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SILK ROAD DIARY



SILK-ROAD
UNIVERSITIES
NETWORK



SPECIAL FEATURE

5th Anniversary of SUN

COVER STORY

**Impact of COVID-19 on higher
education along the Silk Roads**

SILKROADIA

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

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CONTENTS

05 Letter from the Editor

Special Feature: 5th Anniversary of SUN

08 SUN chronology

11 SUN's history in photos

21 Introduction to SUN programs

25 Congratulatory messages

41 Message from the SUN Secretary-General

Cover Story: Impact of COVID-19 on higher education along the Silk Roads

48 COVID-19 and Universities: How universities should change in
pandemic *Lebedintseva L.A., Deriugin P.P.*

53 Country and University Report

Fictional Interview

86 An imaginary interview with Ibn Battuta *Davide Rizzi*

Silkroadia Commentary

93 Past, present and future of Silk Road tourism *Stella Kostopoulou*

Heritage

102 Chinese architecture scholars and Foguang Temple *Wu Hao*

108 Indian elephant: Past and present *Om Prakash Singh*

113 Morin Khuur: An integral part of Mongolia's nomadic culture
T.Otgontuul and D. Otgontuya

116 The Spanish mantilla and the Silk Road: A five- century relationship
Valentin Martinez Gracia

118 Romanian plum brandy *Jeong O Park*

120 Naengmyeon: Korean cold noodle *Hyosun Ro*

Education goes on; SUN sets sight on next five years

Travel

- 124 Mountains of Pamir: The "Roof of the World" *Boboev Farrukh*
- 128 Hiking on Brasov's city guard: Tampa Mountain *Cristina Maria Păcurar*
- 132 Mid-autumn festival in Asian countries *Li Ke*
- 135 The Globe, a classy restaurant and lounge in Riyadh *Alhanouf Alrowaili*

138 SUN News

143 USSUN News

145 News from Member Universities

Disclaimer

The Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) Secretariat is not responsible for accuracy, completeness or suitability for any purpose of the content published. Opinions and views expressed in this webzine are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by the SUN Secretariat. SUN Secretariat shall not be held accountable for any liabilities and disputes arising out of the use of the content published.



Shi-yong Chon

The Having experienced communicable diseases like MERS and SARS recently, few of us had expected the novel coronavirus would last this long. The entire world struggled to fight the unprecedented pandemic for the whole year. What's sad and depressing is that even after one full year of struggling with the evil virus, we still do have the end of the tunnel in sight.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced sweeping changes to the human civilization and everyday life. The life of individuals and organizations from governments to businesses to schools will never be the same as in the past. Worse yet, nationalism and exclusivism reared their ugly heads again, globalization without transnational cooperation exposed its dark side, lockdown and hate – instead of inclusiveness and solidarity – became the norm, post-truth prevails over truth and fact. The argument that the Spanish flu that struck Europe after World War I helped the Nazis take power in Germany should give us some food for thought.

All these dark sides call on us to devise a new governance to cope with threats to human societies like pandemics and climate change and save the mankind and the earth. One of the most urgent tasks should be the institution of an effective global healthcare regime. The pandemic is a global problem, and therefore, it requires a global solution that complements countermeasures of each individual country. This indeed is the time to revive the Silk Road spirit of peace, co-existence and co-prosperity.

In the Cover Story Section, you would be able to see what challenges the COVID-19 crisis is posing to universities on the Silk Roads. The main article authored by Professors L.A. Lebedintseva & P.P. Deriugin of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece insightfully and efficiently summed up the major challenges and gave out answers to the challenges.

A survey *SILKROADIA* conducted for the Cover Story Section found that most SUN member universities have been successfully overcoming difficulties

caused by the pandemic and fulfilling their duty of providing uninterrupted education to students. The two biggest challenges are development and operation of flawless digital education resources like online classes and e-library and coping with the lack of physical contact and engagement with students, which deprives the empathy and fraternization the University of Coimbra aptly said are “irreplaceable.”

If the persistent spread of the coronavirus made *SILKROADIA* choose its impact on higher education as a major part for the second time after the July issue, it also was natural it highlighted the fifth anniversary of SUN in the Special Feature Section.

It is regrettable that SUN marked the milestone while a global pandemic was raging, as it affected all the programs and events it had planned. Nevertheless, the curse of the virus never tampered with the significance of celebrating the five meaningful years of the network. In the section, you will be able to get a glimpse of what SUN has done and achieved since its birth in the South Korean ancient Silk Road city of Gyeongju in 2015.

More important may well be what SUN will seek and do in the coming five years and beyond. Secretary General Sungdon Hwang, the architect of SUN whose imagination and passion have been the driving force behind the growth of the network, contributed an article to set the direction of its future.

All the members of the SUN Family are invited to join the journey and *SILKROADIA* is fully committed to becoming a medium that binds together the family members and promotes SUN outside the network.

Thank you and I wish you all a healthy, normal and happy New Year.



2015-2020
5th ANNIVERSARY OF
SUN

SUN Chronology

2014

- Nov. 4 Symposium on the Silk Road Studies organized by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) at the National Assembly, Republic of Korea
- Nov. 28 Established Organizing Committee for the inception of SUN

2015

- Feb. 2 MOU signed between HUFS and the Provincial Government of Gyeongsangbuk-do for co-hosting the Inaugural General Assembly of SUN as part of Gyeongsangbuk-do's Silk Road Festival
- Apr. - Jun. Visited prospective member universities in Mongolia, China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and Oman
- Jul. 13-15 A meeting by the International Organizing Preparatory Committee for Inaugural General Assemblies of SUN and IASS (International Association for Silk-Road Studies) of SUN at HUFS, Seoul, Republic of Korea
- Aug. 21-24 Inaugural General Assemblies of SUN and IASS (International Association for Silk-Road Studies) 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

2016

- Jan. 16 Designated The Silk Road Zone at Seoul campus of HUFS
- Mar. 16-20 Preparatory meeting between National University of Mongolia (NUM) and Secretariat of SUN for establishing the Silk-Road Digital Library at NUM
- Apr. 1-Aug. 10 The 1st PHOCOS (the Photo Contest of SUN)
- Apr. 5-9 Conducted a field trip for the 3rd General Assembly to be hosted by the National University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam
- Apr. 14 MOU signed between The Korea Academy of Korean Studies (KAKS) and SUN for

collaboration on academic affairs on the Silk Roads

- Jun. 23 The 2nd Silkroadia Philharmonic Orchestra Concert at HUFS in Seoul, Korea
- Aug. 8-12 The 2nd General Assembly of SUN at HUFS in Seoul and a courtesy visit to Governor of Gyeongsangbuk-do province in Andong, Korea
- Sep. 26-29 The 2nd Annual International Academic Conference and General Assembly of IASS at Dunhuang, China

2017

- Jan. 25-26 Supported the conference on "Silk Road Transportations and Diplomacy" organized by Alameh Tabatabai University at Chabahaar in Iran
- Apr. 1-Nov. 11 The 2nd PHOCOS and the 1st Writing Contest of SUN (WRICOS)
- Jun. 19-22 Organized the conference on "The Spread of Iron Civilizations along the Silk Road and Methodologies for Mapping a Standard Map of Silk Road" jointly with Daegu University, Korea and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University at 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," at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Jul. 5-7 Organized a conference on "Education of the Silk Roads at the Schools of Humanities and Liberal Arts in Universities along the Silk Roads," jointly with HUFS and QS in Seoul, Korea
- Sep. 17 The 3rd Silkroadia Philharmonic Orchestra Concert at Korea National University of Arts in Seoul, Korea
- Oct. 10 Kick-off Ceremony for the Expedition of Maritime Silk Road by Ship, Seoul, Korea
- Oct. 12-Nov. 6 Expedition of the 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, co-hosted by the National University of Social Sciences and Humanities at Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam
- Nov. 10 The 3rd Annual International Conference and General Assembly of IASS and the Silk Road Students' (USSUN) Festival held at the National University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam,

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
- Apr. 1-Sep. 1 The 3rd PHOCOS and the 2nd WIRICOS
- 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 co-hosted by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
- Sep. 30 The function of USSUN Secretariat is transferred to Allameh Tabatabai' University, Iran, from SUN Secretariat or a trial period of one year until the end of 2019.

