flatbread symbolizes comfort...*

*We even compare our homeland with a flatbread.”*

## **INTRODUCTION**

It was a long time in the making. After many decades lacking in any form of international recognition, 2019 was arguably the breakthrough year for the small yet burgeoning film industry of Uzbekistan, as Umid Khamdamov’s rural coming-of-age drama *Hot Bread* (*Issiq non* in Uzbek) became the country’s first entry for the Best International Feature Film at the 92nd Academy Awards. While it was ultimately

not nominated, it was nevertheless both a historic achievement for the country and a first for all of the film's production crew, including director Khamdamov, cinematographer Jahongir Ibragimov, composer Tair Kusiev, and the state production companies Uzbekfilm and the Uzbekkino National Agency. But to better understand the significance of this achievement, we can first endeavor to understand both the history of Uzbek cinema, and the story of our film's director.

## **UZBEKISTAN'S FILM HISTORY**

You may be surprised to find that Uzbekistan is considered the birthplace of Central Asian cinema, with its first film screening in 1897, and its own films being produced starting in the 1900s. By the early 1910s, director Khudoibergan Devanov was making filmed documentaries, and in 1924 the first studio, Bukhkino, was established. Uzbekistan produced many silent films drawing from both local and Russian cinematic traditions. During World War II, when the Soviet Union's western region became an epicenter of the conflict, Uzbekistan be-

came the center of film production as Soviet filmmakers relocated to a region removed from the worst of the war (Gardner, 2025). The government-run studio Uzbekfilm and other production facilities produced a wide range of dramas, comedies, and even animation throughout the Soviet period. Years later, in what would come to be known as the Golden Age of Uzbek cinema, local creators from the 1960s through the 1980s navigated censorship and government controls to produce a number of significant and critically acclaimed films (“A Brief History”).

Directors of note include Shukrat Abbosov, one of the founders of modern Uzbek cinema, who made *The Entire Makhalia Is Talking about This* (1961), a comedy still considered a masterpiece, and went on to produce and direct many more films. Recognition for Abbosov’s body of work was so great, he would eventually earn the honorary title of “People’s Artist of the Uzbek SSR” (Gardner, 2025). Ali Khamrayev, another major figure in both documentary and feature films in the Soviet era, created films such as *Yor-yor* (1964),

*The Seventh Bullet* (1972), and *The Bodyguard* (1979). Kamara Kamalova, perhaps the most acclaimed woman film-maker of Central Asia, began working for Uzbekfilm in 1964, and is well known for her feature films and coming of age stories. Melis Abzalov joined Uzbekfilm in 1962 and continued making films into the 1990s, marking the transition away from the heavy Soviet presence and into something more indigenous to Uzbekistan (Yuldashev; Goff). The fall of the Soviet Union led to a decline in film production in the 1990s, and it wasn't until the late 2010s that Uzbek cinema would regain its footing, first with a plethora of B-list movies before returning to higher-caliber comedies and dramas (Gardner, 2025). The resurgence of filmmaking is now recognized as the New Wave of Uzbek cinema.

## **UMID KHANADOV - A SHORT BIOGRAPHY**

It is within this context that we now turn to our featured director. Born in Navoi, Uzbekistan, Umid Khamadov was later a graduate of the Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture, where he was a film-

making student under the mentorship of the previously mentioned Shukhrat Abbasov. His early career involved work as a stage director for public events and as an actor in the theater, although he later admitted that he “wasn’t very interested in it” because of how quickly theater is forgotten, and transitioned from acting to directing out of a desire to “create something more durable” (Ryzhkov, 2019).

That turn into directing would begin with the 2010 short film *Nazar*, a student work that received positive attention from many, including from veteran director Zulfikar Musakov. His first feature-length films were social issue comedies commissioned for him, including the romantic comedy *My Mother’s Dreams* (*Onaginam orzusi*, 2013), which touched on the gender inequality that women face in Uzbek society, but with an tone of light superficiality. Khamdamov, however, dreamed of work more serious, a dream which ran into a severe roadblock: when he took the screenplay for his desired drama film to the artistic council of Uzbekkino, “[officials] did not give permission for several years,” and

it wasn't until the country's leadership change in 2016 (when Shavkat Mirziyoyev became President following his predecessor's death) that he finally "received the go-ahead and funding" to bring his script to screen (Ryzhkov, 2019).

That script would become his most notable work, the 2018 drama *Hot Bread (Is-siq non)*, a coming-of-age tale that explores family, migration, the role of women and the place of absent men in rural Uzbek society, directly confronting these themes in a manner not typical of Uzbek storytelling. The film would find success beyond Khamdamov's expectations, collecting the awards for best film and best screenplay at Uzbekistan's national film awards, Oltin Khumo, and subsequently winning best actress (Feruza Saidova), best music (Tair Kuziev) and the Grand Prix at the 28th Open CIS and Baltic Film Festival "Kino-shok." In addition, as noted above, *Hot Bread* was also the country's first submission (though not nominated) for the Best International Feature Film category at the Academy Awards.

## **“ISSIQ NON”**

What may be most remarkable about *Hot Bread* is its deceptive simplicity - an initial explanation of the narrative can create the impression of a film small in significance. A rebellious teenage girl named Zulfiya (Zarina Ergasheva) is newly released from a boarding home for girls, only to find that instead of her hoped-for reunion with her mother, who lives a “modern” life in the city, she has been taken by her traditionalist grandmother (Munavvar Abdullayeva) to live in a mud-plaster house in the grandmother’s rural village. Living with them is the grandmother’s daughter-in-law, and Zulfiya’s aunt, Norgul (Feruza Saidova), an always quiet and humble worker in the household who repairs plaster walls, collects and sells medicinal herbs, bakes bread for sale, and takes care of her children. Zulfiya goes to school, deceiving her classmates and even herself with a wishful, imagined, and worldly cosmopolitan family. She attempts to make contact with her mother and dreams of escape. But what may seem like a well-worn tale reveals itself to be a thematically rich explo-



Promotional poster from Ozzbekino

ration of family, national community, and one's agency in it all, taking place within the scope of a country and people marked by rapid social changes yet still grappling with traditions.

According to Khamdamov himself, *Hot*

*Bread* is, deep in its core, a film about men. This may initially seem contradictory, given that all the primary characters are women and there are almost no men with any presence or even speaking roles in the narrative. The only males in Zulfiya's life are a schoolboy named Ahmad who forms a friendship which ends in a shocking betrayal, and a mentally-challenged villager who occasionally takes Zulfiya home from school on his bike. Any other male character either makes a small there-then-gone appearance, or is absent like Norgul's husband, who was, according to village lore, eaten by a fish. It is in this absence, however, that men are central to the film's story.

One of the profound and radical changes that has taken place in Uzbekistan and much of Central Asia is a massive labor-migration, as millions of rural people, particularly men but also women like Zulfiya's mother, leave their homes to migrate to the cities, or even out of the country, in search of better-paying work. Khamdamov has acknowledged he based the film on the real-life story of a girl he knew who was taken to her grandmother's

village, and seeing “with [his] own eyes the villages, where there were no men left at all. Except, perhaps, children and the elderly” (Ryzhkov, 2019). Even the young actor Zarina Ergasheva saw the realism in the film: “Cinema gave me the opportunity to convey to people what I could not shout in life,” adding “the pain of my hero Zulfia is close to me.” Uzbek girls “strive to be strong,” she says, because “they think of shouldering the burden of life that has bent their mother’s back” (Uzbekistan Cinema Agency).

This is far from the first film to address the effects of globalization and labor migration - notable works includes Yusup Razykov’s *Gastarbeiter* (2009, Russia), about an Uzbek patriarch who goes to Russia to find his labor-migrant grandson, and Sergei Dvortsevoi’s *Ayka* (2018, Kazakhstan/Russia) about a Kyrgyz woman struggling to survive in Moscow (Monastireva-Ansdell, 2020). But *Hot Bread* is unique in its attention to the domestic effects on the ones left behind. Zulfiya’s grandmother, an educated woman who was once a teacher and principal at the village school, has

been left to be the matriarch in absence of the family's men, and, perhaps to preserve a sense of normalcy, imposes on the family a traditional structure - patriarchy without men - that Norgul appears to accept but which Zulfiya finds tyrannical. The family's only phone is kept locked in a safe, accessible only by the grandmother. Through hidden, hushed phone calls, we learn the happenings of the absent family members, and with them the devastating consequences wrought by the nation's social dislocation.

At the heart of the film is the contrast between Zulfiya and the two family figures in her life, her grandmother and her aunt Norgul, reflecting how each makes sense of their place in a society that has marginalized them. Each effort by Zulfiya's grandmother to enforce traditional practice is met with Zulfiya's angst and rebellion. A child and an outsider, she is contemptuous of rural life and domestic chores, and wishes only to escape and reunite with her full family in her dream world of prosperity and happiness. Norgul, conversely, at first seems to have quietly surrendered



Zarina Ergasheva as Zulfiya (Promotional photo from *Ozzbekino*)

to her situation, working ceaselessly and without complaint caring for and supporting her family, including fully dedicating herself to domestic chores, upkeep of the old house, and raising money through selling bread and dried herbs. Norgul's almost Zen-like wisdom and inner strength is gradually revealed as she approaches Zulfiya with a gentler touch than the grandmother's overbearing authority, intuitively understanding that Zulfiya will journey from childhood to adulthood in due time. This journey will unfold in the film "as a series of disillusionments, shocking discoveries, betrayals of trust, and moments of

enlightenment” that guide her into adulthood (Monastireva-Ansdell, 2020). Zulfiya must learn to navigate a bitter world that will never live up to her idealistic dreams while preserving her resilience and finding her agency within it. She gives up her childish petulance once she understands the tragedy and loss in the lives of her grandmother and aunt, allowing Zulfiya to see them as companions and allies in her own struggle. This is best illustrated by a concluding scene where three generations of women, not conventionally related to one another but bonded as family, work together and follow Norgul’s lead in using vibrant paints to decorate the drab mud plaster home and bring color back into their lives.

Any discussion of the film would be incomplete without acknowledging the film’s impressive technical aspects. Khamdamov’s careful direction and screenplay imbue the film with a bittersweet realism, at times humorous and at others tragic, yet never losing perspective on the full range of emotions within Zulfiya’s story. Also noteworthy is Jahongir Ibragimov’s

expressive cinematography, pairing hand-held close-ups with long single-take tracking shots. In one single-take scene (with what must have been a handheld camera) we follow a character from the home's courtyard gate, up a ladder to a balcony entrance, inside a door to the living room, into the room and then rotating to look back out of the room's window. All this masterful camera work is in service of creating moods of connection and alienation, intimacy and distance, perfectly complementing the themes of the screenplay. Similarly, the musical score by award-winner Tair Kuziyev deeply reflects the film's narrative themes with a mixture of traditional instrumentation and two female vocal parts, a higher soprano and a more mature mezzo, at first sung independently, before later singing together and carrying each other (Monastireva-Ansdell, 2020). Production designer Alisher Umrzakov's use of color palettes marks the story's narrative journey - drab earth tones and Zulfiya's black and white school uniform are ultimately replaced by the colorful dresses for which Uzbekistan is famous. Similarly, the

film's climax is followed by bright paint on the trim of the home, previously unseen colorful light patterns on the surface of the village lake, and a long invisible airliner high overhead, heard throughout the film, finally revealed with prismatic contrails as a symbol of hope.

Special credit must be given to the actors, particularly the leading three women. Each gives an inspired performance, believably evoking real, down-to-earth women all navigating, in their own ways, a state of crisis wrought by a world that shattered their places in it, leaving them to pick up the pieces. Zarina Ergasheva bears the heavy burden of child actors who are central to a film, and she carries it beautifully. Munavvara Abdullayeva, an eminent Uzbek artist, is perfect as the grandmother, first a cold tyrant but later revealing a tragic and broken soul. And Feruza Saidova understandably took the major acting award as Norgul the daughter-in-law, almost imperceptibly moving from what appeared to be a naive mouse to a manifestation of strength and power in a cold and hurtful world.

## CONCLUSION

For all that went right for *Hot Bread*, its greatest error may be its very title. According to Khamdamov, it had originally been called “Hearth” (“Sugnon”), reflecting the oven where Norgul bakes, which he felt more accurately suggested his meaning. However, when the film was sent to the Kinoshock festival, the title had been translated to “Hot Bread,” and by the time of the festival, it became “too late to object. This name was published everywhere” (Ryzhkov, 2019).

Whether it goes by “Hot Bread” or “Hearth,” what is indisputable is the impact made by the film’s triumphant success. Director Yusup Razykov, head of the jury for that year’s Kinoshock - which is the Oscar ceremony for much of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia - remarked the jury deliberation for the festival’s grand prize was quick and near-unanimous, selecting *Hot Bread* as their winner. This came mere months after the film had been awarded the grand prize at Uzbekistan’s national Oltin Khumo ceremony (Ryzhkov, 2019). Capping off the film’s success with a

first-time-ever consideration for the Academy Awards, Umid Khamdamov and *Hot Bread* has played a vital part in getting Uzbekistan's film industry back on the map.

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**Cameron Shirvani Steiner** is a graduate of the Dodge College of Film & Media Arts at Chapman University in Orange County, California.



**Bejaia in Berber-Islamic times**

Source: Archive by Gallica website of the BNF

# Bejaia, Mediterranean Crossroads of the Silk Roads (11th-15th centuries)



**Dr. Manel Ouaret Ladjouze**

**B**ejaia is located in northern Algeria, on the coast 250 km east of the capital Algiers. Described by many travellers and geographers as being very ancient, Pliny the Elder wrote that ancient Saldae (Bejaia) as one of the first colonies founded

by Augustus in Mauretania in 33 BC (Desanges 1980). It was also cited as a colony by the geographer Ptolemy at the beginning of the 2nd century AD. It has a large port, as mentioned by the Greek geographer and historian Strabo (64 BC-36 AD), and the city of Bejaia is also described by the Andalusian geographer Al Bakri (1014-1094) in the 11th century as very ancient (Al Bakri, 1992). Furthermore, the relevant literature highlights the city's heyday and its importance within the Mediterranean region during the Berber-Islamic era (11th-15th centuries), particularly during the Hammadid period. Ibn Khaldun wrote that 'it was during the reign of Prince El Nacir that the Hammadid dynasty reached the height of its power and acquired its superiority' (Ibn Khaldun 2000).

The population of Bejaia during the Berber-Islamic period was highly literate and learned, as evidenced by a quote from Al-wârthilânî's work 'Nuzhat al-Anzâr fî Faḍl 'Ilm al-Tārīkh wa-l-Akhhbâr' (18th century): 'I entered Bejaia in the 8th century and found knowledge flowing from the hearts of its men like water gushing from

its walls. So, I began to write a question in each mosque and leave it there'. This refers to the testimony of Ec-Charif al-Talamcânî upon his entry into Bejaia. The author expresses his deep admiration for the intellectual influence of the city. By describing the knowledge that springs from the hearts of its people like water gushing from its walls, he emphasizes the importance of scientific and spiritual life in Bejaia, where teaching and research were omnipresent in the urban space. The fact that he claims to have written a question in each mosque and left it there illustrates the spirit of exchange, debate, and quest for knowledge that characterised Bejaia at that time.

During the Berber-Islamic period, Bejaia was home to madrasas and various centers of learning where mathematics, Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic language, history, etc. were taught. However, Bejaia was also fully integrated into the intellectual Silk Road that connected the East and West through networks of scholars. Indo-Arabic methods of calculation, for example, developed in India and then spread to Baghdad,

subsequently spreading to Andalusia before reaching the central Maghreb. It was through this scholarly journey, of which Bejaia En-Naciria was one of the major relays, that this knowledge was finally transmitted to medieval Europe.

Among the students who attended these centers of learning was the scholar and traveler Leonardo Fibonacci. His father was director of the Order of Merchants of Pisa at the customs office in Bejaia in the 12th century (A. Khalifa). Leonardo is said to have learned Indian arithmetic, simple and compound fraction notation, and the fundamentals of algebra according to the tradition of Al Khawarizmi and Abu Kamil (Dj. Aissani). It was thanks to this training that Fibonacci later introduced Arabic numerals and algebraic notation to Pisa. In 1202, he published *Liber Abaci*, a fundamental treatise on methods of calculation, as well as other works on accounting and geometry.

Ibn Khaldûn, another scholar and traveler, originally from Tunis, received a comprehensive education in Arabic, Islamic jurisprudence, mathematics, logic and phi-

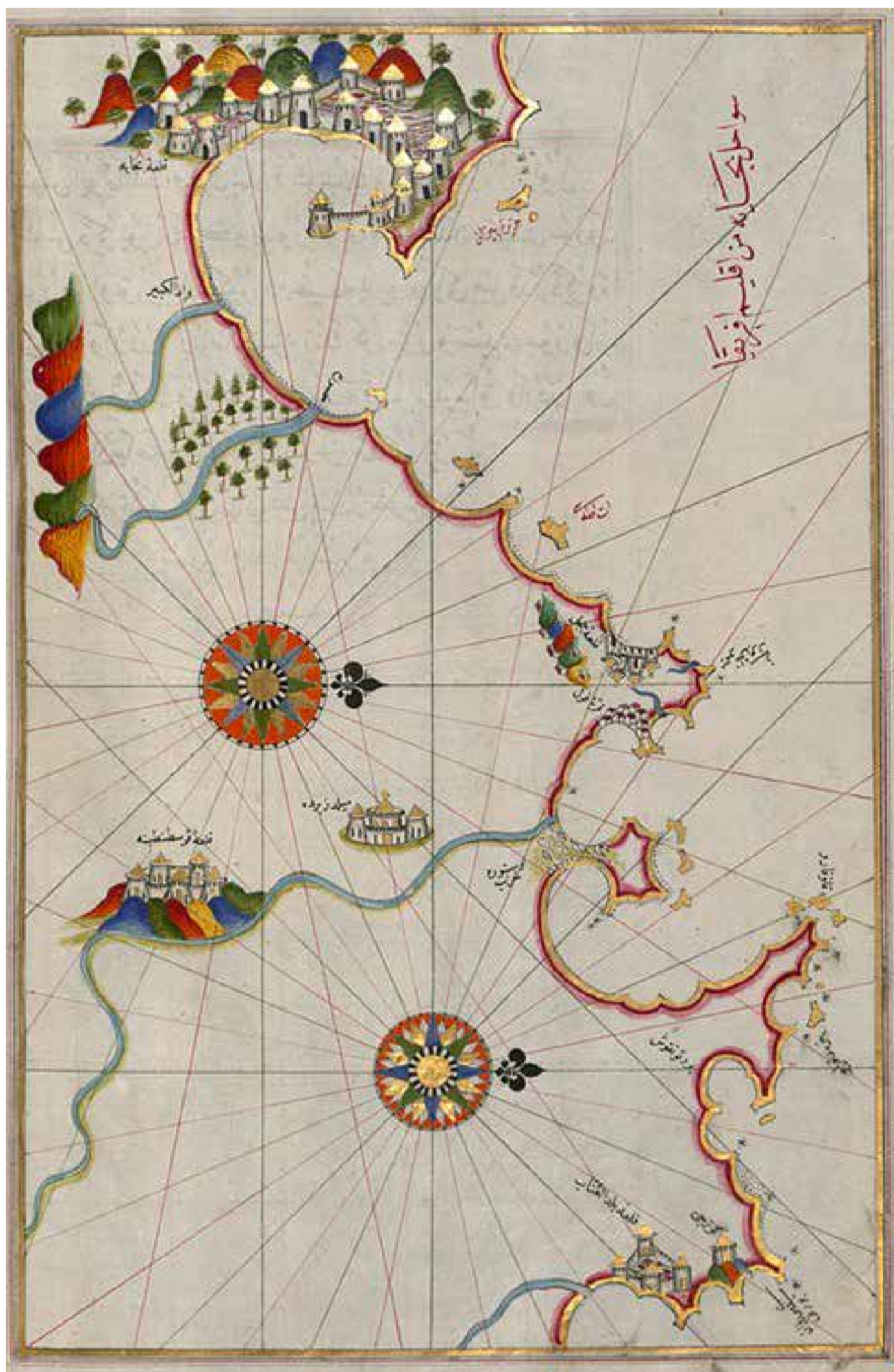


**Location of the University Institute of Sidi Touati in the 15th century (adjacent to its Zawya)**

Sketch by A. K. Otth (1839). Source: Archive by Gallica website of the BNF

losophy. He stayed in Bejaia from 1352 to 1354, where he took part in literary gatherings organised by the sultan (A. Khelifa). Returning to the city in 1362, he taught jurisprudence at the Qasaba Mosque in Bejaia. He then took his notes on the history of the Berbers of North Africa to Cairo. It was in this city that he died in 1406, after writing his famous *Muqqadima* and his *History of the Berbers*.

In addition to these cultural achievements, a university or scientific institute was established in the 15th century on the site of the Zawya of Sidi Touati: Al-Warti-



**The fortress of Bejaia in the 15th century (Piri Reis)**

Source: Archive by Gallica website of the BNF

lani reports that Sheikh Mohammed Touati was an eminent scholar there and that the institute provided education in all sciences to hundreds of students. The testimony of Admiral Piri Reis, who stayed in

Bejaia at the beginning of the 15th century and reports in his *Kitâb-i Bahriyé* that he met Sheikh Touati and remained under his protection for two years, confirms the importance of this establishment, which lasted until 1828.

Various European cities maintained regular contact and trade with the port of Bejaia, as evidenced by numerous contracts and treaties. From the end of the first millennium and throughout the Middle Ages, maritime maps mention the city, which was very popular with Italian, Spanish and French merchants from southern Europe (Comolli, Y.). Bejaia's main exports were wax, leather and hides. The reputation of its candles, known as *Candela di Bugia*, and the quality of its leather, which earned it the name *Buzana* in reference to *basane* (a type of tanned sheepskin leather), spread throughout southern Europe. In addition to these products, Bejaia also exported wheat, oil and precious materials such as marble and fine wood. In return, the city imported salt, spices, pepper and silk from the Levant, transported via Italy and Egypt. Bejaia thus served as a trading

hub, and the sea routes connecting Bejaia to Alexandria and Palermo formed a network parallel to the maritime Silk Road.

Under the reign of the Hammadid sultans (~1000 - 1150 CE), Bejaia experienced its most brilliant period in terms of culture, trade and, above all, architecture. Many prestigious buildings were constructed, including the palaces of En-Naciria: the Palace of the Star, the Palace of the Pearl, the Amimoune Palace, as well as several mosques, all of which bore witness to a magnificence described by numerous travelers, geographers and poets, and which aroused admiration throughout the Mediterranean basin.

Historic Bejaia En-Naciria was built within a fortified enclosure, flanked by bastions and monumental gates. The palaces occupied strategic sites and were surrounded by gardens and orchards, where water flowed through flowerbeds (A. Khelifa). Historians of the time report that some of these palaces served as models for buildings in Italy and Tunisia.

The poems of Ibn Hamdis (11th-12th centuries) reveal the reciprocal influence

of Mediterranean architectural and decorative arts between Bejaia and the cities of southern Europe. For example, we find muqarnas, a honeycomb-shaped decoration invented by the Fatimids, which adorned the ceilings of the Palace of the Star, as described by Ibn Hamdis. This type of ornamentation, combined with calligraphy, bears similarities to the ceilings of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo, built later.

Other Mesopotamian influences can also be seen in the palatial architecture of Bejaia, notably the presence of iwans: vaulted rooms opening onto the exterior via a large arch, reminiscent of Persian palaces and found in the Hammadid mother city of Bejaia, the Qala‘a des Banu Hammad (L. Golvin, A. Khelifa). The use of lapis lazuli as a wall color and ornament emphasises the decorative richness of the site. The Hammadids also used marquetry and green and white ceramic tiles arranged in eight-pointed stars alternating with St. Andrew’s crosses (R. Bourouiba), similar to the motifs found in Madīnat al-Zahrā.

Like Indo-Islamic or Persian gardens, Bejaia had many gardens adorned with

marble irrigation basins and waterwheels. Ibn Hamdis describes in his poems the courtyard of lions that decorated the fountains, with water spouting from their mouths, suggesting that the gardens of Granada may have been inspired by these Bejaia creations.

In the end, Bejaia was not just a trading port or a stop on the Mediterranean crossword, it was a living place of exchange where ideas, sciences and artistic traditions met and evolved. Its scholars, merchants and architects carried knowledge far beyond its walls, reaching Palermo, Pisa, Granada and even medieval Europe. What happened in Bejaia did not stay in Bejaia. It left traces across the Mediterranean, shaping a shared cultural heritage between East and West.

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**Dr. Manel Ouaret Ladjouze** is an architect with a PhD in architectural heritage preservation and a researcher in the Department of Architecture at A. Mira University in Bejaia (Algeria). Since 2009, her research has focused on the preservation of village, Ksouri and port landscapes as heritage sites.



**Live Performance at the Isfahan Music Museum:  
From left, qanun, santur, and tombak**

Photo by Min-ju Sung

# **A Thread of Familiarity: Discovering the Qanun Along the Silk Road**



**Min-ju Sung**

## **The Moment the First Note Reached Me**

While I was studying abroad in Iran for a semester earlier this year, I had the chance to visit the Isfahan Music Museum in Isfahan. The museum displayed an impressive range of instruments, from those used during the era of the Persian Empire to those played in modern times. There were also ancient and traditional instruments from regions connected to the broader Persian cultural sphere, such as Kurdistan, Turkey, and various Arab areas, which visitors could try out themselves. Employees performed some instruments, including the qanun, santur, and tombak, explaining their various histories and meanings as they were played. Seeing these traditions come alive right before my eyes was a memorable experience.

At the end of the exhibition, there was a small live performance prepared as the museum's finale. It was there that I heard the sound of the qanun for the very first time. The moment the first note resonated, I felt as if the atmosphere around me shifted. At the same time, a sensation of "strange yet somehow familiar" washed

over me. I still can't forget the emotion and cadence I felt at that moment. As I wondered where this sense of familiarity came from, I naturally became curious about the instrument itself.

## **The Familiarity Within a Foreign Sound**

The qanun is a zither-type string instrument widely used in Middle Eastern, North African, and Persian musical traditions. It features a trapezoid-shaped resonating body with 72 to 78 tightly strung strings. Players typically place the instrument on their lap or on a stand while sitting on a chair or the floor, plucking the strings with their fingernails or with picks. Notably, during performance, musicians can adjust microtones or semitones using small levers called *mandal*, which create the flowing and ornate melodies characteristic of Middle Eastern music. The clear, transpar-

### **Qanun**

Image from Arab  
Instruments Blog



ent sound produced when the strings vibrate left a strong impression on me, and almost instinctively, it reminded me of the Korean traditional instrument, the gayageum.

Both instruments belong to the zither family and share structural similarities in the way they are placed on the lap or on a stand and played by plucking the strings. The bright and resonant plucked timbre is another common feature. These similarities explain why the qanun, despite being a completely new instrument to me, didn't feel entirely unfamiliar.

However, the two instruments also have distinct differences. While the gayageum has 12 or 25 strings, the qanun has over 70. Moreover, the gayageum allows pitch bending by directly pressing the strings with the fingers, whereas the qanun creates microtonal variations using mandal. Even so, the existence of instruments that resemble one another both structurally and emotionally across entirely different cultural regions struck me as a fascinating discovery.

## **Musical Footprints Across the Silk Road**

Why, then, do such similarities appear between instruments from different regions? This question naturally leads to the history of the Silk Road. The ancient Silk Road was not merely a commercial trade route; it was a crossroads where diverse cultures and technologies interacted. Musical instruments were no exception, and sounds and techniques traveled along this route as well.

In particular, zither-type string instruments evolved and transformed through the exchanges that took place from West Asia through Central Asia and into East Asia. One well-known example is the Persian santur, which influenced the development of the Chinese guzheng as it moved through Central Asia, and later contributed to the emergence of the Korean gayageum through various historical processes during the Three Kingdoms and Goryeo periods. Considering this lineage, we cannot say that the qanun and gayageum have a direct ancestor-descendant relationship, but it is clear that they developed within the same broader cultural network. The



## Gayageum

Image from Organology

movement of instruments was not simply a matter of “cultural diffusion,” but a process in which music and craftsmanship from different regions met, transformed, and progressed.

Seen in this light, the Isfahan Music Museum’s arrangement, displaying instruments from various regions together and presenting their intertwined histories, made perfect sense. Each instrument represents a culture in itself, yet each also carries traces of connection shaped by the flow of the Silk Road.

## **Music, Memory, and What Connects Us**

The Silk Road served not only as a historical and economic route but as a central

crossroads for fields such as medicine, music, and civilization. Within this musical current, I felt I could finally understand why the sound of the qanun felt familiar to me.

The tone of the qanun that I heard that day remains unforgettable. It was not simply because the sound was beautiful, but because it was a moment when I discovered familiarity within an unfamiliar culture. That experience revealed to me that music is a universal language that transcends borders. It also made me realize that cultures we think of as distant are often interconnected in unexpected ways.

My time studying abroad in Iran was a dreamlike period that broadened my perspective. Through this experience, I came to understand, quite naturally, that the process of learning about another culture is also a journey toward understanding myself more deeply.

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**Min-ju Sung** is a student of Persian and Iranian  
Studies and Business Administration Department  
at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea.

# The Dove and Pigeon's Journey as a Symbol of Peace

By Maria Pourlioti, Maurizio Ala, & Yu-jeong Lee

The dove has captured human imagination as a calm and graceful bird, symbolizing peace, purity, and spiritual connection. Across many cultures, from ancient Mediterranean civilizations to the diverse traditions of Asia, this bird appears in myths, religious rituals, artworks, and literature. But what is the difference between doves and pigeons? Though they may look similar, they have historically carried different symbolic meanings: doves are often associated with loyalty, love, and spiritual messages, whereas pigeons are sometimes seen as wild, unruly, or even mundane. Each region interprets these birds in its own way, yet the core val-

ues the dove represents hope, harmony, and compassion remain consistent. The dove's broader association with peace also owes much to developments after World War II. The Allied Forces used pigeons and doves for military communication, and the United Nations inherited this imagery, transforming the bird into a universal emblem of peace. White doves became the primary representation of harmony, even inspiring the term "doves" for political moderates.

According to Jaymi Heimbuch of "Better with Birds," there is no real scientific difference between doves and pigeons. They are all members of the Columbidae family. The names "dove" and "pigeon" come mostly from cultural traditions and language rather than biology. In reality, they are the same birds with different names. And how can we tell a pigeon from a dove? We often sort these birds by appearance. Small and elegant birds are called "doves," while the heavier, street-smart ones are known as "pigeons." A mourning dove appears soft and slender, unlike the plump city pigeon that often shows up

when you're eating outside. Still, there are exceptions. Some small species are called doves, but the giant crowned pigeon keeps the pigeon name regardless of its size. Where can we find pigeons and doves? When it comes to their habitats, the naming becomes even more complicated. In North America and Europe, "pigeon" typically refers to the urban birds that dominate city parks, while "dove" describes their quieter, woodland-loving relatives. However, this pattern changes around the world. Some forest-dwelling species, like Europe's common wood pigeon, still carry the pigeon name even though they live far from city life.

By exploring Greece, Italy, and Korea, we can see how one symbol traveled across continents, evolving through time while retaining its enduring message of hope and unity.

# Dove in Greece: Myth and Antiquity



Maria Pourlioti

As a timeless symbol of purity and peace the dove is always universally recognized and its profound significance goes back in antiquity. In Greek it is called περιστέρι (IPA: /pe.ri'ste.ri/) and it is perhaps derived from the adjective πελιός (/pe.li'os/), meaning dark or pale (Beekes, p. 1177). From the Archaic Age to the Hellenistic Age numerous images have been discovered in temples and sanctuaries dedicated to goddesses who are associated with the transition from childhood to adulthood and finally marriage. For example, in Locri, Central Greece, in a sanctuary dedicated to Proserpine. many doves and cocks made by terracotta came to the light (Johnston, Mastrocinque, p. 213). Many archaic kores found in tombs or temples appear to carry in their hands doves or similar birds as offerings to their protecting goddess (id.). Moreover, they are the first birds depicted

in the Aegean Bronze Age. They are characterized by a stout body shape, a rounded breast, a relatively short neck and a rounded head with a short conical beak (Binnberg, p. 53).

According to the mythology doves are part of Venus' sacred custody or they are considered as creatures under protection of other love gods (Johnston, Mastrocinque, p. 214). One myth presents Peristera as a nymph of Venus. One day Venus and Eros were gathering flowers and competing to see who could collect the most. The goddess allowed Eros to win, but Peristera, wishing to assist Venus, prevailed instead. Eros was so enraged, that he transformed Peristera into a dove (Mythographus Vaticanus I 175, 2.3). Eros himself physically resembled a dove, while in many terracotta statuettes found in Magna Grecia he is presented as a bird rider or as a part of a bird flock (Johnston, Mastrocinque, p. 214). Doves might be connected to Zeus too: some versions declare that doves were feeding him ambrosia and he transformed them into a constellation, Pleiades, to thank them (Allen, p. 60).



**"Stele of girl with dove, no 27.45" (450-440 BC)**

Photo by 3dnatureguy

A truly interesting fact is that in ancient Greek culture doves and pigeons are different. On the one hand, doves are loy-

al to their partners and they mate, only if their first partner dies. On the other hand, pigeons, which are called phatta (φάττα), carried a different connotation due to their wild nature. Artemidoros wrote: “φάσσαι καὶ περιστέραί γυναῖκας σημαίνουσι· φάσσαι μὲν πάντως πορνικάς, περιστεραιδὲ ἔσθ’ ὅτε οἰκοδεσποίνας καὶ κοσμίας”, which means “pigeons and doves signify women: the pigeons always represent harlots, while the doves sometimes denote mistresses of the household and modest women” (Johnston, Mastrocinque, p. 216).

From the 8th century BC doves were trained and used as messengers, mostly for spreading news about the winners of Olympic Games. Even though it seems to be a not so practical solution, it is exactly the opposite considering the means of transportation in these times for travelling long distances. For instance, when Persians were defeated in Marathon it took more than a day for the messenger to reach Athens and finally, he died of exhaustion (Blechman, p. 12).

It is a frequent artistic habit to include

doves in depictions of epiphanies. When a few terracotta columns with doves on the top were found in Knossos, Crete, used for ritual procedures Evans mentions that these birds are recognized as symbols of divine embodiment, just like it happens with the Holy Spirit and the dove in Christianity (Binnberg, p. 12). In Christian tradition doves are the earliest religious ensigns. Noah sends doves from the ark, and they returned holding an olive branch with their beak to symbolize the peaceful ending of the disastrous flood. In New Testament when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan river the Holy Spirit appeared with the look of a dove (Matthew 3:16 - καταβαίνον ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐπ' αὐτόν). Meanwhile it is included in many holy icons and depictions of Virgin Mary. Except for these, doves are symbols of prudence and integrity and most of all peace (with an olive branch), especially the peace felt by the soul in Paradise. In this case it is depicted like drinking from a vessel and holding with its claws a branch of palm or laurel, or a wreath.

Today, doves are a common sight in Greek cities, gathering in squares, parks, and rooftops. While no longer central to religious rituals or myths, they still symbolize peace, love, and harmony. Artists and writers continue to feature doves in murals, sculptures, and literature, keeping their cultural significance alive. In urban areas, people sometimes feed them, though population management is practiced to balance human and bird coexistence. However, they are often rejected, as they are considered dirty animals. That is why they are often called “mice of the sky”. A convincing proof of this rejection is that in modern Greek language there is a common phrase used in oral speech: “you act like an innocent dove”, which is used for people who claim to be innocent but in fact they are not. Even though doves seem to be *aves non gratae*, there is still a Greek island that cherishes these birds. In Tinos there are white buildings called *peristeriones* (which means it contains *peristeria*, doves) which were built in the Venetian period (1207-1715). They were a symbol of financial power and noble origin. They



must be built in places with no winds, so that birds can fly freely. They are truly architectural masterpieces as they are decorated with triangles, flowers, circles and

## other motifs (The Dovecote).

**Maria Pourlioti** is a classic philologist specialised in Latin Language and Literature and in Cognitive Linguistics. She is working at a private school as a tutor teacher and prepares students for admission exams.