- Sep. 13-15 The 4th Annual International Conference and General Assembly of IASS and the General Assembly of IASS in of Gyeongju, Korea
- Nov.19-20 Introduction of SUN to 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

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
- Jan. 1 Published the inaugural issue of SILKROADIA, the official webzine of SUN Vol.1, No.1
- Jan. 1- Sep. 21 The 4th PHOCOS and The 3rd WIRICOS
- Apr. 30-May 2 Supported an 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 Dialogue Conference and Parallel Panel: “Safeguarding the Diversity of Asian Civilizations” organized by Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China and UNESCO at Beijing, China
- Sep. 18-21 The 5th General Assembly of SUN co-hosted by Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Sep. 26-28 The 5th Annual International Conference and General Assembly of IASS held at Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow, Russia- Adoption of “the Moscow Manifesto” regarding IASS’s understanding of the Silk Roads which is consistent with the Almaty Manifesto
- Oct.7-11 The 1st Debate Contest of SUN (DECOS) held 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 The 3rd Workshop for Drawing a Standard Universal Map the Silk Roads at Uzbekistan State University of World Languages in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

2020

- Jan. 1-Dec. 3 The 5th PHOCOS and the 4th WRICOS
- Jan.31 SUN recognized Gyeongsangbuk-do province and Gyeongju city as a historic place on the Silk Roads
- Feb. 21 MOU with the Seoul Design Foundation
- Jul. 1 Published “SILKROADIA” Vol.2 No.1
- Dec. 3 The 6th General Assembly of SUN held online and co-hosted with Ankara University, Turkey and HUFS as the Chair University of SUN
- Dec. 3 Published “SILKROADIA” Vol.2 No.2

SUN History in Photos

2015



The 1st General Assembly of SUN held in Gyeongju, Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea



Students' performance during the 1st General Assembly of SUN

MOU with Gyeongsangbuk-do Province and HUFs for Financial & Administrative Support for SUN



2016

Participants of the 2nd GA of SUN during the ceremony to place the time capsule "Hope and the Silk Road Peace Tree," at HUFs in Seoul, Korea



USSUN students after dinner hosted by Prof. Sungdon Hwang, Secretary-General of SUN during the 2nd GA of SUN



Grand Prize-winning photo of the 2016 PHOCOS by Benjamin Ong Jia Ming, University of Malaya, Malaysia



MOU with the National University of Mongolia to provide a financial support for her project to modernize her library

2017

Students Workshop during the 3rd General Assembly of SUN held at National University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



Students' performance during the welcoming ceremony of the 3rd General Assembly



A tour of Seoul by the participants and volunteers of the 3rd Philharmonic Orchestra Concert in Seoul, Korea



The 3rd Silkroadia Philharmonic Orchestra Concert held at the Korean National University of Art, Seoul, Korea



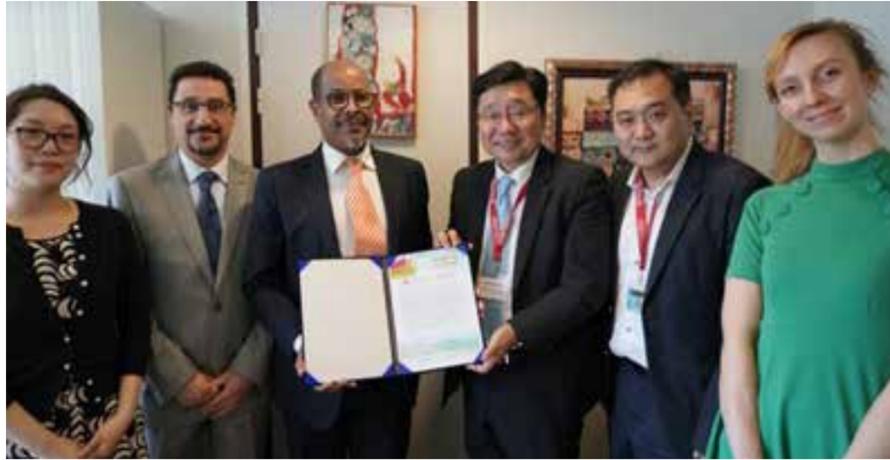
The opening of the Silk Road Zone in HUFU, Seoul, Korea



Grand Prize-winning photo of the 2017 PHOCOS by Aliasghar Heydari, Allameh Tabataba'i University Tehran, Iran

2018

Visiting UNESCO Silk Road Program Chief Ali Moussaie to discuss cooperation with SUN



The 4th General Assembly of SUN held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in Venice, Italy

Students permanence initiating the welcoming ceremony of the 4th GA of SUN



Grand Prize-winning photo of the 2018 PHOCOS by Ksenia Varegina, Moscow State Linguistic University, Russia

2019



The 5th General Assembly of SUN held at the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan



The 5th Annual International Conference of IASS held in Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow, Russia

PHOCOS and WRICOS award ceremony



The 1st Debate Contest of SUN held at Bucharest University, Romania

The 4th Workshop for drawing a Universal Silk Roads Map held at the Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.



2020



Presenting a certificate of recognition of Gyeongsangbuk-do and Gyeongju city as a "historic place on the Silk Roads"



The Grand Prize-winning photo of PHOCOS 2020 by Luis Santos, Coimbra University, Portugal

Introduction to SUN programs

Academic & Administrative Activities

Annual General Assembly of SUN

To review SUN's activities in the previous year and make necessary administrative decisions for the next year

Invitees: Heads and their spouses of member universities and institutions of SUN + two students nominated by the heads of universities

Venue: The city where the host institution is located

Annual Academic Conference of International Association for Silk-Road Studies (IASS)

To bring together researchers, practitioners and policy-makers from universities and other institutions of the countries along the Silk Roads to discuss issues, tackle real challenges, find solutions and explore opportunities.

Participants: Professors and researchers in diverse fields of Silk Road-related studies from the countries along the land or maritime Silk Roads.

Time & Venue: Decided by the president of IASS in consultation with the Secretary General of SUN

International Joint Research for Having a Standard Universal Map of Silk Road

This is a 5-year research project to be carried out jointly by a group of researchers recommended by the heads of member universities of SUN and nominated by the Secretary General of SUN. It aims to make a universal map of the Silk-Roads without any political, cultural, racial, and religious bias. An international joint research team had convened its meeting at Al-Farabi Kazakh National Universi-

ty, Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2017.

Since then experts of member universities and research institutes in the diverse fields of Silk Road studies such as geography, cartography, history, archeology, and anthropology have worked together to draw a map of the Silk Roads. The proceedings are available on the website of SUN (www.sunsilkroadia.org).

Cultural Activities

PHOCOS:

Photo Contest of SUN

Participants: Students from member universities of SUN

Theme: A variety of topics related to the Silk Road

Hosted by SUN & United Students of Silk-Road Universities Network (USSUN)

WRICOS:

Writing Contest of SUN

Participants: Students from member universities of SUN

Theme: A variety of topics related to the Silk Road

Category: Poems and short essays about Silk Road written in the writers' own languages.

Selected works will be translated into various languages by co-organizing universities of WRICOS.

Hosted by SUN & United Students of the Silk-Road Universities Network (USSUN)

S-DECOS:

Speech and Debate Contest of SUN

Participants: Teams of students representing individual member universities of SUN

Format: Team Competition

Venue: Hosting university of SUN

Hosted jointly by SUN, USSUN, and any member universities of SUN with commitment

Annual Concert by the Silkroadia

Philharmonic Orchestra (SPO)

Participants: Students majoring in music at SUN member universities are recommended and chosen in a mandatory screening process to perform in the

SILKROADIA concert.