# Dove in Italy: Venice and Pigeons – An Unusual Love Story



Maurizio Ala

Aside from its beautiful architecture, its maze of canals and bridges, and its rich art, Venice is also known for one improbable inhabitant: the pigeon. Looking down from the rooftops, eating the leftovers on pub tables, and dodging the footsteps of tourists, these unassuming birds are now considered a feature on par with the bell tower and the cathedral of Saint Mark's square. But how did such a small creature become what many see as a nuisance (if not even an ecological threat to the city), and what is the life of Venetian pigeons like today?

One of the most remarkable biological traits of the common pigeon is its ability to fly back to its nest from hundreds of kilometers away, and humans long understood how to take advantage of this. The use of pigeons for carrying messages over

long distances can be traced back 3,000 years in Egypt and Persia. The practice later spread throughout the Mediterranean, soon reaching Greece and Rome.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Italian city-states - including Genoa, Venice and Florence - often used pigeons to deliver state messages, and Italian nobles used to keep *colombari* (dovecotes) as symbols of prestige. The Republic of Genoa was particularly famous for its system of towers across the Mediterranean that could quickly exchange messages thanks to the birds. Specialized breeding also became quite popular, and some of the most famous Italian pigeon breeds can be traced back to this era.

In more recent times, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, carrier pigeons were integrated into military communication systems: telegraphs and radios existed, but due to their frequent malfunctions and the ease with which they could be intercepted, pigeons remained a more reliable link between commanders and the frontlines. During WWI, the Italian military created special mobile dovecotes,

carts able to carry up to a 100 pigeons each, granting soldiers a quick way to send communications (Steenhard).

With the growing post-WWII industrialization, the spread of more advanced communication technologies, and a gradual shift of public perception during the 1950s and 1960s, pigeons stopped being seen as a beloved pet and instead became considered nuisances. The pigeon populations that we can see nowadays are largely the descendants of those who were released when their usefulness to humans declined.

Legend has it that the first pair of pigeons in Venice was gifted to the wife of one of the doges of the city, to comfort her during her husband's frequent travels. Others claim that pigeons were first sent to the city by Doge Enrico Dandolo to announce the Venetian victory over Constantinople. Still, records show that Venetians did not shy away from using pigeons as messengers, and these stories demonstrate how Venetian nobles held their birds dear.

Venice has always been a remarkably suitable environment for a growing pigeon population. A pigeon can fly around the



Photo by Maurizio Ala

city with no real natural predators (aside from the occasional starved seagull), and historically, the ports and open markets were a steady source of food. Venetians themselves would also feed pigeons on purpose, believing it would bring prosperity and good luck. Starting from the 19th century the tourist tradition of feeding pigeons in Saint Mark's Square caused the population to explode, peaking at more than 10,000 birds in later decades ("Feast Over").

Since 2008, however, feeding pigeons in Venice has been illegal. The species itself is not protected - pigeons are classified by lo-

cal authorities as “strays” - but the city introduced the ban due to several concerns: possible damages to historic marble buildings and monuments, health concerns around zoonotic diseases, and general fears of overpopulation (“Feast Over”). The measures have proven effective, and the pigeon population has declined over time, although some tourists and local Venetians can still occasionally be seen feeding them.

Today, pigeons remain an iconic part of Venice’s streets and squares, a living reminder of the city’s history and the complex relationship between humans and urban wildlife. Despite regulations, they continue to capture the curiosity and affection of visitors and locals alike.

**Maurizio Ala** is a student of Korean Studies at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Italy. He teaches Korean at local high schools and is one of the founders of the JOHWA Association.

# Dove in Korea: A Modern and Traditional Icon of Peace



Yu-jeong Lee

In Korea, the dove bridges both historical and contemporary symbolism. Traditionally, doves appear in Buddhist imagery and folklore as representations of harmony, compassion, and spiritual guidance. In temple paintings and sculptures, they are often depicted alongside Bodhisattvas or in serene scenes that emphasize balance, reflecting their role as symbols of inner peace. In Christian contexts, the dove similarly embodies hope and blessing, appearing in church iconography and religious ceremonies as a messenger of divine favor.

Doves are a common sight throughout Korea, fluttering through streets, gathering in parks, and resting in city squares. In Seoul, the city's urban environment is often described as a “dove heaven,” with large flocks visible year round. Historical-



### **Dove in Seoul**

Photo by Choi Jong-wook

ly, from ancient times through the Joseon Dynasty, doves were valued as messengers, carrying letters and communications over long distances. Literary works from the Joseon period occasionally feature doves as metaphors for loyalty, fidelity, and human connection, illustrating their significance beyond mere physical presence. Today, their roles have shifted toward ecological functions, including dispersing seeds, supporting ecosystem restoration, and maintaining environmental balance in both urban and rural environments.

Korea's modern connection to the dove as a symbol of peace became globally recognized during the 1988 Seoul Olympics

and the inauguration ceremony of President Roh Tae-woo. Thousands of doves were released during these events, symbolizing hope, unity, and reconciliation. Many of these birds became part of Seoul's urban wildlife. In Korean art and literature, the dove continues to appear as a motif of harmony and compassion. Modern painters and sculptors incorporate doves into public murals, civic monuments, and gallery exhibitions to evoke feelings of unity and hope. In poetry and fiction, doves frequently serve as metaphors for human ideals, from the longing for reconciliation in divided communities to the enduring desire for personal and societal peace. Socially, doves are still released during national ceremonies, cultural festivals, and memorial events to symbolize collective wishes for harmony and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Over time, the meaning of the dove in Korea has evolved. While its religious and cultural roots emphasize spiritual and moral symbolism, modern interpretations increasingly highlight ecological awareness and urban coexistence. Today, when

Koreans think of “peace,” the dove is the image most commonly recalled, yet it also embodies adaptability, survival, and the intersection of human and natural life in a rapidly changing urban landscape.

In modern Korea, doves remain a familiar presence in city life, yet their role has changed dramatically. Once celebrated as symbols of peace, they are now officially classified by the Ministry of Environment as representative “wild nuisance animals” (Korean Tpoik). Urban residents are often advised not to feed them in order to control their population. This shift reflects a complex reality: the same birds that once embodied hope, unity, and spiritual connection are now seen as part of the challenges of urban ecology. Walking through Seoul today, one can still see flocks of doves on rooftops, in parks, and on public squares but they are no longer just emblems of harmony. They are survivors of a changing environment, navigating streets crowded with humans and vehicles, carrying with them both historical symbolism and the tangible realities of city life. In this sense, the dove continues to tell a story

about Korea's evolving relationship with nature, culture, and the ideals it has long represented.

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**Yu-jeong Lee** is a student of East African Studies and Portuguese Studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea. Currently studying Portuguese at the University of Lisbon.

# **A Sociocultural Analysis of Mongolian Meat Culture**



**Enkhbaatar Mijiddorj**



**Tsengel Davaasambu**

## **Introduction and The Anthropological Framework**

The study of meat consumption and distribution in the nomadic Mongolian culture is critical for understanding the complex relationship between the environment, subsistence, and social structure. Drawing from Nutritional Anthropology, this research views food allocation not merely as caloric intake but as a structured cultural response to a basic biological need (Neupert, 1999). As Gretel H. Peltó noted, the

social organization of the family is directly related to food processing and distribution (Seleshe et al., 2014). This article seeks to systematize the symbolic meaning and allocation of meat parts, thereby clarifying the cultural “commissariat”—the strict social system that manages food flow—among Mongols.

The Mongolian population is 3.5 million as of 2024, along with 57.6 million head of livestock (National Statistics Office of Mongolia). Tradition and culture determine how and under what circumstances we eat, which involves certain conditions to consider, including even when we eat and following what order of items consumed. We will examine two aspects of meat-related culture - first, when we prefer to eat in a given situation, and then the order of eating meat.

## **The Thermal Principle and Resource Management (The Five Kinds of Livestock)**

Mongolian culture has developed a sophisticated system of thermal classification

(чанар) for the Five Kinds of Livestock (таван хошуу мал) to ensure the body's internal heat balance against the harsh continental climate. This process is the first layer of distribution, dictating the timing of consumption (Nandintsetseg et al., 2017).

● **Horse Meat (Hot):** Considered the hottest ( халуун ) and reserved for the extreme cold of winter. Its consumption is a metabolic necessity, providing maximum energy to withstand sub zero temperatures. We eat horse meat only in winter, and it helps improve blood circulation. If we eat it in the warmer seasons, it is easy to get a nosebleed; it becomes too hot for proper body temperature. During winter, herders eat this meat to stay warm and healthy.

● **Mutton (Warm):** Categorized as warm ( дулаан ), making it a versatile staple consumed year-round (Zhen et al., 2010). It is the primary restorative meat, reserved for those needing to restore strength (тэнхээ авах). When babies are born, mothers

usually get tired easily, and we treat the mother with freshly made soup of mutton to get her back to health.

● **Beef (Cool/Cold):** Classified as cool (сэрүүн) and primarily associated with slaughter for provisions (идэш ). Beef's bulk and suitability for curing (as борц) make it a resource for long-term winter storage, minimizing the consumption of live animals later in the season and ensuring their survival . Most Mongolian have a whole cow to pass the winter without needing other smaller animals for their winter storage (Nandintsetseg et al., 2017).

● **Goat Meat (Cool/Cold):** Also cold/cool (хүйтэн). It is culturally preferred in spring and summer because of its leanness and the belief that the animal has consumed fresh, medicinal spring grasses (яргуй идсэн ямаа). Goats do not stay in flat places and always try to climb higher rocky places. In that way, they end up eating every single medical herb while moving from place to place. Mongolians usually raise goats with sheep. Otherwise,

the herd does not stay put, and the goats eat most of the grass roots. This raises the problem of desertification. Modern herders are often unaware of this issue, but because of cashmere, some herders tend to have goats. This raises the question of how to achieve a balance of agricultural practice and tradition and concerns regarding sustainable agricultural practices.

● **Camel Meat (ХҮЙТЭН):** A Cool/Cold meat primarily consumed in the Gobi regions, valued highly for its fat—particularly the hump fat—for its sweetness and ease of digestion. Mongolian Gobi region nomads commonly use this type of meat in their food chain (Šturm et al.; Dovchin & Dovchin).

The selection based on this principle ensures that the animal is used in harmony with the cycles of nature, a core tenet identified by Ruhlmann (2015). During summer, these meats can be processed as dried meat and used as jerky-type borts. We sliced them and dried them in cold and indirect sunlight.



**Mongolian home made dried beef meat (борц)**

Photos by the authors

Mongolian culture has developed a sophisticated system of thermal classification (чанар) for the Five Kinds of Livestock (таван хошуу мал) to maintain the body's internal heat balance in response to the harsh continental climate. This system constitutes the primary layer of distribution and determines the appropriate timing for consumption (Nandintsetseg et al., 2017). Horse meat, considered the hottest, is reserved for winter, while mutton's warmth makes it a year-round staple, especially restorative for those in need of strength. Beef and goat, both cool meats, are preferred for long-term storage and

seasonal consumption, reflecting practical resource management. Camel meat, valued for its fat, is a regional specialty in the Gobi, supporting local dietary needs. During the era of Chinggis Khaan, these dried meats were essential provisions for war-time, as their ease of storage and high nutritional value enabled nomadic warriors to sustain their strength and endurance throughout long military campaigns.

## The Kinship Hierarchy and Symbolic Allocation

Recipient Status	Allocated Meat Part	Ethnographic Detail and Symbolic Significance
Father/Head	Sheep Head	The Head symbolizes honor, leadership, and wisdom
Mother/ Daughter-in-Law	Breastbone	This is a prime and desirable part of the animal signifying a valued status
Maternal Uncle	Sheep Back	The highest honor. The Maternal Uncle is proverbially the "source of kinship." "The taboo against biting the shoulder blade (saying it brings harm to the uncle's spiritual well-being) relates to the bone's sacred role in scapulimancy (bone divination).
Youngest Son	Sheep Fore Femur	The recipient of the livestock's benefits and the hearth's successor.
Son-in-Law	Two Front Legs	This portion represents physical strength and mobility in the nomadic lifestyle.
Elder/ Grandparent	Pelvic Bone, Marrowbone	Offered for their association with kinship in some ritualistic practices and symbolize the continuity of the lineage.
Outlaw/Slave	Hind Shank	The lowest status portion

The distribution of cooked carcass parts is a precise ritual of social acknowledgement that establishes and reinforces the hierarchy of kinship. The portions are not randomized; they carry specific symbolic messages and taboos.

## **Conclusion: Meat as a Regulator of Social Conflict**

The distribution process demonstrates the sophistication of a society operating without strict legal codes in a modern sense. By predefining every portion for every rank, the system prevents conflict and arguments among kin, as noted in the famous history, Compendium of Chronicles, produced in the Mongol Ilkhanate in the early 1300s CE by Rashid al-Din Hamadani. In contemporary society, younger individu-

**Beef, Horse and Yak jerky** photos by the authors



als are increasingly integrating technology into their daily lives, aiding the preservation and incorporation of cultural symbols and practices.

The core observation is that the distribution of meat acts as a ritualized regulatory system that fulfills the biological need for food while simultaneously structuring a specific cultural response to that basic biological need.

● **Reinforcing the Kinship Hierarchy:**

By assigning the Head to the father and the Sternum to the mother, the family structure is ritually reaffirmed.

● **Maintaining Social Harmony:**

By eliminating ambiguity over who receives what, the system manages social cycles and prevents disputes (Dovchin & Dovchin, 2023).

This system serves as a lasting testament to the manner in which Mongolian nomadic culture transformed a fundamental necessity—the division of a carcass—into a sophisticated framework for social organization in Mongolia.

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**Enkhbaatar Mijiddorj** (Ph.D. [enkhbaatar.m@mnuac.edu.mn](mailto:enkhbaatar.m@mnuac.edu.mn)) is the Graduate School Dean, and **Tsengel Davaasambu** (Ph.D. [d.tsengel@mnuac.edu.mn](mailto:d.tsengel@mnuac.edu.mn)) is a Professor of Creative Culture Department at the Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture.



Odeon of Herodes Atticus Photo supplied by ALLOVERGREECE

## TRAVEL

# Under the Starry Sky of Athens and Epidaurus



Maria Pourliot

**I**n 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 the show begins. The lights are already on and the actor steps on the stage. In the theater there is absolute silence, a sense of awe that moves the audience. In front of their eyes the glorious

past merges with the vibrant present, a combination that leads to a promising future. The area is filled with the mature words bequeathed to us by ancient Greek poets, and the audience shivers. The stars and the moon participate, as they gently illuminate the chorus and guide the actors safely on stage. The revitalizing breeze and the summer warmth raise the pulse and create an atmosphere of anticipation for the next summer's festival.

In excellent preserved ancient theaters, the Athens Epidaurus Festival opens its curtains annually every summer to audiences of all ages, not only in Athens but also in the Peloponnese. From 1955, when it was first founded, until 2005, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in the shadow of the sacred hill of the Acropolis was used. This structure was built in the post-Christian period between 160 and 165 AD and is a typical example of Roman architecture. In addition the theater of Epidaurus, dedicated to Asclepius, the god of medicine, which was built around the 4th century BCE for the god's worship rituals, is also used. Finally, performances were also held at the



**Theatre of Epidaurus** Photo supplied by Athens Epidaurus Festival



**Theatre of Lycabettus** Photo supplied by in.gr

Lycabettus Theater, a recent creation on the imposing hill of Lycabettus. However, since 2006, other venues in Piraeus and Athens have opened to host music and dance events.

The festival's goal is cultural development through the promotion of art and the quality it supports. This year, the Festival celebrated its 70th anniversary and the celebration was indeed very festive. In a tribute-documentary on the festival's long journey, directors, set designers, and other contributors shared their experiences, while a commemorative volume with 730 pages was published, including 846 documents from catalogs, programs, posters and photos collected over the years.

During the festival, performances are staged of works by ancient Greek poets,

Promotional photo supplied by To Vima



such as Aeschylus' *The Persians*, or modern adaptations of these, such as *Antigone* directed by Ulrich Rasche, a work that emphasizes personal freedom and the distinction between social and moral propriety. The productions are not only by Greek teams of actors but also international productions based on works of global significance, such as *The Vegetarian*, the theatrical adaptation of Han Kang's novel directed by Daria Deflorian. Besides performances, spectators also enjoy music and dance shows by Greek and international musicians, choreographers, and dancers. The range of choices varies from classical artists like Beethoven and Puccini to contemporary and perhaps more alternative ones. The Festival is a huge chance for promoting Greece, because through these, the reputation of great and significant Greek composers, such as Mikis Theodorakis or Dionysis Savvopoulos, who have captivated audiences of all ages for decades, spreads internationally.

The stage transforms into a wild celebration that respects human creation and the creativity that leads to each unique



**Dionysis Savvopoulos (right) and Giorgos Ntalaras (left)**

Photo by Thomas Daskalakis/MusicCity

work. Artists gain a voice and win over an audience that eagerly awaits the next summer to allow themselves to cultivate their spirit and ultimately find peace under the starry sky of spectacular Athens and mystical Epidaurus.

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**Marial Pourliot** is a student of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. She is the president of United Students of SUN (USSUN) for the year 2024-2025.

# Echoes on the Road: Konya, Where the Silk Route Meets the Spirit



**Seljuk dome interior** Source: Türkiye Culture Portal



**Enes Musa Güçlütürk**

**W**elcome to Konya, a city in the heart of Anatolia that isn't just a dot on the map—it's a historical, cultural, and spiritual crossroads where the famed Silk Road came to rest and rouse the soul. Far

from the bustling coastal cities, Konya offers a deeper journey into the Turkish past, revealing its vital role as a powerhouse of trade and intellectual exchange.

## **The Seljuk Capital: A Hub of Commerce and Power**

The peak of Konya's historical significance coincided with the reign of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm (11th to 13th centuries), which made it its capital. This strategic positioning placed it perfectly on the central Anatolian branch of the Silk Road, linking the East—from Persia and China—to the Mediterranean ports and, ultimately, Europe.

As the seat of power, the Seljuks invested heavily in the infrastructure necessary for a flourishing trade hub. They built magnificent caravanserais (kervansaray)—stone-built “caravan palaces” located a camel's day journey apart (roughly 30-40 km)—to offer safe lodging, food, and security for the countless merchants and their goods. Structures like the immense Sultanhanı Caravanserai near Aksaray stand today as imposing testaments to this era,



### **Sultanhanı Caravanserai**

Source: Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism

their thick walls protecting precious cargo like silk, spices, jewels, and medicinal herbs.

This commercial activity fueled a golden age of architecture and science. The Seljuk legacy is still visible in the city's landmarks: the soaring minaret of the İnce Minareli Medrese (now a museum) and the majestic Alaeddin Mosque , showcase the exquisite craftsmanship and geometric artistry that blossomed from the wealth generated by the Silk Road.

### **Mevlana Rumi: The Spiritual Silk Route**

Yet, Konya's most enduring and universal



### **Seljuk stone carving detail**

Source: Seljuk architectural heritage, Konya

contribution to the Silk Road story is not found in a ledger, but in the teachings of a man: Jalaluddin Rumi. Arriving in the city in the 13th century after his family fled the Mongol invasion in the East (present-day Afghanistan/Tajikistan), Rumi found a new home and a receptive audience in Seljuk Konya.

Rumi, or Mevlana (“Our Master”) as he is known in Turkey, became one of the world’s most revered poets and Sufi mystics. His message of universal love, tolerance, and spiritual ascent transcended borders and languages, mirroring the intellectual and cultural exchange facilitated by the Silk Road itself. His presence trans-



### **Tomb of Mevlana Rumi**

Source: Mevlana Museum, Konya

formed Konya into a spiritual capital, attracting scholars, philosophers, and artists from across the Islamic world and beyond.

Today, the serene Mevlana Museum , Rumi's final resting place and the former lodge of the Mevlevi Order (the Whirling Dervishes), is the city's heart. Visitors from all over the globe come to witness the mesmerizing Sema ceremony, a meditative practice that symbolizes the soul's journey toward God. This tradition, born on the Silk Road, continues to connect people through poetry and mysticism.

## **A Taste of the Journey**

Even the local cuisine carries the echoes of this history. Influences from the East arrived with merchants, shaping the unique flavors of the Anatolian plateau. Don't leave without tasting Etliëkmek, a long, thin, crispy flatbread topped with mince-meat, a local specialty that fuels the spirit just as it once did the weary traveler.

Konya stands as a powerful reminder that the Silk Road was never just about goods—it was a dynamic conduit for ideas, faiths, and people. It's a city that invites you to walk in the footsteps of merchants, mystics, and sultans, offering a profound sense of connection to a past that shaped the world.

**Enes Musa Güçlütürk** is a fourth-year student in the Engineering Faculty at Ankara University. He currently serves as the President of the Ankara University Student Council.

# SUN NEWS

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**SUN holds the 10th General Assembly: Reflecting on a decade of co-existence, collaboration, and co-prosperity while shaping strategic directions for the next ten years**



**By Min-song Kim**

As the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) enters its second decade, the 10th General Assembly in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, stands as a remarkable milestone in its journey of academic cooperation and intercultural exchange. This year's gathering not only commemorated ten years of collaborative achievements but

also signaled the beginning of a new era—marked by institutional transformation, innovative initiatives, and forward-looking partnerships across the global Silk Road region. With representatives from 23 countries convening at the historic crossroads of civilizations, the Assembly provided an ideal stage to reflect on SUN’s past, address present challenges, and shape its future vision.

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## **Overview of the 10th General Assembly: Main Events & Key Discussions**

The 10th General Assembly of SUN was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from October 13 to 17, 2025. This year’s gathering carried particular significance, as it commemorated the 10th anniversary of SUN’s establishment and its decade-long pursuit of the guiding motto: “Co-existence, Collaboration, and Co-prosperity.” The overarching theme for the 2025 assembly was “Use of Technologies for Peaceful and Sustainable Tourism along the Silk Roads in the Era of Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Cyber Security: Challenges and Opportunities for Universities,” reflecting SUN’s determination to address global technological transformations through academic collabora-

tion.

The General Assembly was co-hosted by Canadian University Dubai, the current chair university of SUN, together with Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the vice-chair university. Adding to its historic weight, the event was also jointly hosted by three prominent SUN member institutions in Samarkand: Samarkand International University of Technology, the “Silk Road” International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, and the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages. A total of 95 participants attended the assembly, including presidents, rectors, vice-rectors, faculty staff, professors, scholars, student representatives, and ambassadors from 31 institutions across 23 countries.

**Flag Entrance during the Opening Ceremony of the 10th General Assembly of SUN in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

Photos by Euihwan Cho



The Opening Ceremony took place at the Hotel Silk Road by Minyoun in Samarkand, beginning with the traditional SUN flag-raising ceremony. This signature ritual—conducted with participants wearing the official convocation dress of their respective universities—symbolized both pride in each institution and a shared willingness to collaborate for future co-prosperity. During the Administrative Proceedings, the Secretary-General presented the annual activities report and the strategic plan for the upcoming year. Professor Jeong-o Park reported the financial statement of SUN via video message, including the report for important income and expenditures during 2024-2025. This financial report was audited

**Administrative Proceedings by Secretary-General Sungdon Hwang during the 10th General Assembly of SUN in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**



by SUN's auditors, Prof. Mahmut Ertan Gokmen and Prof. D.A. P. Sharma. The proceedings were particularly important this year because they included significant amendments to SUN's Articles of Association, details of which were introduced later during a special session.

The MOU signing ceremony featured several major developments under SUN's promotion and expansion activities. The Secretary-General announced that the University of Bejaia in Algeria officially joined SUN as a new member. Two new institutional partnerships were also formalized. The first was an MOU between SUN and the Accreditation and Rating International Agency (ARIA), aimed at strengthening higher education quality across the Silk Road region. Under this agreement, the two parties committed to developing shared accreditation standards, conducting joint training, fostering academic exchange and research, and collaborating on evaluator guidelines, publications, conferences, and student mobility initiatives. The second MOU, signed between SUN and Amazing Silkroada Travel Agency, designated the latter as SUN's Official Travel Agency. This partnership supports the planning and implementation of educational expeditions, cultural programs, and post-assembly tours under the joint brand



**MOU Signing between SUN and Bejaia University, ARIA, and Amazing Silkroadia during the 10th General Assembly of SUN in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

“SUN—Amazing Silkroadia Expedition.” SUN will provide annual financial support for these initiatives, while the agency will oversee program logistics, safety, and the creation of culturally rich travel experiences.

A major highlight of the assembly was the Panel Discussion for launching the Silk-Road Cultural Heritage Forum. Moderated by SUN Secretary-General Professor SungDon Hwang, the panel included distinguished scholars such as Professors Lorenzo Pubblici and Michel Bermardini from the University of Naples “L’Orientale,” Professor Richard Griffiths from Leiden University, and Professor Metin Kartal from Ankara University. The forum introduced the concept of a Silk Road Virtual Museum, envisioned as a “museum without walls” offering free global access to cultural heritage. Panelists emphasized its potential for deep cognitive engagement, educational innovation, broader global outreach, and strengthened institutional cooperation across the Silk Road region. This discussion laid the conceptual foundation for future collaborative museum projects.

Another key academic milestone was the panel discussion launching both the Silk-Road Medical Forum and the Silk-Road City Mayors Forum. Panelists included Dr. Sungdon Hwang, Professor Jonathan McFarland—

President of “The Doctor as Humanist” and faculty member at Pompeu Fabra and the University of Madrid—and Professor Ivan Jovetic from the University of Donja Gorica in Montenegro. The Silk-Road Medical Forum aims to honor Hippocrates as the Father of Medicine and to promote global dialogue on medical ethics, humanism, and cross-cultural understanding. Proposed activities included daily lectures on the Hippocratic Oath, bioethics case analyses, discussions on ethical issues in contemporary healthcare, and workshops focused on empathy, communication, and humanistic medical training. Panelists also suggested creating an international roundtable where participants from diverse backgrounds could exchange views on ethical dilemmas, challenges, and best practices.

The Silk-Road City Mayors Forum was introduced with a proposal to integrate Sim Racing into university sports as an innovative form of digital competition. The concept envisions participation from teams in at least 15 countries and includes establishing the technical infrastructure, educational content, and tournament structure necessary to create a vibrant, youth-centered digital sport along the Silk Roads.

During the UPSUN Workshop, discussions centered on strengthening student engage-



**Panel Discussion for Launching the Silk-Road Cultural Heritage Forum during the 10th General Assembly of SUN in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

ment and expanding global youth collaboration. Dr. Dorota Majewicz called for more structured support for USSUN chapters and encouraged students to contribute to initiatives such as the Silk Road Virtual Museum. She emphasized the importance of revitalizing student workshops, contests, and cross-campus collaborations. The workshop also welcomed three new SUN member institutions—Béjaïa, Georgian American University, and the Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture—alongside the reintroduction of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Numerous proposals were shared, including the creation of a “SUN Passport” to promote student mobility, expanded faculty exchanges, a Silk Road Wisdom and Culture Forum, and a Green Silk

Road Initiative. Additional suggestions included hosting a Virtual Museum Festival, organizing a Hippocratic Oath event in Kos, launching a Silk Road Tourism Convention, and making Mongolia's Naadam Festival an annual SUN program.

The United Students of the Silk-Road Universities Network (USSUN) Workshop was chaired by Professor Dorota Sylwia Majewicz with forty-two participating students. The first day focused on peer-to-peer visibility and community building, introducing each others' universities and exchanging ideas for vitalizing the USSUN network. The second day featured a dynamic debate on the role of artificial intelligence in higher education, emphasizing

**UPSUN Workshop during the 10th General Assembly of SUN in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**



the need for clearer guidelines on digital ethics, responsible AI use, and academic integrity. The workshop concluded with a report outlining four key priorities: enhancing network visibility through a central landing page and improved communications, creating stronger student representation through Student Town Halls and AI literacy workshops, and launching a mentoring and cross-institutional project scheme supported by dedicated DM/PR teams.



**USSUN Workshop during the 10th General Assembly of SUN in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

# Special Session: Governance Amendments & the Beginning of the Dubai Era

A special feature of this year's General Assembly was the approval of major amendments to SUN's Articles of Association, marking the beginning of SUN's new "Dubai Era." The first amendment relocated the headquarters and secretariat of SUN from Korea to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, specifically to Canadian University Dubai, while permitting the establishment of branch offices in other countries. The second amendment redefined SUN's legal status, stipulating that it will be registered as

Images courtesy of Canadian University Dubai



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a non-profit and non-governmental legal entity in Dubai as long as its headquarters and secretariat remain there. The third amendment revised executive terms, allowing both the Chairperson of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General to serve five-year terms with no limit on the number of reappointments. The fourth amendment adjusted the Annual General Meeting schedule, specifying that it shall be held on or about the second week of August each year, with final dates determined by the host institution in consultation with the Secretary-General. The fifth amendment modified the composition of the Board of Directors, reducing the maximum number of non-permanent directors from thirty to twenty, including the Board President.

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## **A Decade Across the Silk Roads, A New Era Ahead**

The 10th General Assembly in Samarkand ultimately marked not only a celebration of SUN's decade-long legacy but also a bold step toward its evolving future. Through the launch of major initiatives, the forging of impactful partnerships, the active engagement of students, and a historic restructuring of governance, SUN reaffirmed its commitment to



**Cultural Tour during the 10th General Assembly of SUN in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

fostering meaningful academic connectivity across the Silk Roads. With its headquarters now entering a new chapter in Dubai and with strengthened institutional frameworks guiding its next decade, SUN stands poised to expand its influence, deepen cooperation, and continue shaping a more interconnected academic community dedicated to peace, culture, and sustainable development. The spirit of Samarkand—where ancient routes once converged—served as a powerful reminder that the Silk Roads remain a living bridge, linking shared histories with shared futures.

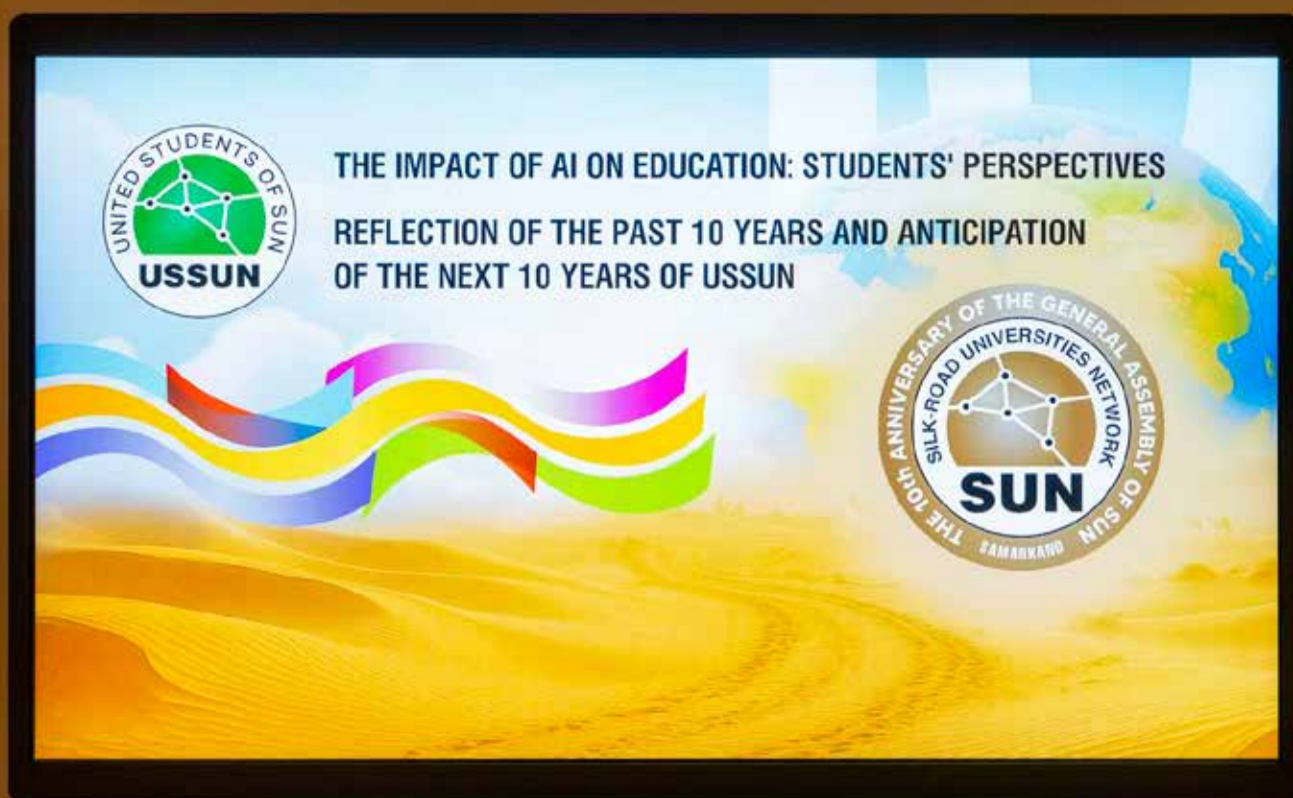
**Min-song Kim** is a student in the Department of English Literature and Culture of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea

# USSUN NEWS

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## USSUN Samarkand Workshop Highlights: Strengthening Youth Cooperation Across the Silk Roads

The USSUN Workshop, held on October 15, 2025 at the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, brought together students from across the Silk-Road Universities Network for an engaging and lively exchange of ideas. This year's workshop, organized as part of the 10th General Assembly, gathered 40 students from 16 countries and 18 universities, creating a wide reaching and internationally connected environment.



Photos by Euihwan Cho

Many students joined the program with strong expectations and enthusiasm, eager to share their perspectives and explore new possibilities for collaboration across the network.

The event opened with warm remarks from USSUN Adviser Professor Dorota Sylwia Majewicz, who highlighted the growing visibility of USSUN within the network and the importance of students' voices in international academic cooperation. She noted how the network connects universities across the Silk Roads and provides students with opportunities to share knowledge, develop leadership skills, and contribute to collaborative projects.

Following the opening session, students introduced themselves and shared brief snapshots of their home universities. These short presentations showcased the variety of



10<sup>TH</sup> GA of Silk-Road  
Universities Network,  
Samarkhand 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>  
of October 2025

(UNITED STUDENTS  
OF SUN USSUN)  
WORKSHOPS - DAY 1

academic environments represented at the workshop and helped participants quickly build a sense of familiarity and connection.

When file sharing was slightly delayed, the organizing team promptly created a centralized folder for all materials, ensuring that the program continued smoothly and without interruption. This collaborative response reflected the workshop's core purpose: enhancing mutual understanding across member universities.

On the second day, the focus shifted to a discussion on how artificial intelligence is reshaping university learning and student life. Participants engaged in a thoughtful exchange of perspectives: some expressed enthusiasm for AI-powered tools, while others raised important considerations regarding ethics, transparency, authorship, and academic



integrity.

Despite having different opinions, students engaged in a thoughtful discussion and found common ground on several key needs. They emphasized the importance of clear guidance for responsible AI use, noting that it would help them apply AI tools safely and effectively in academic settings. Participants also highlighted the need for stronger digital ethics education, which would allow them to better understand and address ethical issues that may arise when using AI.