Hosted by SUN *SILKROADIA* Philharmonic Orchestra

Co-organized by Korea National University of Arts and any member university of SUN sponsored by Gyeongsangbuk-do & SUN

SRVF:

The Silk Road Video Festival

Sharing the beauty of cultural diversities along the Silk Roads with documentary as well as entertainment videos

Time: During the General Assembly of SUN

Silk Road Students Festival

Exchange of information, ideas, knowledge, and culture among the students of member universities of SUN

Time: During the General Assembly of SUN

Venue: host University of the General Assembly of SUN

Expedition Activities

Expedition of the Land & Maritime

Silk Roads for Students at Member Universities of SUN

University students from the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) in Asia, Europe, and Africa will share the spirit of the Silk Roads and strengthen their bonds as they travel along the land and sea routes of the old Silk Roads and engage in cultural exchange activities and volunteer activities in the places they visit.

- The Land Silk Roads Expeditions
 - Expedition of the Chinese Part of the Silk Roads
 - Expedition of the Central Asian Part of the Silk Roads
 - Expedition of the Mongolian Part of the Silk Roads
 - Expedition of the Persian Part of the Silk Roads
 - Expedition of the Middle East Part of the Silk Roads
 - Expedition of the Turkish Part of the Silk Roads
 - Expedition of the Mediterranean Part of the Silk Roads
 - Expedition of the Russian Part of the Silk Roads

- The Maritime Silk Roads Expeditions by Ship
 - Voyage 1: From Busan, Korea to Malaka, Malaysia (completed in October 2017)
 - Voyage 2: From Malaka, Malaysia to Muscat in Oman, Dubai in UAE, or a port city in Iran (under planning)
 - Voyage 3: From Lisbon, Portugal to the final port city in Voyage 2 (under planning)

5th ANNIVERSARY OF SUN



SPECIAL CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE

H.E. Ban Ki-moon

*Former Secretary-General of
the United Nations*



Congratulation!
It is my great pleasure to send this congratulatory message to the member universities and research institutes of SUN (the Silk-Road Universities Network) for her 5th anniversary and the 6th General Assembly of SUN cohosted by Ankara University, Turkey, and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea. I would like to extend my appreciation to all members of SUN for their utmost efforts that they have exerted for the last five years to enshrine peaceful co-existence and sustainable co-prosperity along the Silk Roads. It is my sincere wish that SUN, as united international intellectual forces, can accomplish her mission: restoring the values of the ancient Silk Roads as the cradle of civilizations and enhancing cultural diversities spread along the Silk Roads as a healthy sign of civilizational vitality. I also wish that successful achievements are waiting for SUN's wonderful programs, called "ACE programs": Academic programs, Cultural programs, and Silk Road Expedition programs. Finally, I hope that today's General Assembly of SUN will end up with a fruitful result and multiple joys of cultural diversities leading to healthier and stronger solidarity in her membership. Thank you! Teşekkür ederim.

University of Coimbra, Portugal

Amílcar Falcão *Rector*



The University of Coimbra congratulates the Silk-Road Universities Network on its 5th anniversary. As a Member of the Board of Directors, the University of Coimbra strongly supports the vision of promoting peaceful coexistence and collective prosperity through the celebration and understanding of individual differences and cultures, taking the Silk Road as an historical example of overcoming boundaries and building a new generation able to promote peace, harmony and mutual success through education and training.

Canadian University of Dubai, UEA

K. Chelli *President*



Congratulations SUN on marking five successful years! Your initiative has managed to introduce institutions and professionals from various parts of the world to collaborate. Your initiative allows students to grow and be more culturally aware worldwide. Canadian University Dubai appreciates your commitment to compelling storytelling and quality reporting. We value our relationship and look forward to many more years of collaboration

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

**KMeletios-Athanasios C.
Dimopoulos** *Rector*



Please accept my congratulations on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of SUN! Silkroadia goals have always been in accordance with the objectives of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, to nurture leaders who have the integrity, determination, and expertise to bring about positive social change in global society and the local community. Let's look forward to the best in the coming years. Internationalization and cooperation between institutions is now perhaps more important than ever. The challenges we face cannot be solved by one person or one nation alone; but we need to stand together. Especially these past few months, the corona-virus epidemic has been a powerful reminder of just how connected we are to one another - and how our choices today determine our options tomorrow.

May the journey of this 5-year success of SUN continue even in the coming years!

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Republic of Korea

In Chul Kim *President*



On the 5th anniversary of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN), I would like to express my sincere congratulations as the president of chair school of SUN.

SUN is a valuable organization that aims to bring about a renaissance along the Silk Road region and provides opportunities for participants to develop an understanding of and respect for people from different cultural backgrounds.

Conflicts large and small around the world continue in our present day. I think the spirit of the Silk Road that pushes for communication and coexistence, not conflict and antagonism, is the key value for this era.

Therefore, through SUN, I hope that universities, the halls of knowledge and learning in each country, cooperate to alleviate confrontation and conflict, and discover the driving force that can promote harmony and prosperity between regions.

Ca' Foscari University, Italy

Tiziana Lippiello *Rector*



Sending my regards from Marco Polo's native city, it is with great pleasure that I congratulate our wonderful network on its fifth-year anniversary. Ca' Foscari University believes strongly in the importance of international communities like ours because of how they create contexts for our universities to learn from one another. Looking back, it was an honor to host the organization's General Assembly in 2018, and once again I would like to thank all of our colleagues from along the Silk Roads for having allowed us to welcome them to Venice on that occasion. Looking forward, I would like to say that although the pandemic has challenged -- and will continue to challenge -- all of our institutions in so many ways, we will all benefit from the new encounters and opportunities for collaboration and growth that our participation in the SUN family will bring us all in the future.

Beijing Foreign Studies University, China

Jia Wenjian *Vice-President*



On behalf of Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) for its 5th birthday.

Over the past five years, SUN has been proactively cooperating with the universities along the silk-road and conducting a series of diverse academic and cultural exchanges, where the spirit of Silk Road embracing the communications between Eastern and Western civilizations has been passed on and great contributions have been made to the world peace and the advancement of human civilizations.

Since 2015, when BFSU was first invited to join SUN as one of the founding members and a member on the board of directors, we have actively responded to the call of SUN and participated in various activities host or co-host by the Network. In the years ahead, we will further employ our strengths in language teaching, talents cultivation and Silk Road studies to strengthen our cooperation with SUN in the area of academic research, talents training, youth exchange and think tank cooperation.

We'll also call on other universities and think tanks to join SUN and "Belt and Road Initiative" researches to carry forward the spirit of "Silk Road" and achieve a higher level of integration and cooperation for a better world.

International University Cambodia, Cambodia

Neth Barôm *Vice President*



Greeting from International University! We, International University, would like to send you a congratulations message from our president Sabo Ojano to your committees on the occasion of your 5th year anniversary. We are very pleased to be able to wish you a happy anniversary this year. This anniversary is an important milestone. We would like offer thanks and the honor you for the contribution you have made to the state of mine and your community. I hope you had a very memorable anniversary this year and I wish you many more in the future. Congratulations again and best wishes.

Shanghai International Studies University, China

LI Yansong *President*



Dear Colleagues, I am writing, on behalf of Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), to congratulate cordially on the 5th anniversary of Silk-road Universities Network (SUN). Over the past years, SUN has undertaken diverse projects and has expanded its global footprint to nearly 30 countries and regions with a profound impact. With the outbreak of the COVID-19, the world has realized the importance of fostering an exchange of ideas and taking actions transcending national, religious and cultural boundaries. In this regard, we truly appreciate your efforts in bringing different cultures together through your network of innovative international activities, collaborations and partnerships. As a member university, we are proud of SUN's achievements, and wish to work together with other partner universities to promote world peace and harmony. We would like to send all our best wishes for a successful celebration.