The workshop concluded with encouraging remarks from USSUN leadership, who invited students to take an active role in shaping future initiatives. Many participants expressed strong interest in contributing to upcoming programs, including AI literacy workshops, mentoring activities, and cross-university collaborative



projects. Throughout the sessions, students actively engaged with one another, sharing insights, asking thoughtful questions, and discussing ideas across different academic and cultural perspectives. The atmosphere reflected a genuine enthusiasm for learning and collaboration, as participants appreciated the opportunity to exchange knowledge, build networks, and contribute to meaningful projects within the Silk-Road Universities Network.

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## Student Voices: Reflections on USSUN Workshop

Following the main sessions of the USSUN Workshop, participating students shared a wide range of insights, impressions, and takeaways from the event. Their voices highlight how the workshop not only provided academic and cultural perspectives but also encouraged meaningful dialogue among young scholars from member universities.

Many students expressed that the workshop broadened their understanding of international cooperation within the SUN network, while others emphasized the value of meeting fellow students from diverse cultural and academic

backgrounds. Several participants also noted that the program's discussions and hands-on activities inspired them to rethink their roles as future leaders in global society.

Below are reflections from students who attended the workshop, offering a closer look at how the event influenced their perspectives and aspirations.



### **Maria Pourlioti**

Greece (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

### **Towards a productive year for USSUN**

A few days ago, the 10th General Assembly in Samarkand of Uzbekistan was successfully concluded, with local hosting by Samarkand International University of Technology, the “Silk Road” International University of Tourism and

Cultural Heritage, and the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages. The annual conference is not only an opportunity for reunion, but also a moment for reflection on life itself and for appreciating the world where we live.

Professors from around the world came together and, despite their scholarly backgrounds and the prestige they hold as academics, they remained approachable, friendly, and warm towards everyone. All of them celebrated the network's ten-year presence and pledged to reunite in the future with even more initiatives.

Regarding USSUN, two workshops were completed over two consecutive days, with students from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Algeria, India, Portugal, Italy, the Emirates, Jordan, Romania, Iran, the United States, and Greece. On the first day, students introduced themselves and their universities, while on the second day they participated in a debate concerning the positive or negative impact of AI on everyday life. Furthermore, they shared their views on the network's operations, identified potential weaknesses and proposed their own ideas for the advancement of USSUN. Thus, new members emerged—enthusiastic, active, and motivated—who are willing to support the executives and coordinators in promoting the

network effectively and enabling it to develop in the way it deserves.

Just like the previous year in Naples, what stands out once again is the human approach, based on genuine interest rather than personal gain. We spent time together, opened up, laughed, exchanged concerns, and recognized the many similarities that unite us. What everyone mentioned is the research engagement and academic orientation—elements that were less present this year due to the absence of IASS. We sincerely hope that in the future the network will make meaningful use of the innovative and fresh minds that have the potential to contribute significantly to scientific research in their respective fields.

In the period after the event, the enthusiasm for creation and the regular communication still continue. Gradually, groups are being formed for digital media management and public relations, while student representatives are being chosen for each university. In light of this ongoing interaction, the two-day workshop has proven to be productive, as it will undoubtedly lead to a renewed and revitalized form of USSUN.

We are looking forward to excellent collaborations and to reunite in person again soon!



## **Siddhi Srivastava**

India (Delhi University)

### **Reflections on the General Assembly: AI in Education**

Participating in this year's General Assembly proved to be an exceptionally enriching and thought-provoking experience. The session exploring artificial intelligence in education ignited profound discussions that compelled us to examine technology's transformative influence on our academic journey with fresh perspective and critical insight.

The debate on AI's impact was particularly captivating and intellectually stimulating. We thoughtfully explored AI as a "dual-edged

sword,” carefully weighing its remarkable opportunities such as personalized learning at scale and enhanced operational efficiency against its inherent challenges, including pressing concerns about academic integrity and the perpetuation of algorithmic bias. This nuanced, balanced perspective illuminated a crucial understanding: AI is not replacing educators but rather redefining and elevating their roles as “learning architects” who design sophisticated, meaningful educational experiences.

What resonated most profoundly was discovering how assessment methodologies must fundamentally evolve. The paradigm shift from traditional examinations to “AI-proof” assessments encompassing oral presentations, in-class demonstrations, and authentic project-based work represents a transformative change in how we demonstrate and validate knowledge. As students navigating this new landscape, we are called to critically evaluate, ethically employ, and thoughtfully synthesize AI-generated information rather than passively memorize content.

The collaborative and intellectually vibrant atmosphere made this experience genuinely valuable. We were not merely passive observers but active contributors to meaningful conversations about ethics, equity, and the

future trajectory of education. This General Assembly reinforced a vital lesson: successfully navigating AI in education demands moving beyond fragmented, ad-hoc initiatives toward comprehensive, principled strategies that prioritize robust technological infrastructure alongside sustained professional development.

I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to engage with these crucial questions that will undoubtedly shape our educational landscape, and I remain genuinely excited about the transformative possibilities that lie ahead.



**Ramisha Ahmareen Zaman**  
Dubai (Canadian University Dubai)

## Reflection on Experiencing Cultural Diversity

I had the honour of representing Canadian University Dubai as a student representative at the 10th General Assembly of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The conference brought together students and leaders from more than 15 universities, all part of SUN's wider network of 80+ partner institutions along the historic Silk Road.

For me, the most valuable part of the experience was the cultural exchange. I met students from different countries, academic

backgrounds, and traditions, and we spent real time interacting with each other by eating together, talking, learning about each other's cultures, and even wearing our traditional clothing at the farewell dinner. It felt very genuine and respectful.

The formal program included opening ceremonies, speeches from SUN leadership, and panel sessions led by professors and experts. I especially appreciated the discussions on climate issues and cultural heritage, as well as the USSUN student workshop, where we talked openly about AI: how it is changing education, what its risks are, and how students in different countries are responding to it.

Samarkand itself played a huge role in the experience. The people were warm, generous, and genuinely excited to share their culture with us. We were welcomed, fed real local food (I'm still thinking about the plov), and treated like guests, not just visitors. On our final day, we were also able to explore the city itself. The historic Registan square, mausoleum of Amir Timur, and Siyob bazaar of Samarkand. Walking through these places felt like walking through living history. The architecture, colours, and atmosphere were unforgettable, and it added a deeper layer to the whole experience because we weren't just hearing about culture, we were physically in it.

In a way, the whole experience felt like what the Silk Road is supposed to stand for, different cultures meeting, learning from each other, and actually connecting beyond borders. This experience was more than a conference for me. It was a shared space of learning, culture, respect, and future-building. I would be honoured to continue being part of SUN in the coming years, and I hope this network keeps growing, keeps connecting us, and keeps giving students this kind of platform.



**Hala Tariq Abdulrahman Saleh**  
Jordan (University of Jordan)

## **Bridging Cultures and Innovation: Insights from the Silk Road Universities Network**

The recent event hosted by the Silk Road Universities Network (USSUN) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, provided a remarkable platform for students and academic representatives to partake in significant discussions and cross-cultural interactions. This gathering united individuals from various backgrounds, all driven by a common goal of academic partnership and sustainable global advancement. During the sessions, attendees delved into a variety of progressive topics, particularly focusing on artificial intelligence (AI) and its transformative impact on education,

research, and society. The conversations offered valuable insights into how AI can facilitate international collaboration and foster innovation throughout the Silk Road region and beyond.

Among the numerous enlightening sessions, the discussion on sustainability in tourism was particularly noteworthy. It highlighted the intricate balance between safeguarding cultural and natural heritage while encouraging responsible tourism practices. The takeaways from this dialogue underscored the necessity of incorporating sustainability into future development strategies — a principle that aligns closely with the ethos of the Silk Road. This experience not only expanded our academic and professional perspectives but also reinforced the connections among participants. It served as a poignant reminder that through collaboration, innovation, and shared principles, we can collectively forge a more sustainable and interconnected future.



## **Marco Serote Roos**

Portugal (Faculty of Social and Human Sciences -  
Nova University of Lisbon)

### **10th GA of SUN - a Place to Learn, Cherish, and Grow.**

This is the first time I participated in a GA from SUN, so I didn't know what to expect. I confess, I thought it was going to be a rather boring event, since its description seemed to be focused on administrative and formal matters. I'm happy to report that I was wrong.

The whole week was anything but boring, in an overwhelmingly positive way. Being in Samarkand, hearing the very charismatic

and moving speeches of Dr. Sungdon Hwang, participating in debates and, most importantly, meeting so many wonderful people, are memories that I'll cherish forever.

I was also pleasantly surprised by the diverse perspectives in the student workshops, where I believe there was enough space for both sciences and humanities to learn from each other.

I will not pretend to fathom the logistical nightmare that is having multiple large organizations working together for the same goal, or the vicissitudes of organizing and executing an event of this scale. For this, the coordination of SUN and all the people involved have my utmost respect and should be commended for their tireless work and dedication to us guests and to the functioning of the event itself, even with minor mishaps along the way.

I do have, nevertheless, one suggestion. I think the event could have benefited from more time for presentations and a more flexible schedule. We were being rushed during our talks, which was really stressful for both the presenters and the organizers. The timetable was scheduled by the minute, which I do not think it works at all, especially in that formal environment and when English is almost no one's first language.



**Khalikova Jonona Abdulhamidovna**  
Tajikistan (Tajik National University)

## **Reflection on the 10th Silk Road University Network Assembly**

Participating in the 10th Assembly of the Silk Road University Network was an unforgettable and inspiring experience. Representing our university and country at such an important international event gave me a great opportunity to broaden my horizons and connect with people from more than 15 countries.

The Assembly created a truly multicultural atmosphere, where students and professors from different backgrounds shared their knowledge, experiences, and traditions. I had a

chance to practice my English and improve my communication skills, which helped me gain more confidence in international settings. It was fascinating to learn about diverse cultures, histories, and educational systems.

One of the most valuable aspects of this event was the academic exchange. Professors and representatives from various universities shared their contact information, offered invitations to summer programs, and encouraged participation in academic mobility opportunities. These connections open new doors for collaboration and mutual growth.

The Assembly demonstrated how education can unite people beyond borders. It promoted cultural understanding, academic cooperation, and the idea of a shared future through knowledge. I deeply appreciate the organizers' efforts in creating such a meaningful platform for young people and scholars to engage and inspire one another.

I truly hope that this Assembly will become a foundation for future partnerships, research collaborations, and student exchanges between our universities. I look forward to seeing this network grow stronger and continue to build bridges of friendship and learning among the nations along the Silk Road.



## **Giulio Romano**

Italy (Naples University L'Orientale)

### **A honest review, reflection, and suggestions for improvement**

So, I'd start with the positive sides: the great presence of students from all over the world, which allowed for a lot of cultural exchange, helped clear up prejudices, and debunk myths and stereotypes.

Also, the general interest in having us do so many different activities (although that's also going to be a negative point later on).

On a more superficial note, every location we visited was absolutely stunning.

As for the negative sides: I'd say the absence

of the IASS was definitely noticeable — there were no technical or scientific presentations, it all felt more like a big advertisement for various things, except for the virtual museum, which was actually really cool.

As we already discussed that evening over drinks, there was a total lack of organization regarding the student-focused activities — we could've had peer discussion forums instead of presentations, for example, to really get everyone involved and avoid awkwardness or shyness.

Coming back to the many activities, I think they were scheduled on the wrong days — having all the visits on the very last day, when we were all completely exhausted, was quite a bad idea. Plus, there were way too many of them, and all too packed together.

I hope I covered everything — but in general, you already know my opinion and that of the Napoli group from our chat at the hotel bar!

# Message from the President of USSUN

## **Maria Pourlioti**

Greece(Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

### **Our Way to Reconstruct the USSUN**

This year we made a firm promise to ourselves to help USSUN - and SUN in general - reconstruct and gain the recognition it deserves. We prioritize effective promotion and the establishment of USSUN branches in each member university. It is urgent to create a solid image with a clear goal. Technology and its capabilities can help to spread USSUN's vision and let students around the world get to know who we are.

After the 10th General Assembly in Samarkand, the USSUN team met active students ready to become members and to share their ideas in the network's growth. So, they were recruited as student representatives for universities in Uzbekistan, Algeria, Jordan, Iran, Italy and Portugal. Additionally, two new teams were formed: a Social Media Management team and a Personal Relations team. Both teams have started with great

dynamism and showed great enthusiasm for their new role.

Regarding the future plans, we intend to organize on a monthly basis two seminars, one academic and one cultural. In this way students will have a productive opportunity to introduce their scientific ideas in their respective field and to share with others the uniqueness of their cultures. We are also keen on having virtual city tours and language lessons as well and finally we aim to bring back students' creativity through contests, such as WRICOS and PHOCOS.

Chances like these - being part of a widespread university network - comes once in a lifetime. We are ready to take the bull by the horns and leave our mark. USSUN is about to change; in fact, it's already changing. The story is to be continued...

# NEWS FROM **MEMBER UNIVERSITIES**

Compiled by Min-ju Sung

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## **The University of Bejaia, Algeria**

### **The University of Bejaia shines on the international stage**

In the heart of Bejaia, a city with three thousand years of history, stands Aderrahmane Mira University. Founded in 1983, it is now a major multidisciplinary public institution, welcoming nearly 38000 students, supervised by 1902 teacher-researchers, and supported by 1 229 technical and administrative staff.

Since its creation, the University of Bejaia has made internationalisation a strategic lever for strengthening scientific excellence and a key pillar of its development policy. This orientation reflects a constant desire for global visibility and academic influence.

Over the years, the University of Bejaia has established itself as an essential actor on the international academic scene. It is now a member of numerous high-profile cooperation networks and consortia. This dynamic has been



Photo courtesy of the University of Bejaia

crowned this year by a major achievement: according to the prestigious Times Higher Education (THE) world rankings, the University of Bejaia ranks first nationally in the category of ‘international openness’.

This ranking clearly illustrates the efforts undertaken by the institution to consolidate its presence in the global academic space.

With a rich and diverse network of international partnerships, the University of Bejaia has signed more than a hundred framework cooperation agreements with universities from different continents. These fruitful collaborations have enabled the University to actively participate in several international programs, notably within the Erasmus+ framework and other multilateral initiatives.

During the current academic year, the

University of Bejaia has distinguished itself by coordinating a CBHE (Capacity Building in Higher Education) Erasmus+ project entitled: “Support for the internationalisation of Algerian universities: Diversification of Activities and Exchanges – SALDAE”, a two-years project. This project fully illustrates the University’s commitment in promoting the internationalisation of higher education in Algeria through the diversification of activities, academic mobility, and the sharing of experiences between Algerian and European partner institutions.

The international recognition of the University of Bejaia was also illustrated by the distinction awarded to its Rector, Professor Abdelkrim BENIAICHE, winner of the international ‘Virtue and Knowledge’ Prize, in the special ‘Mare Nostrum’ category, at the 9th edition of the Festival Virtù e Conoscenza (‘Virtue and Knowledge’) held on June 21, 2025 in Porto Cesareo (Italy). This award recognises his commitment to Euro-Mediterranean academic dialogue and the promotion of the values of knowledge, ethics and cooperation.

Furthermore, two teacher-researchers from the University of Bejaia have been ranked among the top 2% of researchers worldwide, according to the ELSEVIER 2024 international ranking. These are Professor REKIOUA (née ZIANI Djamila) and Dr OUBELAID Adel, whose research has contributed to strengthening

the scientific reputation of the institution on a global scale.

These successive recognitions not only confirm the academic excellence and quality of scientific research conducted at the University of Bejaia, but also demonstrate the collective commitment of the entire University community – teachers, researchers, students and administrative staff - to promote the University, the region and Algeria on the international scientific stage.

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## **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece**

### **AUTh Marks 100 Years by Looking to the Future with Aristotle Innovation Forum**

This year, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is celebrating its centennial and a series of events and happenings have been organised for this occasion. The events commemorating the anniversary celebration of AUTh will conclude in May 2026 with the Aristotle Innovation Forum, which is a new initiative that encapsulates the University's honoring of its past while also looking to the future as an institution.

The Aristotle Innovation Forum will take place from May 17-22 and will focus on promoting innovation, excellence in education



Photo courtesy of AUPh

and knowledge transfer to society. This hub of knowledge and creativity will include different types of talks, workshops, exhibitions and activities. This forum will host rectors from Greek and foreign universities, distinguished alumni and representatives from the international academic community.

The guiding principle of the Forum titled, “From Thessaloniki to the World,” speaks to AUPh’s commitment to being global, while maintaining a historical connection to the city that hosts the university. Thessaloniki is a city with a history of more than 2,300 years and has always been a crossroads of cultures, ideas, and innovation, very much like Aristotle University.

As part of this initiative, Aristotle University will host a major International Relations conference on May 20 and 21, 2026. This event will focus on the past and future of AUPh’s International Relations, under the theme: “Century of Global Bridges: 100 Years of

International Relations – Shaping the Global Campus of Tomorrow.” The conference is designed to bring together the global academic community to foster academic cooperation, educational innovation, and cultural diplomacy.

These events will conclude a year of celebrations, commemorating AUPh’s rich history as well as its determination for the future. The anniversary kicked off with a grand ceremony on Thursday, June 12, 2025 in the Thessaloniki Concert Hall. Special lectures, workshops and exhibitions were also organized and held throughout the year.

More information on the Aristotle Innovation Forum and AUPh’s 100th anniversary is available at: <https://aristotleforum.auph.gr/> and <https://100xronia.auph.gr/>.

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## **244 members of AUPh rank among the World’s Top 2% Scientists Lists**

**The “World’s Top 2% Scientists Lists,” compiled by Stanford University and recently published in the Elsevier Data Repository, include 244 members of Aristotle University.**

These lists evaluate the impact of scientists’ research work using a composite index that

considers, among other factors, the number of their publications in prestigious international journals and the number of citations their work has received. This quantitative index aims to assess the researchers' performance both throughout their entire scientific career ("career-long impact") and within the past year (2024) ("single year impact").

The inclusion of 244 Aristotle University members among the top 2% of scientists worldwide ranks Aristotle University first among Greek Higher Education Institutions and Research Centers. At the same time, it highlights the University's strong research performance on an international level. Consequently, 10% of AUP's academic staff has been recognized by Stanford University's world lists for their work and academic excellence, showcasing the University's potential.

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## **University of Guilan, Iran**

### **22 Faculty Members and 2 Graduates of University of Guilan Named in the 2025 List of World's Top 2% Most-Cited Researchers**

The 2025 report from the Scopus citation database, a leading source for academic citations, in collaboration with Stanford University, a prestigious research institution, identifies the most-cited researchers across



Photo courtesy of University of Guilan

all fields. These researchers are recognized as the top 2% in their fields, identified by their citation impact in 2024 and their career-long achievements up to 2024. Among the distinguished researchers, the report highlights 22 faculty members and two graduates from the University of Guilan.

In the esteemed 'long-term (career-long) category', the following individuals from the University of Guilan have been recognized: Dr. Reza Ansari Khalkhali, Dr. Seyed Abouzar Eftekhari, Dr. Ahmad Salehi Dobakhshri, Dr. Gholamhossein Hamedi, Dr. Akbar Khodaparast Haghi, Dr. Majid Arvand, Dr. Ramin Ghorbani Vaghei, Dr. Farhad Shirini, Dr. Hossein Nasiraei, Dr. Mahyar Arabani, Dr. Mohammad Kazem Hassanzadeh Aghdam, Dr. Jafar Biazar, Dr.

Mohammad Ali Mirzazadeh, Dr. Navid Ghavi Hosseinzadeh, and Dr. Asadollah Bafekri (a graduate in Physics).

Meanwhile, the 'short-term (single-year 2024) category' honors these distinguished individuals:

Dr. Shabnam Sohrabnezhad, Dr. Zahra Sadat Tabatabaeian, the late Dr. Nina Alizadeh, Dr. Ramin Ghorbani Vaghei, Dr. Farhad Shirini, Dr. Mohammad Kazam Anvari Fard, Dr. Jafar Biazar, Dr. Majid Arvand, Dr. Reza Jamshidi Chenari, Dr. Gholamhossein Hamedi, Dr. Mahyar Arabani, Dr. Mohammad Kazem Hassanzadeh Aghdam, Dr. Reza Ansari Khalkhali, Dr. Mohammad Ali Mirzazadeh, Dr. Hossein Nasiraei, Dr. Maysam Bagheri-Tajani, Dr. Bahram Falahatkar, Dr. Rahmat Madandoost, Dr. Navid Ghavi Hosseinzadeh, Dr. Asadollah Bafekri, and Dr. Seyed Hossein Mousavi (the latter two being graduates).

University of Guilan (UG) stands out among Iranian universities for its innovative research-led teaching methods, its picturesque green campus, and its commitment to broadening students' perspectives through a purposeful educational approach. University of Guilan is the largest university in northern Iran. Over 17,000 students are currently enrolled at UG, 40 per cent of whom are graduate students. UG offers more than 110 B.A./B.Sc. programs, 160 M.A./M.Sc. programs, and 140 Ph.D. programs. These programs integrate traditional academic

approaches with novel methodologies and technologies, such as applying AI in scientific studies. The University's fundamental mission is the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and its understanding. Moreover, University of Guilan seeks to enhance both the quality of its research and educational activities and the environment in which these pursuits occur. UG is committed to reinforcing its reputation as a center of excellence.

Only 30 kilometers away from the Caspian Sea, University of Guilan is located in Rasht, the capital city of Guilan Province. It is renowned for its lush landscapes, where forests, fields, and rivers converge to create a region of striking natural beauty. It is a region full of life and joy with an enchanting landscape, which is, at the same time, a source of dynamism as well as inspiration of tranquility, stimulation of thought and creativity.

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## **Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy**

**Ca' Foscari University successfully completed the first phase of a long-term project aimed at fostering "Knowledge Networks" between Italy and Central Asia in support of intergovernmental dialogue.**

**June 19, 2025**  
**Aula Magna Silvio Trentin**  
 Ca' Dolfin - Dorsoduro 3859/A, Venice

# OF BRIDGES AND NEXUSES

## Italy-Central Asia Cooperation towards a sustainable future

Multidisciplinary perspectives on water, connectivity and sustainable development

The conference is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation within the framework of the project aimed at building "Knowledge Networks" between Italy and Central Asia.

For more information: [www.unive.it/knit-ka](http://www.unive.it/knit-ka)

**9:00 – 9:30 Welcoming Speeches**  
**Tiziana Lippiello**, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Rector  
**Federico Falla**, MAECI, Plenipotentiary Minister

**9:30 – 11:00 1<sup>st</sup> SESSION**  
**Water and Health**  
 Chair: **Antonio Marcomini**, Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
**Enrico Veschetti**, Italian National Institute of Health, Rome  
**Selbi Hanova**, UN RCO Turkmenistan, Ashgabat  
**Dinara Ziganshina**, SIC of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia, Tashkent  
**Gabriella Rossi Crespi and Giancarlo Gusmano**, SOGESID, Rome

**11:30 – 13:00 2<sup>nd</sup> SESSION**  
**Water governance and Agriculture**  
 Chair: **Andrea Zinbani**, University of Bologna  
**Iskandar Abdullaev**, International Water Management Institute, Tashkent  
**Yerlan Zhumabayev**, CAREC Kazakhstan, Astana  
**Mariateresa Cardarelli**, Tuscia University, Viterbo

**14:30 – 16:00 3<sup>rd</sup> SESSION**  
**Trade and Connectivity along the Middle Corridor**  
 Chair: **Carlo Frappi**, Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
**Gulsum Kenzhalina**, Eurasian National University, Astana  
**Shairbek Dzhuraev**, OSCE Academy, Bishkek  
**Nurlan Kulbatyr**, Center for Trade Policy Development QazTrade, Astana  
**Fabio Indeo**, Italian Institute for Asia, Rome

**16:30 – 18:00 4<sup>th</sup> SESSION**  
**Education**  
 Chair: **Filippo Costa Brunelli**, Unitalia, Rome  
**Abdugani Mamadazimov**, Tajik National University, Dushanbe  
**Silvana Stefani**, GEM Silkway, Milan  
**Evren Rutbil**, International Institute for Central Asian Studies, Samarkand  
**Ikboljon Qoraboyev**, Maqbul Nankabayev University, Astana  
**Patricio Barbinotto**, Ca' Foscari University, Venice

Photo courtesy of Ca' Foscari University of Venice

On the 19th of June, the international conference "Of Bridges and Nexuses. Italy–Central Asia Cooperation towards a Sustainable Future," hosted by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, brought to a close the first phase of an ambitious long-term project dedicated to strengthening intergovernmental cooperation between Italy and Central Asia. More than a concluding moment, the conference marked a milestone in an ongoing journey of dialogue, shared expertise, and joint vision for a sustainable future.

Promoted and supported by the Italian



Photo courtesy of Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the project took shape within the framework of the Italy–Central Asia Ministerial Conference in the ‘1+5’ format. Launched in 2019, this diplomatic platform has grown steadily and is set to reach its fourth edition in 2026. Within this evolving context, Ca' Foscari has assumed a leading role in the attempt to bring together Italian and Central Asian universities and research institutions to build “Knowledge Networks.” These networks are designed to connect centres of excellence across both regions in areas that lie at the heart of intergovernmental cooperation: water resources, health, sustainable agriculture, connectivity, renewable energy, and advanced education. By engaging Italy’s leading research actors – within and beyond academia – the



## ITALY-CENTRAL ASIA KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Image courtesy of Ca' Foscari University of Venice

initiative fosters spaces for exchange, joint reflection, and collaborative research with Central Asian counterparts. At the same time, it offers concrete, bottom-up support to the development of institutional relationships at the intergovernmental level.

At their core, the Knowledge Networks aim to facilitate the circulation and practical application of knowledge, encouraging innovation while responding to shared challenges. Through collaboration, information exchange, and joint research, Italy and Central Asia are working to

develop sustainable solutions and to open new pathways in strategically important sectors.

In line with the three pillars of the University mission, the 2024-25 phase of the project focused on a rich programme of joint activities spanning research, education, and scientific outreach. Over the course of the year, the initiative supported sector-specific studies in the thematic areas covered by the project, contributing targeted analysis and expertise to fields of strategic relevance. It also launched a dedicated mentorship scheme designed to connect early-career scholars with distinguished academics and researchers across Italy and Central Asia, fostering intergenerational and transregional dialogue. Alongside this, the project promoted a series of joint events conceived as dynamic platforms for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and experiences on issues high on the intergovernmental agenda. Finally, and no less importantly, it marked a significant step forward with the launch of the first joint education programmes, conceived with the explicit aim of strengthening soft connectivity as a key enabler of long-term cooperation and mutual understanding between nations. Further information on the activities carried out during the first phase of the project is available at: [www.unive.it/knit-ka](http://www.unive.it/knit-ka)

The project aimed at building Knowledge Networks between Italy and Central Asia

resonates deeply with the identity of its host city and university. It renews Venice's historic vocation as a gateway between worlds while reaffirming the central role that Asian studies have long played in the research and teaching activities of Ca' Foscari University. Looking ahead, the initiative is set to enter its second phase in 2026, when Ca' Foscari will lead the development of an international advanced training programme aimed at public officials and members of the business community from both Italy and Central Asia – further strengthening the bridges built during the project's first chapter.

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## **Mutah University, Jordan**

### **Mutah University Concludes “Hackathon 2025” Under the Patronage of President Dr. Salama Al-Naimat with Widespread Participation Showcasing Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

Under the patronage of Professor Dr. Salama Al-Naimat, President of Mutah University, the university concluded today the activities of “Mutah Hackathon 2025”, organized by the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, with wide participation from students as well as representatives from national institutions and pioneering companies supporting the



Photo courtesy of Mutah University

innovation sector in Jordan. This event provided a key platform connecting students with experts and specialists, within the University's ongoing efforts to foster an interactive learning environment that encourages creativity and nurtures promising ideas.

In his comprehensive opening speech, President Al-Naimat emphasized that Mutah University is experiencing a transformative phase in its entrepreneurial orientation, noting that the University no longer confines itself to traditional education but is building an integrated system that encourages students to generate knowledge and develop practical solutions that meet societal and market needs. He highlighted that the hackathon represents an initiative that reflects the University's commitment to unlocking the potential of youth, enabling them to think innovatively through teamwork, practical experience, and



Photo courtesy of Mutah University

the use of technology in project development.

President Al-Naimat added that the University is actively enhancing partnerships with national and international institutions to provide diverse support and expertise that help students invest their ideas and transform them into scalable projects. He stressed that entrepreneurship is no longer an additional activity but an integral part of the University's vision and mission. He expressed his pride in the innovative ideas presented this year, affirming that the University will continue to develop its entrepreneurial ecosystem through advanced training programs, collaborative workspaces, and opportunities for project incubation and funding.

The event also featured participation from the private sector, including a speech by Ms. Arwa Al-Maayta, representing Zain, who praised Mutah University for empowering students and highlighted the company's



Photo courtesy of Mutah University

ongoing collaboration in supporting creativity, technology, and entrepreneurship initiatives within Jordanian universities. Additionally, Quill presented a technical session covering the latest digital trends and smart applications, aligning with the hackathon's aim to keep pace with global developments in technology and innovation.

Thirteen entrepreneurial projects from students across various disciplines participated in "Mutah Hackathon 2025," undergoing a thorough evaluation by a specialized judging panel based on criteria including innovation, economic feasibility, and practical implementability. Following the assessment of presentations and prototypes, the panel awarded first place to Team Vibe for their outstanding entrepreneurial concept, second place to Team Grow Mind, and third place to Team Future Earth.

At the conclusion of the event, Dr. Salama Al-Naimat inaugurated the accompanying

exhibition, featuring presentation booths for all participating projects, where students demonstrated their ideas, workflows, and developed prototypes.

President Al-Naimat expressed his admiration for the high level of creativity displayed, noting that these projects reflect students' advanced awareness of innovation and their ability to provide practical solutions that respond to societal needs, while reaffirming the University's commitment to supporting any student initiative striving for excellence and creativity.

The event concluded with a reaffirmation of Mutah University's continued commitment to an entrepreneurial approach, expanding its projects and initiatives to enhance students' skills and equip them with competencies required by modern markets, ultimately contributing to building a dynamic academic ecosystem that supports a knowledge- and

Photo courtesy of Mutah University



# The University of Jordan, Jordan

## Historic Rise in QS 2026 Rankings Places UJ among World's Top 350

In a landmark achievement for higher education in Jordan, the University of Jordan (UJ) has made a significant leap in the QS World University Rankings 2026, securing 324th place globally. This remarkable advancement, up 44 positions from the previous year, underscores the University's steady progress and reflects a broader vision rooted in academic excellence, research innovation, and international collaboration.



Image courtesy of UJ

For decades, UJ has been a pillar of higher education in the region. This latest recognition reinforces its role as a national leader and regional academic centre, now attracting international attention. The QS ranking is one of the most prestigious global assessments of higher education institutions, evaluating universities across key dimensions, including academic reputation, employability, research strength, and international outlook.

UJ President Prof. Nathir Obeidat described the new ranking as a national achievement and a symbol of collective dedication. "We proudly dedicate this milestone to His Majesty King Abdullah II, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein, and to the Jordanian people," he said. He emphasized that the achievement is the result of years of hard work, thoughtful planning, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. "We believe in the power of education to drive change, and the world is beginning to take notice," he added.

The QS 2026 rankings highlight UJ's rising performance across multiple metrics. In academic reputation, the University climbed to 239th globally, a 15% improvement, reflecting growing recognition of UJ's schools and programmes by international peers. In employer reputation, it ranked 194th globally, improving by 13.1%, which shows the high regard employers hold for UJ graduates. Notably, the University ranked 105th in

Employment Outcomes, demonstrating that its graduates are well-prepared for the modern job market, aligning with efforts to link academic programmes with practical skills and professional development.

UJ's international profile was further strengthened by a 21% increase in international student ratio, placing it 309th worldwide, reflecting the University's transformation into a truly global campus. In research, the International Research Network ranking rose to 543rd, while citation rates increased by 3.8%, underscoring the growing influence and reach of UJ's research.

According to Prof. Faleh Sawair, Vice President for International Rankings and Accreditation, these achievements result from a deliberate long-term strategy. "We have invested in our people, modern infrastructure, and global partnerships," he explained. "But most importantly, we have invested in purpose; our mission is to serve Jordan, the region, and the world through knowledge," he concluded.

This year's QS success is more than a number; it signals that the University of Jordan is evolving, competing, and earning its place among the world's leading institutions. Looking ahead, the recognition marks not an endpoint but the beginning of a continued journey of excellence, driven by determination, innovation, and pride.



Photo courtesy of UJ

## **Second Honorary Professors' Forum Marks Largest Academic Gathering in Jordan**

At the heart of the University of Jordan (UJ), and under the theme “Higher Education in the Era of Rapid Transformation,” the University held the second edition of its Honorary Professors' Forum on Saturday and Sunday, 31 May - 1 June 2025, marking the largest academic, scientific, and intellectual gathering ever organised by the institution.

The forum was held under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Prof. Azmi Mahafzah, and witnessed wide participation from distinguished scholars, academics, and experts representing institutions from Jordan and around the world.

In his address, Mahafzah emphasised that

honorary professors are a vital intellectual resource whose expertise must be leveraged to inform policy making, guide scientific research, and foster international academic partnerships. He further underscored the Ministry's firm belief in the central role of honorary professors in shaping educational visions and addressing global transformations, particularly in the era of artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

He also noted that the forum offers a valuable platform for coordination and collaborative efforts aimed at strengthening scientific research, innovation, and cross-border academic engagement; key priorities within the Ministry's strategic agenda and the broader framework of the Economic Modernisation Vision.

UJ President Obeidat, stressed that the forum constitutes a significant step toward fostering dialogue and partnership among scholars, particularly in light of the profound changes shaping the global landscape.

Obeidat spoke of the University's commitment to intellectual freedom, creativity, and academic excellence, asserting that universities must champion innovation, critical thinking, and independent thought to address the major challenges of our time, among them climate change, the evolution of artificial intelligence, and the safeguarding of shared human values.

Obeidat called on educators not to leave future generations unprepared, highlighting the importance of equipping students with sound knowledge, solid research skills, and an open intellectual horizon. “Quality education,” he asserted, “remains the most effective enabler in navigating unprecedented global transformations and narrowing the gap between advanced and developing economies.”

On behalf of the honorary professors, Professor Philip G. Jessop from Queen’s University, Canada, delivered a keynote speech in which he praised the forum for creating space for meaningful academic exchange and cross-cultural learning.

Reflecting on his teaching experience at the UJ, Jessop commended the students for their intellectual curiosity and passion for learning. He expressed his hope for expanded cooperation between the University of Jordan and Queen’s University in areas such as student and faculty exchange, and highlighted joint research efforts with UJ faculty in the field of green chemistry, including the development of environmentally friendly technologies and innovative solutions for climate and energy challenges.

This year’s forum brought together about 80 distinguished scholars from globally renowned institutions, all of whom have been awarded the title of Honorary Professor in recognition of their outstanding contributions to academia,

scientific innovation, and institutional development.

The forum sought to build a robust scientific platform that facilitates the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and interdisciplinary collaboration. It also aims to strengthen ties between academia and industry by promoting entrepreneurship, technology transfer, and strategic research partnerships with the private sector.

Moreover, the event provided an opportunity to address emerging global challenges in higher education, explore the integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence into teaching and learning, and foster leadership competencies among current and future educational leaders.

It featured a comprehensive two-day agenda designed to address critical challenges and opportunities in academia. The first day was structured around four distinct panel sessions covering the full spectrum of modern university operations. The forum began by tackling the crucial issue of Securing Financial Sustainability, exploring new funding models and revenue sources. The focus then shifted to the pedagogical future with 'Forecasting Higher Education,' discussing trends like lifelong learning and micro-credentials. The afternoon was dedicated to enhancing student employability through Future Programmes for Future Jobs, examining how to bridge the gap

between theory and the job market. The day concluded with a session on 'Higher Education and Society,' exploring the university's ethical and social responsibilities in a digitally connected world.