University of Malaya, Malaysia

Mohd. Hamdi Abd. Shukor *Vice-Chancellor*



Warm greetings from Universiti Malaya. I extend my heartiest congratulations to you and everyone at the Silk-road Universities Network on the 5th anniversary of the establishment of SUN. Universiti Malaya has been a member of SUN since 2016 and we are proud to be part of this esteemed network together with 75 universities from all over the world. The diversity of activities offered by SUN have benefited not only our researchers and academic staff but also our students. Despite the unprecedented challenges the higher education sector is facing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain committed to continue our engagements and collaborations with SUN as well as member universities within the SUN network. On behalf of Universiti Malaya, please accept our most sincere congratulations once again to SUN and wish you every success in the future.

University of Valencia, Spain

Carlos Padilla Carmona

Vice-rector for Internationalization and Cooperation



On behalf of the University of Valencia I would like to extend our heartiest congratulations to SUN for completing 5 years of continuous successful activity. Since the University of Valencia joined the network in 2016 and after your valued visit, our institution has been fully committed to not only sharing our experience but also learning from the expertise of its members.

Your commitment and dedication as SUN Secretary General during these years have made SUN activities and initiatives spread widely, especially during these difficult times, where the participation of its members has given good proof of their tight and strong relationships. It will be a great honour for our University to join the 6th General Assembly and celebrate with all our valuable partners this major milestone. Wishing you all the success for many more years to come and hoping to continue our fruitful cooperation.

Moscow State Linguistic University, Russia

Irina Kraeva *Rector*



I have pleasure in sending you my warmest congratulations on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of SUN. Your invaluable contribution to peaceful coexistence and collective prosperity through education and training cannot be overestimated.

MSLU is honoured to be a member university of SUN as well as to have hosted the Annual International Academic Conference on "Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Languages, and Ideas" in Moscow, Russia.

I send best wishes for all those concerned and hope for even a brighter future together with SUN.

Ural Federal University, Russia

Victor Koksharov *Rector*



B.N. Yeltsin and my own behalf let me express sincere congratulations to the 5th anniversary of Silk-Road Universities Network.

We highly appreciate your activity in establishing business and friendly relations between our university and the Organization of SUN and we hope for further fruitful cooperation with all the members according to great mission and aims of SUN.

We wish Silk-Road Universities Network prosperity and more great years to come.

National University of Mongolia, Mongolia

B. Ochirkhuyag *President*



It is my great pleasure to congratulate all of you on 5th Anniversary of SUN and express my deep appreciation for all of member universities for your continued collaboration and I hope we would promote the partnership more extensively in the future.

It is undoubtedly true that today's fast changing world urges universities to serve more for the benefits of society by acting together as an engine for the national and regional economic growth, providing highly skilled knowledge work force and demonstrating research impact, producing social equity and responding to global problems while taking our traditional responsibilities.

Therefore, we sincerely hope that we will successfully and ambitiously cooperate and clarify our visions, redefine our responsibilities, and strengthen our regional collaborations.

A continued cooperation with SUN would give a good opportunity to share a knowledge, enhance academic and culture exchange of academic faculties and students with foreign universities and provide young generation with opportunities to mature, develop, build up their talents, acquire living skills and understanding a different culture.

At the end of my message, I wish a good health and well-being to all and big success for the future collaboration.

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran

Hossein Salimi *President*



I am pleased to congratulate the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Silk Road University Network (SUN). During the last five years, Allameh Tabataba'i University has had the honor to take part in the organization of numerous academic and cultural activities within the SUN framework. Year after year, we are witnessing the increasing maturity of the network and I am confident that there are even much brighter days ahead of all its members. I really hope SUN shines ever more and we will be able to meet soon in our next events.

Past five years with SUN and its critical tasks in the next five years

Sungdon Hwang

Professor at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Five years have passed since the birth of SUN in 2015. SUN has carried out diverse projects and programs in conjunction with many people and member universities located along the land and maritime Silk Roads during the last five years. "ACE" is the term to classify and summarize key characteristics of the SUN projects and programs. "A" stands for academic activities, "C" cultural activities and "E" expeditions of the sites of the Silk Road civilizations.

My experience of handling all of these activities as the Secretary General of SUN for the last five years was filled with moments of encountering amazingly wonderful people and events. Recalling them is like to watch a panorama of wish and hope, commitment, concern and suspense, joyful wonder and heart-moving learning, a sense of being relieved even by small pieces of achievement and feelings of being recharged by them, and taking a new step toward the next stop in the long journey of developing SUN. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all who have enabled me to have such wonderful experiences and whatever little achievement I have made. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. It is my sincere and strong wish



that, while carrying on with the programs and projects SUN has been carrying out successfully for the last five years, I can achieve at least the following four tasks in the forthcoming five years:

First, the membership of SUN should grow in number and geographical representation across the Silk Roads. One fact in point is that SUN does not have a single university or research institute in Africa. It is a historical fact that the Silk Roads extended to the African continent. Therefore, it is an important task for SUN to invite African universities and research institutes as new members. I hope you will help me accomplish this task as soon as possible.

Second, SUN should be able to help member institutions cope with the uncertainties and fundamental changes set off by the 4th industrial revolution and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Conventional ways of higher education are to wither away due to the prevalence of “new normals” forced upon by the new global phenomena. Online education, cyber universities, education about and with A.I., and big data technologies are no longer auxiliary options. We have already entered the era in which they have emerged as a game changer in higher education and have become must-haves for all including even the most prestigious ones.

An interesting point in this revolutionary change is that convergence of sufficient amount of and diverse knowledge and skills, information and data about the cases of practices are the most important prerequisite for successful solutions in the fields of A.I. and big data management. The convergence breaks the long-held borders between academic disciplines such as natural sciences & engineering, social sciences, and humanities. Here lies in the value of collaboration among universities and research institutes. If they collaborate

with each other in a smart way for this purpose, then they can sweep the new game of education as the most prestigious world class winner. SUN has already established a network of more than 80 universities and research institutes which are diverse enough in culture and geography that spans from Europe to Asia and in the academic disciplines.

Genuine collaboration is not possible without accumulation of trust. Trust can be accumulated after a long period of interactions and mutual understandings. My observation of member institutions of SUN for the last five years is that trust among them is quite robust and that all the necessary conditions for successful collaboration of the alliance have already been in readiness. As Secretary General of SUN, I feel a deep sense of responsibility for initiating a project which I would like to call “the Project to Develop the Silk Road Network University (SRNU).” The core element of the envisaged university is an online international network university focused upon A.I. and big data management with the most diverse partner universities and research institutes in the world. It may well be run jointly by member universities and research institutes of SUN participating with strong commitment and willingness to collaborate and cooperate with other participants.

Third, the project to recognize the Silk Road heritage was authorized as an official project of SUN to start from 2020 unanimously by the participants in the 5th General Assembly of SUN held at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2019. The project did not proceed, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is so relevant to the mission of SUN and critical to enhancing the global visibility and reputation of SUN that an

ad-hoc committee to discuss and prepare a detailed action through a series of online meetings should be named as soon as possible.