The second day transitioned from panels to a collaborative 'Ideation Session.' This facilitated dialogue brought together University leadership, honorary professors, and invited experts to synthesize the previous day's discussions. The primary goal was to collaboratively explore emerging challenges, share innovative ideas, and identify key opportunities to strategically shape the future of the academic landscape.

Through this initiative, the University reaffirms its role as a leading academic institution and a regional hub for intellectual and scientific advancement. The forum stands as a testament to the University's enduring commitment to excellence, its openness to innovation, and its dedication to building bridges of knowledge with the world's foremost scholars.

## **Numerous Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research Groups Officially Launched at UJ**

Over the past months, the University of Jordan (UJ) has launched a series of pioneering interdisciplinary initiatives, spanning healthcare, engineering, information technology, the arts,

## Research Domains



Life Sciences and Medicine



Engineering and Technology



Natural Sciences

## Image courtesy of UJ

education, social sciences, and the humanities. In 2025, UJ reached 125 approved and official research groups, up from 98 in 2024. These initiatives bring together leading national and international scholars and graduate students, advancing evidence-based research, fostering academic collaboration, and translating findings into practical solutions that address both local and global challenges.

Among these initiatives is the Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis: Joanna Briggs Methodology Research Group, an international team specializing in systematic reviews and meta-analyses using the methodology of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), affiliated with the University of Adelaide, Australia. The group aims to produce high-quality reviews that meet global standards and provides internationally accredited training, with research priorities including healthcare quality, digital health, chronic diseases, oral health, developmental disabilities, marine sciences, and nanotechnology.

In the field of cybersecurity, the Intrusion Detection and Prevention Systems (IDPSs) Research Group develops advanced solutions to protect digital infrastructure against sophisticated threats. Led by researchers from the King Abdullah II School of Information Technology and collaborating with experts from Jordan, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and the USA, the group integrates artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data, and quantum computing. Research focuses include securing IoT environments, smart networks, and connected vehicles, enhancing data encryption, and applying quantum computing to strengthen cybersecurity. The group also organizes workshops and conferences while building strategic partnerships to position Jordan as a regional hub for digital security innovation.

The Palliative Cancer Care Research Group emphasizes improving the quality of life for cancer patients and supporting their families through evidence-based care strategies addressing physical, psychological, and spiritual needs. National and international experts collaborate to design effective interventions, build strategic partnerships, and translate findings into educational and clinical resources for compassionate, patient-centred care.

The Digitisation and Human Security: Benefits and Threats Research Group explores the impact of technological developments on human well-being and societal stability.

Using a multidisciplinary approach, the group examines both opportunities and risks of digitisation and AI, including data protection, algorithmic fairness, disinformation, and ethical considerations, while developing frameworks to promote societal resilience and responsible technology use.

In healthcare innovation, the Rheumatic Diseases Research Group focuses on improving diagnosis and treatment of rheumatic diseases through interdisciplinary collaboration and international expertise. Key priorities include studying autoimmune mechanisms, developing diagnostic tools, and leveraging advanced medical imaging and AI to support early diagnosis.

The Contemporary Arab Diasporic Literary Studies Research Group investigates modern Arab literature produced in diaspora contexts, exploring themes such as displacement, trauma, identity, and daily life symbolism. Through partnerships with organizations like the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA), the group strengthens global academic collaboration.

Other research groups include the Auditing in Accountancy Research Group, which advances applied research to improve professional standards, governance, and risk reduction; the Arabic Manuscripts: Investigation and Analysis Research Group, dedicated to preserving Arab-Islamic intellectual heritage; and the

Intertextuality in Arts Research Group, which explores creative interdisciplinary connections in artistic practices.

In education, the Elevating Competencies in Counselling and Special Education Research Group integrates AI, robotics, and digital platforms to enhance professional skills, while the Empowering Teachers: 21st Century Skills Research Group focuses on teacher empowerment, professional development, and integrating digital technologies to improve educational outcomes.

Other initiatives cover areas such as food safety (Fresh Produce: Safety and Quality Research Group), academic libraries and information access (Academic Libraries Research Group), livestock health (Heat Stress in Farm Animals Research Group), Islamic education (Teaching Islam: Methods and Approaches Research Group), dental prostheses (Quality of Life in Patients with Removable Prostheses Research Group), biomedical signaling (Intracellular Molecular Signals and Pathways Research Group), optical communication (Optical Communication Research Group), civil engineering (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Civil Engineering MLACE), mental health (Resilience and Psychological Wellbeing Research Group), patient safety (Patient Safety Research Group), and global literary studies (Asian World Literature Research Group).

Through these pioneering interdisciplinary

initiatives, UJ reaffirms its role as a hub for innovation, scientific excellence, and international collaboration, strengthening both national development and global knowledge exchange.

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## **Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea**

### **Graduate School of Interpretation and Translation's Korean-English Department Shines on the APEC 2025 KOREA Stage**

Faculty members, alumni, and students from the Korean-English Department at the Graduate School of Interpretation and Translation (Department Chair: Prof. Juyoun Lee) played key roles at the APEC 2025 Summit held in Gyeongju, providing a wide range of interpretation services—including simultaneous, consecutive, escort, broadcast, and media briefing interpretation—that contributed to the successful hosting of the event.

Throughout the summit week, members of the Department served as official interpreters for one of the nation's most significant diplomatic events, supporting smooth communication among heads of state and delegations from around the world.



**From left—Interpreters Song Hye-young (Class of '23), Hwang Jung-won ('23), Prof. Juyoun Lee ('19), and Interpreter Park Sun-joo ('21) Photo courtesy of HUFS**

On October 29, Prof. Juyoun Lee (Class of '19) and Interpreter Hwang Jung-won ('23) provided simultaneous interpretation during the U.S.–Korea Expanded Summit Luncheon. On October 30, Prof. Lee and Interpreter Park Sun-joo ('21) interpreted at the APEC Ministerial Meeting (AMM). From October 31 to November 1, Interpreters Hwang Jung-won ('23) and Song Hye-young ('23) delivered simultaneous interpretation for the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting (AELM) plenary sessions.

At the APEC Media Center, official press briefings and media conferences were interpreted simultaneously by Interpreters Choi Eun-ah ('23) and Ko Jin-young ('39). For the



**Second-year (Class of '46) and first-year (Class of '47) Korean-English Department students serving as table interpreters at the official APEC welcome banquet** Photo courtesy of HUFS

MBC live broadcast of the summit, Interpreters Lee So-hee ('19), Hong Seol-young ('21), Jeon Yu-kyung ('37), Jang Su-min ('38), Kim Yeon-hee ('39), and Lee Sun-kyung ('41) delivered real-time interpretation of key moments on-site.

In addition, 60 second-year students (Class of '46) and 14 first-year students (Class of '47) from the department participated as table interpreters at the APEC official welcome dinner held at Lahan Hotel Gyeongju on October 31. They provided consecutive interpretation during dinner conversations with delegation members and distinguished guests from government and business sectors, demonstrating their practical interpreting competencies in a real-world diplomatic setting.

Through their participation, the Korean-

English Department reaffirmed its strong reputation on the national diplomatic stage. Faculty, alumni, and students delivered high-quality interpretation services throughout the APEC summit, showcasing the excellence, professionalism, and global competence of interpreters trained by our institution.

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## **University of Coimbra, Portugal**

### **University of Coimbra brings science and sustainable innovation to Expo Osaka 2025**

The University of Coimbra (UC) participated in Expo Osaka 2025 with a delegation led by João Nuno Calvão da Silva, Vice-Rector for External Relations and Alumni, and Nuno Mendonça, Vice-Rector for Innovation, Employability and Business Relations, presenting innovative solutions that combine sustainable technology with international collaboration.

Bernardo Amaral, Director of the Portugal Pavilion, warmly welcomed the University of Coimbra during the three-day event, where the UC presented research projects reflecting excellence of Portuguese science and innovation. One of the highlights was UAS4Litter, a project developed with support from the Japanese government, which uses drones and advanced sensors to detect



Photo courtesy of UC

and monitor marine litter. This affordable technology is now being considered for deployment along Japan's coastline.

Several other projects were also presented, including the Multidisciplinary Institute of Ageing (MIA Portugal); Activas, which addresses environmental challenges related to an ageing population; Reefs, a device designed to capture wave energy; and the Atlantic Coast HUB of the Coimbra Region, which promotes entrepreneurship and talent retention. The UC Mar – Figueira da Foz Campus was also presented as an example of innovation in fisheries and aquaculture.

At the Portugal Pavilion, the University of Coimbra showcased an interactive digital table that linked Osaka live to the Pátio das Escolas, enabling visitors to explore the University's heritage through a virtual reality experience.

The University of Coimbra's participation in Expo Osaka 2025 was also the result of its

collaboration with JETRO (the Japan External Trade Organisation), which brought Portuguese science and technology closer to potential Japanese business partners.

For more information, see <https://noticias.uc.pt/en/articles/university-of-coimbra-brings-science-and-sustainable-innovation-to-expo-osaka-2025/>

## University of Coimbra strengthens academic and cultural ties with University of Macau

The University of Coimbra (UC) and the University of Macau (UM) have strengthened their academic and scientific cooperation, launching a scholarship programme that allows UC master's and doctoral students to conduct research in Macau, and UM students to do the same in Coimbra, with support from MGM. The



Photo courtesy of UC

new collaboration agreements were formalised during a visit to Macau by a UC delegation led by Vice-Rector for External Relations and Alumni, João Nuno Calvão da Silva.

The tripartite agreement also includes scholarships and awards for Law students and the joint organisation of academic events, such as the “Public Law: International, Constitutional and Administrative Law” conference held on 13–14 October at UM, which brought together participants from Portuguese-speaking countries and territories, including UC Law Faculty lecturers Jónatas Machado and António Malheiro de Magalhães.

During the visit, UM joined the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Dialogue on Heritages of Portuguese Influence, coordinated by UC’s Professor Walter Rossa, and a partnership was established to create a joint digital database dedicated to the work of Luís de Camões.

“Celebrating this agreement, with MGM’s support, allows UC students to pursue master’s and doctoral studies in Macau, and UM students to do the same in Coimbra. This reinforces the historical ties between our Law Faculties and helps ensure the continuity of Portuguese legal tradition in Macau beyond 2049. At the same time, our partnership on cultural heritage through the UNESCO Chair expands cooperation and demonstrates the commitment of both institutions to the values of such an important international organisation,” said Vice-Rector

João Nuno Calvão da Silva.

For more information see <https://noticias.uc.pt/en/articles/university-of-coimbra-strengthens-academic-and-cultural-ties-with-university-of-macau/>

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## **Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania**

### **Innovation Woven with Heritage: UTCN's Paradigm for AI Research and Sustainable Architecture**

The Technical University of Cluj-Napoca (UTCN) is redefining the nexus of high technology and cultural continuity with its creation of the Artificial Intelligence Research Institute (AIRi@UTCN). This ambitious project, fully funded by UTCN, is poised to become a national and regional epicenter for advanced AI research, but its significance extends far beyond its state-of-the-art laboratories; it embodies a paradigm of sustainable urban development through a profoundly innovative architectural vision: the deliberate integration and preservation of a century-old building, dubbed Casa Radio, within its contemporary structure.

The architectural solution employed to realize this objective is both sophisticated and visually arresting. Instead of resorting to the

conventional practice of site clearance, UTCN commissioned a structure engineered with a striking three-dimensional curvature, allowing the new research complex to bend and fold around the 1920s structure. This design choice transforms the project into an exemplary case study, powerfully reflecting the core historical lesson of the Silk Road: that the key to peaceful coexistence and collective prosperity lies in treating individual differences as a cause for celebration rather than segregation. It illustrates how technological progress and architectural heritage can coexist harmoniously, making a profound statement that the future is built not by erasing history, but by intelligently integrating it. Furthermore, this gesture is not merely symbolic: the preserved structure will be repurposed as a central convening space within AIRi@UTCN, designed to actively foster informal scholarly exchanges and interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers and students, thus embedding heritage functionally within the core research ecosystem.

Beyond the significance of its architectural synthesis, the almost 24 million USD project is a strategic investment in Romania's scientific landscape, aligning with SUN's mission to support cooperation in education and research on the Silk Road. Covering over 14,000 square meters, the facility will become Romania's first fully constructed research center of its kind since 1990. AIRi@UTCN will



Photo courtesy of UTCN

feature 33 specialized laboratories and other state-of-the-art infrastructure, including high-performance computing resources and dedicated facilities for advanced data processing, robotics, microelectronics and cybersecurity. This infrastructure is designed to consolidate multidisciplinary teams and strengthen academic-industrial partnerships, thereby acting as a catalyst for national and international digitalization initiatives in fields ranging from education to healthcare.

Ultimately, as highlighted by UTCN leadership, the Institute's construction - built with both technical mastery and respect for tradition - demonstrates the university's capacity to build the future of scientific inquiry by meticulously honoring and integrating the past into the very foundation of progressive advancement. For more information see [airi.utcluj.ro](http://airi.utcluj.ro)

## Fostering Applied Innovation: The SOLIS UTCN Project and the Cultivation of Sustainable Engineering Expertise

The commitment of the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca (UTCN) to technological innovation is not solely confined to its formal research centers but is dynamically driven by its student community, exemplified by the SOLIS UTCN project. Initiated within the Faculties of Electrical Engineering and Industrial Engineering, Robotics and Production Management, SOLIS has evolved into a prominent, campus-wide, and interdisciplinary platform for hands-on engineering education and sustainable technology development. Its core activity centers on the design, development, and refinement of solar-powered vehicles intended for representation in major

**International Validation: Hyperion's Endurance at the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge 2025** Photo courtesy of UTCN



international competitions, transforming theoretical knowledge into tangible, real-world engineering outcomes.

The technical expertise and dedication cultivated within the SOLIS UTCN student initiative achieved significant international validation through the participation of its latest prototype, Hyperion, in the 2025 Bridgestone World Solar Challenge (BWSC) in Australia. Widely recognized as the premier global competition for solar-powered transport, the BWSC mandates teams to traverse 3,000 kilometers of the demanding Australian outback. The team faced constant technical and environmental adversity along the route, including intense desert heat, strong crosswinds, and rapidly shifting weather patterns. This necessitated continuous on-the-spot problem-solving and highly effective team coordination. A particularly challenging incident occurred when a sudden, powerful wind gust pushed the vehicle off the road shortly before the final control stop in Port Augusta. Although this affected the concluding timed segment, Hyperion's ability to push for the finish line in Adelaide highlighted both the vehicle's resilient design and the team's perseverance, underscoring UTCN representatives' commitment to advanced engineering education and sustainable mobility solutions in theory and in practice.



Photo courtesy of UTCN

Following the race's culmination, the vehicle was showcased in Victoria Square and featured in the traditional Adelaide parade, drawing international attention to the technical achievement. The successful campaign validated not only the students' mechanical and electrical engineering competencies but also their crucial soft skills like adaptability, teamwork, and determination, all essential for navigating one of the most demanding engineering endurance tests worldwide.

Ultimately, the Hyperion project serves as a powerful testament to the caliber of Romanian technological education. Its journey encapsulates the fusion of academic knowledge, collaborative endeavor, and commitment to a sustainable future, effectively placing UTCN's student innovation on a prominent international platform.



Photo courtesy of UTCN

## **Cultivating Global Citizenship at UTCN for International Innovation: The EUT+ Label as a Marker of Shared Cultural and Professional Identity**

As part of the recent developments within the European University of Technology (EUT+) Alliance, the rectors of four pioneering institutions - Mathieu Kessler Neyer, Rector of the Technical University of Cartagena, Spain; Vasile Țopa, Rector of the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Georgi Venkov, Rector of the Technical University of Sofia, Bulgaria; and Christophe Collet, Director of the University of Technology of Troyes, France - honored three distinguished UTCN graduates with the EUT+ Label during the June 2025 UTCN Graduation Ceremony.

The EUT+ Label, a reflection of the “Think Human First” principle, serves as an



Photo courtesy of UTCN

official acknowledgment of students' active engagement in a collaborative framework, recognizing those who have participated in joint curricula and embraced international mobility to gain immersive, cross-cultural experiences. By integrating technical expertise with intercultural competence, the label reflects successful immersion in a learning environment defined by multicultural collaboration, human-centered innovation, and cross-border academic harmonization. It demonstrates that professional skill and cultural awareness are mutually reinforcing in today's interconnected world. As articulated by one of the recipients, the program illustrates how engineering connects people "beyond technical knowledge," fostering a deeper understanding that diverse perspectives are essential to enriching problem-solving approaches in the 21st century.

This synthesis of academic rigor and cultural diversity reinforces UTCN's role as a hub for technological innovation and intercultural education where the EUT+ initiative leverages higher education as a medium for dialogue between nations, fostering mutual respect, shared progress, and a generation of technological professionals who consider themselves citizens of the world, in line with SUN's vision.

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## **Tajik Technical University, Tajikistan**

Over the past six months, Tajik Technical University (TTU), named after Academician M. S. Osimi, has strengthened its international cooperation, expanded academic programs, and enhanced its role in advancing digital technologies, engineering, and sustainable development in Tajikistan.

### **Strengthening International Partnerships and Academic Mobility**

TTU has continued its active participation in the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) and reinforced collaboration with regional partners. In 2025, six TTU students successfully completed an academic mobility program at the IT University of Astana in Kazakhstan,

where they studied modern areas related to information technology and cybersecurity.

Furthermore, TTU expanded joint educational initiatives through the 2+2 program with the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (Kazakhstan), introducing three new academic programs in Informatics, Information Systems, and Cybersecurity.