Finally, the institutionalization level of SUN must be further enhanced. In the last five years, efforts have been focused upon increasing the number of member institutions and networking them. In the forthcoming five years, however, SUN should rely more on systems of rules and procedures than on individuals. In addition, stable and sufficient financial sources should be embedded in the structure of SUN. Diverse types of membership and differentiation of membership fees adjusted by GDP may need to be introduced. Now the financial support from the South Korean provincial government of Gyeongsangbuk-do ceased one year earlier than its promise, and finding appropriate financial sponsors that can replace it is an urgent task at this moment. Changing the current principle of imposing no participation fee in the cultural contest programs and charging a fee may be considered as a plausible option. Diverse programs and projects that can serve as stable financial sources should be developed. A viable option may be co-hosting annual or biennial international conventions with governments and/or international organizations regarding diverse themes related to the Silk Roads such as tourism, agriculture, natural resources, science and technologies, trade and economic cooperation. Organizing a professional forum for those who are interested in trade and business along the Silk Roads may also provide an opportunity of financing for SUN. All these programs will of course help SUN not only secure new financial sources but also raise its profile as an international alliance of major universities on the Silk Roads.

I welcome any comments, suggestions, and advice regarding de-

velopment of SUN. I look forward to your continuous, active support for and participation in activities of SUN. Thank you and wish you to keep safe and healthy!

COVER STORY

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION ALONG THE SILK ROADS

Universities: How universities should change in pandemic



L.A. Lebedintseva



P.P. Deriugin

The immense impact of the pandemic on higher education was global in scale. Nonetheless, as far as we can determine, the majority of universities happened to be ready for pivoting all of their processes towards an online work regime, including the educational processes. All in all, the format of distance learning has more or less already been in practice for more than ten years. During that period, and up until today, universities have gone through three very uneven phases.

The first phase - before the pandemic happened - for the most part was a great deal of various and distinct online courses, often offered on prominent educational online platforms: Coursera, Open-edu, EdX, Harvard Open Courses, and others. Virtually every university had either their own online options or acquired outside interactive teaching systems. Thus, for instance, St. Petersburg State University was actively using Blackboard Learn - an app for interactive teaching, learning, community creation, and knowledge exchange.

However, in March 2020, the pandemic raised the bar for digitalization to previously unimaginable heights, and universities have taken up this challenge. Thus, during the second stage in March through June of 2020, all types of video communication tools were used, such as Skype, Zoom, Discord, etc. In essence, these are the platforms for online video conferences and video webinars that provide high-resolution images. They played an important role in connecting the teacher with students remotely, allowing for the presentations of lectures. However, these platforms are not designed for full online education. Having a short respite during the summer holidays, the universities adapted to move to a fully on-

line environment in Autumn 2020.

So, in September, began the third period, which involved the active use of the developed systems for full-fledged remote learning in the educational process. Not merely offering online courses, but the entire system of higher education moved into the online space. Internet platforms such as Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment), Microsoft Teams and others, such as free e-learning systems, began to be used. These are open web-applications, on the basis of which specialized platforms for the teaching and development of students were created. And if during September-October universities still were working in a mixed format, since November, with the beginning of the second-wave of the pandemic, the learning process again switched to an online format, but already in a completely different, more highly organizational quality.

Another facet of modern processes that the pandemic has affected is international cooperation in the field of higher education. Modern universities have already been actively involved in international cooperation for quite some time. So, what does it look like now? What is being done, or has already been done, to keep the broad networks of international contacts afloat at universities around the world? Recent studies by many international organizations, such as the International Institute for Educational Planning at UNESCO, the International Association of Universities, the Association of European Universities, and others, analyze the main aspects of university life that are affected in one way or another by COVID-19.

The teaching process

The infrastructure of many universities currently does not meet all the requirements for organizing online education. There is a decline in the quality of teaching and the unwillingness of a significant proportion of teachers to use digital tools and the opportunities for online learning. Importantly, not all scientific fields can be taught online - for instance, medicine, technical and creative specialties, and practical classes. Furthermore, students experience stress due to the fact that there is no possibility of personal communication with teachers, a fundamental change in the learning process, which requires additional psychological and social adaptation. In addition, among many other things, in many countries universities have canceled entrance examinations (particularly for bachelor's and master's degrees).

In an international context, most universities have strengthened their collaboration with each other, and with national education authorities, educational platforms, and international organizations, including:

- providing each other with methodological support on the use of digital tools in education,
- large national universities providing free access to developed educational courses, and
- increasing the number of programs provided for advanced training for online work.

Research

The fight against COVID-19 has become an area of widespread collaboration in research: many universities have designed the research programs to develop treatments for COVID-19. Major international organizations and universities are conducting joint research on the impact of the pandemic on the sphere of higher education, methods of combating COVID-19, and conducting expert discussions online. Nonetheless, universities are forced to abandon the conduct of much other scientific research because of their practical impossibility and in order to more efficiently use funds to support the learning process. Scheduled international scientific conferences are either postponed to a later date, or transferred to an online format, which does not contribute to strengthening and expanding scientific ties. However, virtual research networks are

being created to maintain communications. Universities also are looking for new forms of partnership and inter-university interactions, revising the organization of research projects as well as cooperation with business and other non-academic organizations, though those organizations are currently also trying to overcome the economic crisis, thus further complicating the practical training of students.

The international educational environment

Most universities are faced with the issues of organizing the educational process for foreign exchange students who remained during the pandemic in the country where they are receiving education or have already left for their homeland. Institutions are looking for new ways of attracting foreign students and organizing the educational process to accommodate them. The student and academic exchange programs have been almost completely suspended for an indefinite period. The forms of work with foreign partners in the development and implementation of joint educational programs, primarily at the master's level, have been revised.

Financing

Due to the fact that the number of foreign students and funding from the state may decrease, universities have focused on a more efficient use of financial resources to maintain their stable performance. There is also the challenge of increased financial stress on universities, as paid educational services may diminish due to a decrease in income in the general population and many organizations suspending research grants for scientific developments.

The structures of interaction that have been built for decades on-campus, in the country and internationally, are now being adjusted to the requirements of the new situation. However, the world may never be quite the same again, and it is necessary to discover and comprehend the prospects and advantages of the remote and online learning formats, of the interaction in the global educational market.

There are a number of challenges to educational internationalization, to the development of partnerships for the development and launch of joint educational programs (such as double or joint degrees), and to financing of research projects in which master students are involved, which today are relevant for most national

higher education systems. For many systems, the “export” of higher education via foreign students is not a small source of income in the national budget. Even skeptics deliberated: of course, they said, online would not replace traditional forms of higher education, but they agreed that the opportunities for the development of the same master's degree might become wider.

What are the answers to these challenges?

Due to the high sensitivity of higher education to the changes which have occurred, an appropriate response begins to form, based on quickly reacting and making management decisions which “bypass” traditional bureaucratic procedures. In particular:

1. The challenge to the universities in the task of effective teaching and ensuring the quality of students' knowledge requires the active participation of universities in the development of adequate regulatory and organizational measures for conducting entrance exams and state attestation online, for organizing the work and remuneration of teachers, and for maintaining high quality interaction between students and teachers.

2. In the area of internationalization, universities are developing strategies and making tactical decisions to help foreign students who find themselves in the country during a pandemic; such institutions also should participate in the development of additional legislative/regulatory measures allowing foreign students both to leave and to come to study.

Confronting the reduction of foreign students, many universities are thinking about virtual mobility as an alternative. Universities are developing strategies for virtual mobility, preparing teachers to work with students in a digital environment, using already created virtual mobility platforms or developing their own. Online Master's programs are becoming an increasingly common form of internationalization. The question of what forms and instruments of virtual mobility will be adequate to the emerging situation will be especially acute in the months and years ahead.

Liubov Lebedintseva is an associate professor at the Faculty of Sociology of St. Petersburg State University. Pavel Deriugin is a professor at the Department of Applied and Sectoral Sociology at the Faculty of Sociology, St. Petersburg State University.

Report on Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education



Greece

University: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Author: Helen Baxevanidou, Head of the International Relations Department

Country Report:

Please answer the following questions on the impacts of COVID-19 on your country.