## **Development of IT Education and Digital Technologies**

As a leading institution in Tajikistan for training specialists in information technologies and artificial intelligence, TTU has significantly expanded its IT-related academic offerings. The university introduced new programs focused on intelligent systems, digital security, software engineering, and modern information technologies.

The Faculty of Digital Technologies, Systems, and Information Security continues to upgrade its programs and infrastructure to align with global educational standards and emerging technological trends.

## **Advancing Renewable Energy and Sustainability Initiatives**

In 2025, TTU enhanced its commitment to sustainable development through the launch of a new Resource Center for Renewable Energy.

This center serves as a platform for practical training, research, and demonstration of

solar, hydro, and wind energy technologies. It supports student and faculty projects in clean energy and promotes the integration of environmentally sustainable approaches into engineering education.

The University also organized a dedicated seminar encouraging girls and women to pursue careers in solar energy and sustainable technologies — an important step toward expanding gender participation in STEM fields.

### **Professional Development and International Training Programs**

TTU faculty members strengthened their expertise through participation in advanced international training programs. In 2025, lecturers completed a specialized course on “Cybersecurity and AI” at the Institute of Continuous Education of the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, receiving international certificates.

Additionally, TTU representatives joined the international summer program “Cybersecurity and AI Governance” at Chongxin University of Posts and Telecommunications (PRC). The program included practical training on digital security, artificial intelligence, risk management, and global best practices.

### **Academic Achievements**

TTU students have participated actively in academic competitions and innovation projects.

In 2025, a TTU student received the national award “Student of the Year – 2025”, highlighting the University’s dedication to fostering young leaders in engineering and technology.

### **Participation in International Forums**

TTU continued presenting its initiatives at international platforms. University students took part in a UNESCO conference focused on the “Role of Girls in Technology,” where TTU highlighted successful initiatives supporting women in engineering, renewable energy, and digital innovation.

### **Conclusion**

From June to December 2025, Tajik Technical University achieved significant progress in international collaboration, educational development, renewable energy initiatives, and technological innovation. Through mobility programs, joint academic projects, professional development, and global engagement, TTU continues contributing to regional academic advancement and the mission of the Silk-Road Universities Network.

# Canadian University Dubai, UAE

## Canadian University Dubai: Creating an engine for innovation through entrepreneurship, community engagement, and strategic partnership

Canadian University Dubai (CUD) has reinforced its commitment to acting as a downtown engine of innovation, with the recent launch of the first entrepreneurial venture from the institution's dedicated business incubator. Powered by ZipTrust, a blockchain-enabled technology, the new enterprise, TrustPaper, is a groundbreaking innovation that enables the secure, automatic verification of documents in just seconds.

As part of CUD's long-term commitment to sustainability and social impact, 25% of royalty proceeds from the business will be dedicated to an endowment that supports equality in education.



Photo courtesy of CUD

## Community engagement through creativity

CUD students continue to demonstrate their talents through community engagement with some notable success stories in recent months.

Joining forces with leading UAE lifestyle provider, Majid Al Futtaim, CUD architecture students have pioneered sustainability-driven design solutions to create the winning projects in a competition to set new standards in urban living through climate-responsive innovation.

Design students have also been part of a collaboration with Dubai Holding and ImInclusive to create an installation for Dubai Design Week 2025, which was inaugurated by Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Chairperson of Dubai Culture and Arts Authority. The project merges education with lived experience to create a space that is both artistic and deeply human, symbolising a shared vision of inclusion and creativity.

Photo courtesy of CUD





Photo courtesy of CUD

## **Celebrating CUD heroes**

CUD has a long-established reputation for nurturing talented students who go on to achieve remarkable success in the wider community as business leaders, entrepreneurs and international sportspeople. Recent CUD heroes include Accounting and Finance student Rashed Mohammed Atiq Almehairi, who has been crowned World Champion at the FEI Endurance World Championships staged recently in Buftea, Romania. Almehairi secured the title after an intense 126 km race, reinforcing the UAE's distinguished global standing in endurance sport. Rashed follows in the footsteps of Saeed Salem Atiq Khamis Almehairi, who has won the world championship multiple times.

The University has also marked the accomplishments of graduate Mohammed

Al Hakim, who has been appointed President of UAE Operations at Crypto.com, becoming the first GCC and Emirati national to take on this prestigious position in the cryptocurrency industry. Renowned as an outstanding leader with a distinguished career in government organizations, Al Hakim is now spearheading the transformation of the region's financial landscape. By demystifying the world of cryptocurrency, he aims to secure the UAE's position as a global hub for the sector.

Among CUD's alumni entrepreneurs is Public Health graduate Nadine Audi, who has pioneered the sustainable femtech brand, Diva'Me. As co-founder and CEO, Nadine was recognized among the Forbes 30 Under 30 profiles last year as she was able to raise a 1 million seed fund for her startup and has established herself as a passionate advocate for women's health and empowerment.

## **Strategic partnerships for knowledge development**

Looking ahead, CUD is set to collaborate with leading regional and international groups to advance knowledge development and transfer between the University and industry. CUD has recently participated as a Knowledge Partner at the Forbes Middle East Health Leaders Summit held in Abu Dhabi. The forum gathered policymakers, healthcare executives, and scientific pioneers to address the forces



Photo courtesy of CUD

reshaping care delivery, with CUD positioned at the forefront of this knowledge exchange.

The Brand Me Summit, the largest worldwide event dedicated entirely to personal branding as a business and career-defining asset, returned to CUD on November 22nd and 23rd. Featuring global speakers, workshops, and thought-leadership sessions, AI took center stage this year, exploring how emerging technologies are reshaping content creation, business scaling, and the evolution of digital authority.

# Chapman University, USA

## Chapman University Emerges as a Leading Hub for Quantum Innovation

By recruiting top faculty and researchers, investing in innovative facilities, and providing students with unique, hands-on learning experiences, Chapman University is making a substantial investment in the future of quantum studies.

“We are driven by curiosity about the natural world but it’s also very important that we engage it not as abstract, disembodied minds, but as living and breathing people that have our own needs,” said Andrew Jordan, Professor of Physics and the Co-Director of Institute for Quantum Studies. “We take it for granted that the things we use daily were created as we uncovered scientific facts about the world around us. If you look at the trajectory of society, transformation is preceded by pushing the boundaries of our understanding. With our significant investment in quantum physics research and education, Chapman is helping extend new horizons in critical research. This work is always grounded in community and advancing humanity forward.”

The research of the Institute will benefit from the recent opening of the Struppa Research Park at Chapman’s campus, located at the

renovated site of an historic school building that is a registered national landmark. Adaptive reuse of this facility includes a quantum research hub, which recently received a \$2.43 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The hub will focus on key topics in quantum foundations research and aims to become the primary center of excellence for the field in the U.S. Insights and discoveries in quantum foundations will be shared with the scientific community and the public through regular seminars, annual conferences, and public lectures. This unique collaboration involves theoretical physicists, experimental physicists, and philosophers who will apply methods from their respective disciplines to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of reality.

“The John Templeton Foundation grant establishing the Southern California Quantum Foundations Hub at Chapman University is a testament to the transformative impact of our faculty’s interdisciplinary research— both past and future,” said former Chapman President Daniele C. Struppa, Ph.D., who recently retired as University President and after whom the new facility is named. “With this grant, our University is positioned to become the leading center for quantum foundations research in the United States, a field ripe with potential for significant scientific discoveries and a greater understanding of reality.”



**Struppa Research Park, home of the Institute for Quantum Studies** Photo courtesy of Chapman University

## **At Chapman, Film Students Get an Agent Before They Graduate**

Since 2021 Chapman's Dodge College of Film and Media Arts has operated a career center with a straightforward mandate: help students land internships and jobs, not after they graduate, but while they're still on campus. Now, star Hollywood agent Joe Rosenberg

has joined the team, connecting students with major studios and bringing talent to campus.

Rosenberg spent 25 years as an agent—the last 10 at the world famous Creative Artists Agency (CAA)—representing directors like Ridley Scott and David Fincher. Now he gives the treatment once reserved for Hollywood's elite to students at Chapman's Dodge College, connecting them with internships, jobs, and industry access before they graduate.

Instead of representing a few directors, he represents hundreds of students who wouldn't meet these people until years into their careers. "If there's a job in the industry—whether it's in production, marketing, data, or AI—why shouldn't they choose a Chapman student?" Rosenberg says. "If there's an open opportunity, I want to fill it with a Chapman student."

"We've always had a startup mentality, but now we're Career Center 2.0," Rosenberg says. "We're still nimble, we embrace disruption, but we're maturing in how we operate. Dean Galloway has given us a clear mandate: prepare students not just for what's happening now, but for the future. That flexibility is our advantage."

After 25 years making deals for Hollywood directors, Rosenberg found something better. At CAA, he made hundreds of deals. Here, he's building something that will generate thousands of opportunities he'll never track. Students he's never met will benefit from the systems he's creating.



**Joe Rosenberg meets with a student**

Photo courtesy of Chapman University

## **Chapman University Inaugurates Prof. Matt Parlow Its 14th President**

Following the planned retirement of Dr. Daniele Struppa from the Office of the University President, Prof. Matt Parlow, Executive Vice-President and former Dean of Chapman's Fowler School of Law was inaugurated in October 2025. A highly experienced and effective administrator-scholar and fundraiser with more than a decade of service at Chapman, Parlow embodies the transformational leadership sought to advance the University's growth trajectory and deepen its mission.

"Matt exemplifies these qualities of transformative leadership, with more than 20 years in higher education and strong roots and achievements at Chapman University," noted Mr. Parker S. Kennedy, Chairman of the University Board of Trustees. "Matt has forged



**President Matt Parlow**

Photo courtesy of Chapman University

strong connections with business, civic and community leaders, creating opportunities that benefit students, faculty and programs. These efforts reinforce the Chapman Family's close-knit community and collective mission, which continue to inspire his deep commitment to the University."

"Chapman has a tradition of truly excellent leaders, most notably Daniele Struppa and, before him, Jim Doti. I am proud to follow in their footsteps," Parlow said. "Over the last 30 years, we've transformed this University in ways that are the envy of all of higher education. Yet, with where we stand today, there's still incredible potential and opportunity ahead of us that makes for a really exciting future."

"To me, this is also personal. I love Chapman. It's been a home for me in so many ways, and it

is a community I am deeply connected to, with so many people I care so much about. Chapman is special. I believe in our mission and the collective work that we do together that makes an impact on our students and the community. It will be my true honor to work in the role of president to elevate Chapman to help us achieve all our ambitious goals and to deepen our mission.”

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## **University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Viet Nam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam**

### **Bridging History and Innovation: USSH-VNUHCM Elevates Strategic Partnership with South Korea**

It has been a historic season for the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Viet Nam National University Ho Chi Minh City (USSH-VNUHCM) in 2025. From the busy boardrooms of Ho Chi Minh City to the coastal campuses of Busan, the University is not just signing agreements, it is actively weaving a deeper, more personal fabric of connection with South Korea.

Through a series of dynamic initiatives, spanning historical preservation, executive

education, and high-level leadership integration, USSH-VNUHCM is proving that the “Silk Road” of knowledge between Vietnam and South Korea is not just open; it is becoming a superhighway. The University is successfully blending the ancient past with the digital future, creating a partnership model that is deeply personal and strategically profound.

### **A Bond Written in History: The Ly Dynasty Connection**

To understand the depth of the current relationship, one must look back nearly a millennium. While modern universities focus on the future, USSH-VNUHCM has taken a pivotal role in honoring the past. The University recently announced a collaboration with Bonghwa County to introduce the “K-Vietnam Valley” project, set to take place on September 12, 2025.

This is not a standard cultural exchange. Bonghwa County is the only locality in South Korea that houses relics of the Vietnamese Ly Dynasty, serving as the living home for descendants of the Vietnamese imperial family who migrated to the Korean peninsula centuries ago.

Prof. Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan, President of USSH-VNUHCM, emphasized: “The K-Vietnam Valley project in Bonghwa County, Korea, is not merely a historical and cultural landmark but a symbol of the nearly 800-year relationship

between our two nations. This introduction serves as an opportunity to spread the project's special significance, sparking national pride and raising awareness among the younger generation about their responsibility to preserve and promote our heritage”.

The South Korean government has committed approximately 200 billion won to develop this site, but it requires an academic and cultural context to truly shine. By stepping in to co-organize the introduction of this project, USSH-VNUHCM is helping to tell a story that predates modern diplomacy. It is a reminder that the connection between the two peoples is blood-deep, creating a foundation of trust that makes modern cooperation easier.

## **The Currency of Culture: Educating Korean Business Leaders**

Building on this historical trust, USSH-VNUHCM is addressing a critical modern challenge: the economic relationship between the two countries. South Korea is one of Vietnam's largest investors, but capital alone guarantees neither success nor harmony.

Recognizing this, USSH-VNUHCM partnered with the Asia Center at Seoul National University (SNU) to create the “Global Future Strategy Advanced Management Program”. The recently concluded course was designed for a specific, high-impact audience: Korean entrepreneurs and executives operating in Vietnam.



**K-Vietnam Valley, Bonghwa County, Gyeongsangbuk Province, South Korea** Photo courtesy of USSH-VNUHCM

In the closing ceremony on June 27, 2025, Professor Chae Su Hong, Director of the Asia Center at Seoul National University, underscored that the success of the program stems not only from its high-caliber academic content but also from its role as a platform for cultural exchange, an essential element in cultivating global leadership in the 21st century. He further highlighted that the program's distinct identity is shaped by the synergy between practical leadership experience and solid academic grounding.

USSH-VNUHCM President Prof. Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan expressed profound appreciation for the journey undertaken by the learners in collaboration with the University and its partners. She also emphasized the program's value not only in academic content but also

in fostering critical thinking, intercultural communicative competence, and long-term professional networks.

## **A Personal Milestone: Recognition on the Global Stage**

The strength of an institution often rests on the vision of its leadership. This reality was vividly illustrated in Busan, where Dong-A University conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Tourism Management upon Prof. Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan on August 27, 2025.

The event was attended by Ms. Doan Phuong Lan, Consul General of Vietnam in Busan; Mr. Shin Choong Il, former Consul General of the Republic of Korea in Ho Chi Minh City; leaders of Dong-A University and its affiliated schools; members of the alumni association; a delegation from USSH-VNUHCM; along with Dong-A faculty and students.

**Commemorative photo of learners with representatives from both universities at the ceremony** Photo courtesy of USSH-VNUHCM



This was a moment of profound emotion and validation. Standing before the academic community of Dong-A, Prof. Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan Lan dedicated the honor not to herself, but to the collective efforts of the USSH faculty and the Saemaul Undong Center for Rural Development. She framed the award as a testament to 30 years of diplomatic friendship.

Dong-A University is currently a rising star in Korean education, having been selected as a “Glocal University” (Global + Local). By honoring the President of a Vietnamese university, Dong-A signaled that its path to global prominence runs directly through Vietnam.

## The Glocal 30 Initiative: Unlocking a New Era of Partnership

Beyond the ceremonial robes and honorary degrees, on the afternoon of August 27, Prof.

The conferral ceremony of the Honorary Doctorate upon Prof. Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan Photo courtesy of USSH-VNUHCM



Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan and Prof. Lee Hae Woo signed a Joint Appointment Agreement between USSH-VNUHCM and Dong-A University.

Under this agreement, Prof. Dr. Ngo Thi Phuong Lan will serve as an academic advisor to Dong-A University, while USSH-VNUHCM will jointly carry out projects within the framework of the Glocal University 30 Initiative.

The Glocal University 30 Initiative, supported by the Korean Ministry of Education with a budget of approximately USD 75 million over five years, aims to:

- Implement specialized educational programs aligned with local industries;
- Strengthen international cooperation to cultivate globally competitive human resources;
- Promote joint academic research and organize international conferences;
- Host global academic forums to foster cross-border knowledge exchange;
- Establish a Faculty Program with the participation of outstanding international scholars;
- Enhance international academic exchanges and student learning experiences;
- Develop university-industry partnerships to support regional and global competitiveness;
- Expand student exchange programs through international collaboration.



**The representatives from the two parties signed a Joint Appointment Agreement** Photo courtesy of USSH-VNUHCM

## **The Human Bridge**

Taken together, these four stories paint a picture of a University that is operating on all cylinders. USSH-VNUHCM is looking backward to honor the Ly Dynasty ancestors, looking sideways to support Korean businesses in Vietnam, and looking forward to build a high-tech, integrated academic future with Dong-A University.

In doing so, USSH-VNUHCM has transformed itself into a vital human bridge. It is proving that while governments sign treaties and corporations sign contracts, it is universities that build the understanding, the respect, and the shared vision necessary for a lasting friendship between Vietnam and South Korea.

## 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@sun0822.org](mailto:sunwebzine@sun0822.org)



## 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 [secretariat@sun0822.org](mailto:secretariat@sun0822.org)

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

### What they get

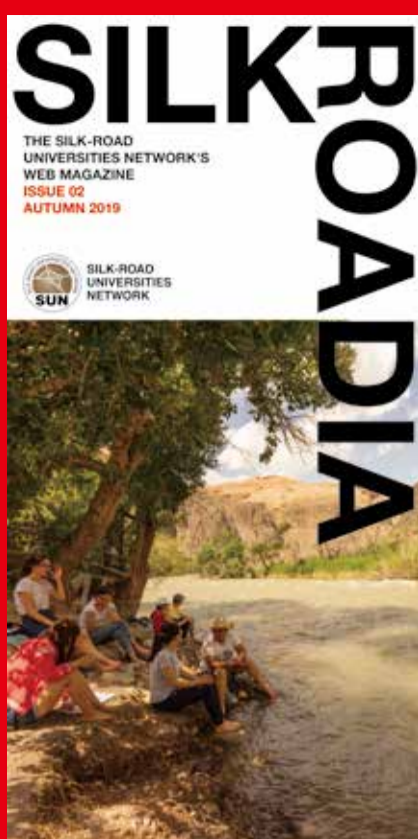
Articles and images published on SUN webzine and website.

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 [secretariat@sun0822.org](mailto:secretariat@sun0822.org)



# 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)**

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