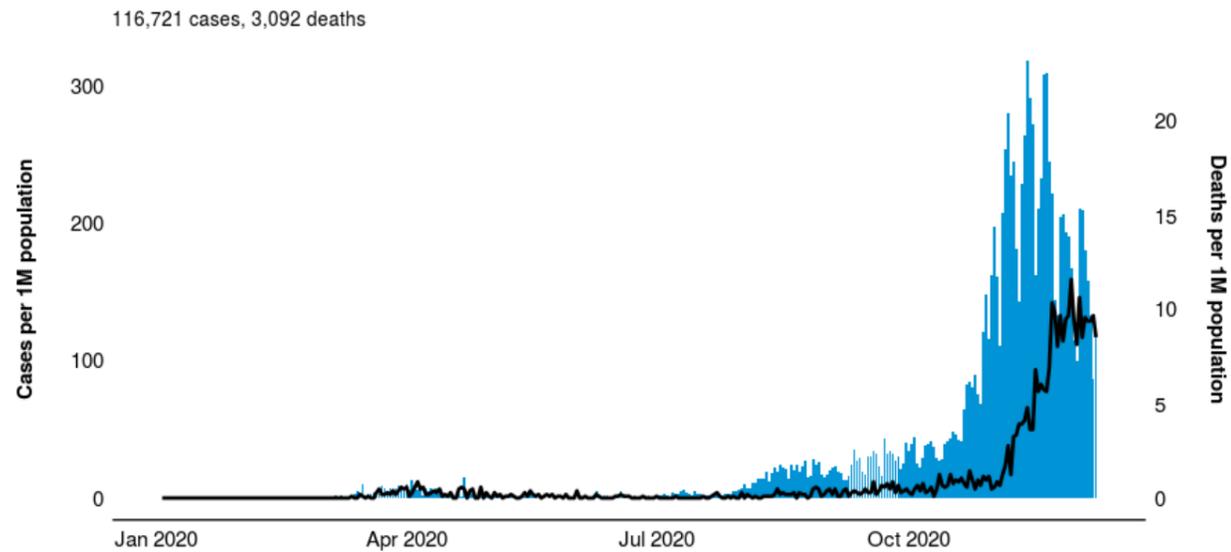
1. When was the 1st case of COVID-19 reported in your country?

Date: February 26, 2020

Infection origin & route: From Italy to Greece

2. Please provide a graph or a table showing the occurrence tendency of COVID-19 in your country from the date of the first reported case to the latest available date.

3. How did the education in your country have been affected by COVID-19 and what were the actions taken by the government and education authorities to cope with the problem?



New Cases by date in Greece
 source: <https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/covid/>

- On 10 March, with 89 confirmed cases and no deaths in the country, the government decided to suspend the operation of educational institutions of all levels nationwide.
- All congresses, conferences, educational meetings, clinical practice for medical students etc. were postponed and all courses were provided on-line.
- Starting from 4 May, after a 42-day lockdown, Greece began to gradually lift restrictions on movement and to restart business activity.
- Schools reopened on 14 September, subject to fulfilling a list of 16 conditions notably concerning hygiene measures, break times, school trips and activities. Universities still provide mainly online courses. Social distancing and masks are mandatory for the few courses provided on campus.

University Report:

Please answer the following questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on your university.

1. What were the major challenges your university faced in connection with COVID-19? How did the university cope with the challenges?

The most serious challenge was to ensure a fair and credible process for the online exams of the students, in which all of them could have access. The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki re-

sponded effectively, with the appropriate applications and arrangements through its IT Center.

2. How do you think the role of universities should change in the awake of COVID-19?

Universities should try to maintain their engagement with the students, to mobilize them and to generate a sense of community and collaboration, even if the classes are not provided in campus. They need to find solutions to avoid an incline in the quality of education they are providing.

3. In your opinion, what kind of innovation the education industry needs in the era of Post-COVID-19?

- Very good IT services for admissions, on-line courses and exams
- Virtual libraries
- Virtual life- learning courses

4. Could you suggest what would be the most promising jobs for university students in the era of post-COVID-19? And what are the things students have to prepare?

Informatics, health related professions, engineering, but also teaching (if we want to invest to our children and therefore to our future) and agriculture, which should always be the basis of our economies.

It is important for our students to be digitally literate in order to cope with and progress in a more social distanced and digitalized world.



Greece

University: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Author: Dr. Maria Vardaki, European and International Relations Department

Country Report:

Please answer the following questions on the impacts of COVID-19 on your country.

1. When was the 1st case of COVID-19 reported in your country?

Date: February 26, 2020

Infection origin & route: The first case in Greece was confirmed on 26 February 2020 when a 38-year-old woman from Thessaloniki who had recently visited Northern Italy, was confirmed to be infected. Subsequent cases in late February and early March related to people who had travelled to Italy and a group of pilgrims who

had travelled to Israel and Egypt, as well as their contacts. The first death from COVID-19 in Greece was a 66-year-old man, who died on 12 March.

2. Please provide a graph or a table showing the occurrence tendency of COVID-19 in your country from the date of the first reported case to the latest available date.

3. How did the education in your country have been affected by COVID-19 and what were the actions taken by the government and education authorities to cope with the problem?

Greece has met the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic efficiently. Authorities have not only taken all the necessary measures to contain the spread of the virus, but they have also excelled in superb communication management since day one, building social trust and persuading citizens to embrace the imposed measures.

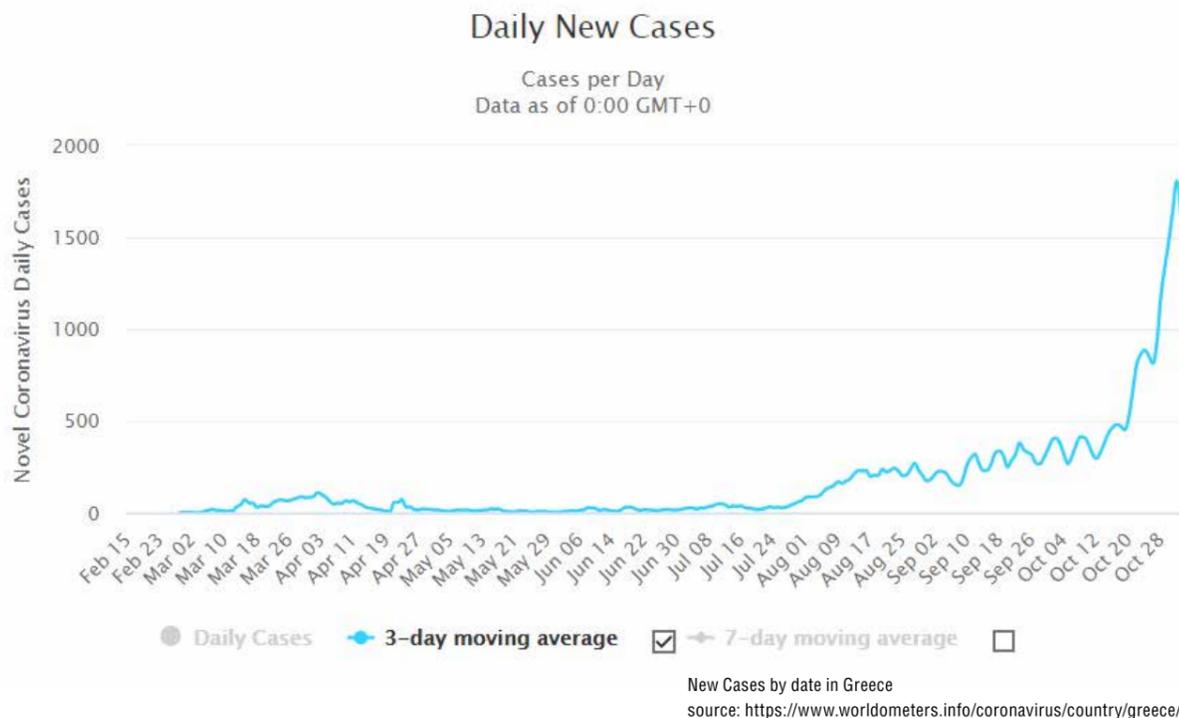
On 10 March, with 89 confirmed cases and no deaths in the country, the government, in cooperation with the Greek National Public Health Organisation, decided to suspend the operation of education institutions at all levels nationwide. As a response to the challenge imposed by school closures, the education ministry launched digital tools enabling distance learning and a specific web portal providing information for education and training programmes at all levels.

Priority was given to the implementation of distance learning in the last year of upper secondary education programmes. However, all learners in primary, secondary (including VET), post-secondary and tertiary education had access to distance learning. Learners at post-secondary vocational training programmes could follow 95% of the courses in this way.

Supporting learners, teachers and trainers

In the two-month period of the lockdown, teachers and trainers were supported both technically by the central technical team based at the education ministry and pedagogically through short-term training sessions in digital skills.

All schools (including VET) nationwide were swiftly provided with tablets and laptops by the education ministry; the initiative was supported by European funds and private donations. This equipment is used by teachers and learners to ease the implemen-



tation of distance learning. In the long term it will also contribute in enhancing learners' digital skills. Priority was given to supporting low-income families, unemployed parents, single families, families with three children, families with many children or orphaned families, learners with special needs or excellent achievements. The equipment was distributed according to the number of learners and the existing technological equipment at each school; the specific number of tablets and laptops was subject to the total amount of donations.

Masks were provided to each student.

This unforeseen situation has triggered cooperation between the public and the private to support the education system and equip Greek youth with the necessary digital skills for the 21st century. Based on the most recent data, broadband cover reaches 99.9% of households and 4G mobile network coverage reaches 97%. The vast majority of families with children have, at least, one smart phone and computer; they also have unlimited data connection to the internet. The Greek Government also gave access to digital classrooms via landline telephones, at minimal charge. Discussions were held with internet providers to provide further support to distance learning.

Modern distance learning: synchronous

According to education ministry data, participation in distance learning was significant, with the number of learners views rising by 70% on average per day. More than 112 000 teachers have managed hundreds of thousands of hours of live broadcasting in digital classes with over 1 096 311 learner views. The number of online courses per day peaked at approximately 41 000; in total there were almost 10 000 000 participations by learners in online courses. Priority was given to learners in the last year of upper secondary education, who are candidates for the nationwide university entry exams. All necessary measures were taken to enable them to attend online courses via livestreaming, aiming to achieve 100% participation.

Asynchronous learning

Almost 1,200,000 learners and 200,000 teachers have registered at the Panhellenic school network and are using asynchronous distance learning platforms. Networks are constantly being upgraded

to respond to the extremely high demand from both learners and teachers. From the beginning, all schools have been included in asynchronous distance learning. The education ministry's platforms (Panhellenic school network, E- class, E-ME) and web portals providing digital education material (Photodendro, Aisopus, E-Books) are constantly being upgraded.

Educational television

Broadcasts of educational television for primary school pupils started on 30 March 2020 and on the first day 51.2% of children in the age group 4-14 (more than 141 000) watched them. Data show that educational television programmes have been watched, if only for a minimal time, by 588 313 viewers.

Public post-secondary VET institutes (IEK)

In less than a week after face-to-face learning was suspended (10 March 2020) 114 of the 124 public IEK launched or set up asynchronous teaching platforms and started broadcasting synchronous distance learning.

Universities/ tertiary education institutions

A significant number of courses in each department of tertiary education institution is in place, combining existing asynchronous teaching platforms with synchronous distance learning.

University Report:

Please answer the following questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on your university.

1. What were the major challenges your university faced in connection with COVID-19? How did the university cope with the challenges?

The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens was about to launch the first undergraduate English program at a Greek University, which was designed especially for international students, the "BA PROGRAM IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY, AND LITERATURE OF ANCIENT GREECE". The pandemic reduced the number of applications, students who had already applied and paid tuition fees were unable to obtain a student visa on time and, in specific cases, due to measures they could not travel to our country. Some of them had to be shifted to on-line courses until circumstances

allowed them to travel to Greece. The program offers a unique opportunity to study the culture of ancient Greece while acquiring first-hand knowledge of some of Greece's most important archaeological monuments and sites, such as the Athenian Acropolis and the Parthenon, Delphi and Olympia; but all such education trips have unfortunately to be postponed and will be organized after the pandemic measures.

Greek Government Health Experts' Commission consists mainly of NKUA professors of School of Medicine.

Our University has published instructions for the early diagnosis and management of covid19 cases in the University:

https://en.uoa.gr/announcements_and_events/view_announcement/instructions_for_the_early_diagnosis_and_management_of_covid_19_cases_in_the_nkua/

The three University hospitals have been assigned to treat any such case.

The Microbiology Laboratory of the NKUA was one of the main centers for covid tests processing in Greece.

The University has implemented an enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocol as an element of the University's COVID-19 Prevention Plan with the goal of ensuring a healthy and safe campus. Masks and antiseptic were distributed to the academic community. Both diagnostic (RT-PCR) covid tests as well as antibody tests are regularly being taken at specific areas of the University campuses.

Antibody treatment research project has been initiated at the University (coordinated by academics from Medicine, Chemistry and Biology Departments) with a sample of 5,000 volunteers examined

Hotline for case assistance but also for psychological support was created immediately.

Our Departments of primary education/education/psychology have released guidelines for schools, teachers, pupils and parents.

All meetings and conferences have been held via teleconference. All courses have been shifted remotely. 65,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students of the NKUA had to start being trained remotely in just couple of days. Erasmus and international students also virtually participate in our courses. Laboratory experiments could still be held with a minimum number of students according to the governmental guidelines.

All personnel have been trained to use e-class platform requirements, electronic protocol, skype for business, Cisco Webex Meetings, zoom, GoogleMeet etc. Laptops were given to personnel working from home.

Everyday NKUA Rector, M.-A. Dimopoulos, who is Professor of Medicine, together with other faculty members of the School of Medicine resume scientific advancements regarding Covid19, possible implications on people with specific health conditions, necessary measures to be taken, etc. and send them to the academic community (these can be found in Greek in <https://mdimop.gr/covid19/>). Accordingly, we inform foreign students by email in English.

2. How do you think the role of universities should change in the awake of COVID-19?

What we know today is that higher education, both domestically and internationally, has been disrupted. Forecasts for the long-shadow implications of COVID-19 range from a five-year disruption to one of six months.

Forecasts predict anywhere from a 15% to 25% decline in enrolment, depending in which part of the world the calculations are made. (It took higher education two years to recover from the impact of the SARS epidemic). It is also an opportunity for the Universities to develop distance-learning courses and probably the future is towards remote education.

It is also high time to create year-long recruitment programmes for both domestic and international students. We consider the challenges of a partial virtual recruitment and admissions system and a with effective and efficient methods of communicating with applicants and their parents and promote the University remotely.

3. In your opinion, what kind of innovation the education industry needs in the era of Post-COVID-19?

The need for more extroversion and internationalization, revision of internationalization strategy and strengthen collaborations between institutions is now perhaps more important than ever. The challenges we face cannot be solved by one person or one nation alone; but we need to stand together. Especially these past few months, the coronavirus epidemic has been a powerful reminder of just how connected we are to one another - and how our choices

today determine our options tomorrow.

4. Could you suggest what would be the most promising jobs for university students in the era of post-COVID-19? And what are the things students have to prepare?

Since the economy is not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels until the second half of 2023, digital jobs seem to be of high demand. Positions in cybersecurity, cloud computing and IT auditing, digital marketing, content marketing, full-stack web development, machine learning, and UX Design can be the future professions. Also, any kind of hardware and networking providers and platform support specialists. During the job crash of April, when just about every industry shed jobs, hiring according to LinkedIn rose a remarkable 2.3% for semiconductor makers, internet service providers, wireless firms and makers of networking gear. It also seems that caregivers and psychologists will be of high demand.

Finally, we should not forget that in difficult economic times, people turn to university continuing education. In every recession since the 1960's, the response has been the same: when labour market opportunities are scarce, workers look for education alternatives to increase their earning potential. One of the most important factors for these workers is that the program is tied to jobs. The research also shows that higher-skilled graduates are more recession-proof.



Malaysia

University: University of Malaya

Author: International Relations Office, University of Malaya

Country Report:

Please answer the following questions on the impacts of COVID-19 on your country.

1. When was the 1st case of COVID-19 reported in your country?

Date: 25 January 2020

Infection origin & route: Covid-19 was first detected in Malaysia on 25th January 2020 among three Chinese nationals who entered Malaysia through Singapore and had close contact with an infected person in Singapore.

Date: 4 February 2020

Infection origin & route: On the 4th February, the first Malaysian tested positive for COVID-19. The 41-year old man had a history of travel to Singapore for a business meeting, which was also attended by a delegation from China.

Date: 11 March 2020

Infection origin & route: Malaysia confirmed its first sporadic case of Covid-19 on 11th March, signaling the first time the coronavirus was detected in an isolated and random manner in the community. A sporadic case means that the infected person did not have any travel history to the affected countries or contact with an infected person.

Date: 17 March 2020

Infection origin & route: Malaysia recorded its first two fatalities

in the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic on 17th March, a case related to the religious gathering in Seri Petaling, Kuala Lumpur and another death was reported in Sarawak.

Date: 18 March – 3 May

4 May – 9 June

10 June – 8 Nov

9 Nov – 6 Dec

Infection origin & route: The number of positive cases increased beyond 553 cases on the 16th March and the Prime Minister of Malaysia announced a Movement Control Order (MCO) that begun on 18 March to curb the spread of Covid-19 until 3rd May. A Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) was implemented on 4th May until 9th June and Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) was implemented on 10th June until 8th November. Given a sharp increase in cases, CMCO was reinstated on 9th November 2020 throughout Peninsular Malaysia except in 3 states, to curb the increasing number of cases in Malaysia.

2. Please provide a graph or a table showing the occurrence tendency of COVID-19 in your country from the date of the first reported case to the latest available date.

- Total number of confirmed cases is 53,679 (as of 21 November 2020).
- Malaysia is in the third wave of Covid-19 pandemic and the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) was reinstated on 9th November 2020 across all but three states in Peninsular Malaysia for four weeks until 6 December 2020.
- Under the CMCO, education institutions are closed and no social activities are allowed. However, economic activities can operate as usual according to the set standard operation procedures.

3. How did the education in your country have been affected by COVID-19 and what were the actions taken by the government and education authorities to cope with the problem?

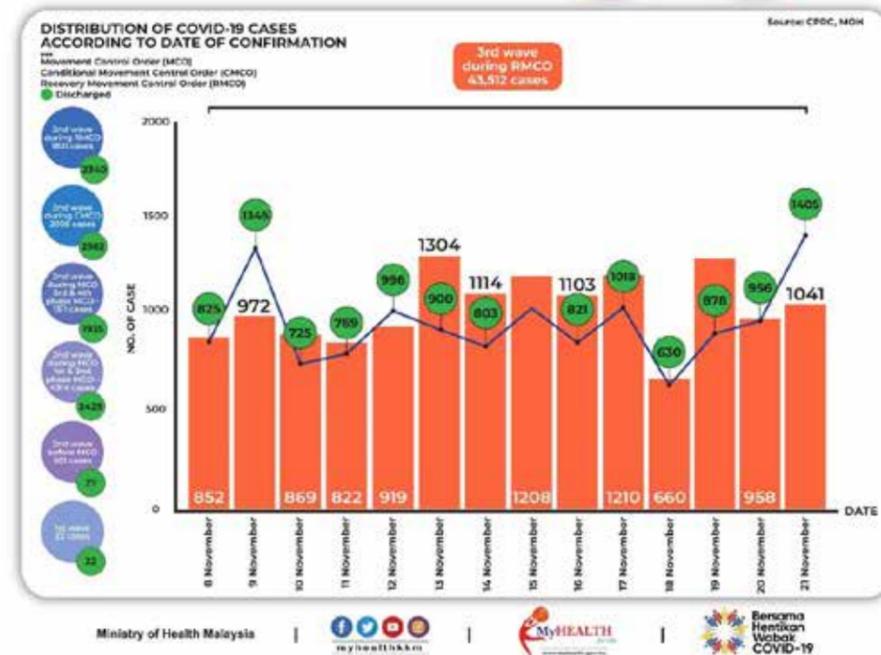
In Malaysia, when the Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented from 18th March until 3rd May, the government imposed six (6) restrictions including closure of the education sector:

- Kindergartens, government, and private schools including daily schools, boarding schools, international schools, tahfiz centers, and other primary, secondary and pre-university institutions were all

COVID-19 IN MALAYSIA

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

as of 21st November 2020, 12 pm



source: <http://covid-19.moh.gov.my/terkini/112020/situasi-terkini-21-november-2020>

closed.

- Public and higher education institutions and skill training institutes nationwide were also closed.

School nationwide were reopened in stages during the RMCO starting 15th July. Meanwhile, for universities, all teaching and learning (T&L) activities continued to be conducted fully online until the end of this year.

The government announced the cancellation of Standard Six's Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) and Form Three Assessment (PT3) examinations, amid the Covid-19 pandemic this year. All major public examinations such as Malaysian Certificate (SPM)

and Malaysian Higher Education Certificate (STPM) were postponed until next year.

To reflect the postponement, Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has agreed to postpone the admission date for higher education institutes for foundation, matriculation and diploma programmes to between July and August 2021, while admission for degree programmes will be delayed to September or October 2021.

The third wave of Covid-19 in Malaysia, which started in early October, has once again forced the government to close schools nationwide until 17th December 2020, traditionally the last day of the school year. Throughout the closure, home-based learning is continued. The 2021 school term will begin on 20th January in stages as well.

University Report:

Please answer the following questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on your university.

1. What were the major challenges your university faced in connection with COVID-19? How did the university cope with the challenges?

1) A shift in Teaching and Learning (T&L) delivery

- As in many countries worldwide, Covid-19 pandemic has forced universities in Malaysia to close in March 2020.
- Since then, UM has implemented fully online T&L via UM's learning management system – Student Powered e-Collaboration Transforming UM (SPecTRUM) and other available digital platform and this online learning will continue until end of this year.
- Though we are prepared in terms of equipment and system as well as the readiness of faculty members, we had challenges with students' connectivity and the availability of devices.
- Students who were located in remote areas did not have conducive environment for online learning or adequate/suitable space in their homes to work in as well as access to stable internet connection.
- Notwithstanding these challenges, in general, the online T&L went well and students were receptive to it. Our attendance rate went up and the learning process was more personalised even though faculty members had to put in extra hours to handle various queries from students.

- This experience has also helped the university to achieve 100% blended learning in terms of courses offered as compared to a 60% rate prior to this.

- To assist our academic staff in implementing online T&L effectively, UM produced a comprehensive Online T&L Guideline, 1st edition released in April and second edition recently.

2) Internationalisation

- Impact on international student enrolment

- For students who plan to enroll in full-time programmes, online learning may not be as attractive as face-to-face classes, as international students usually look forward to the additional advantages of studying on campus versus virtual learning.

- We hope to see a better enrollment next year as far as foreign students are concerned, and hope that by that time, effective vaccines will have been discovered.

- In terms of postgraduates, they are back on campus and to some extent may be less affected compared to the undergraduate programmes.

- Mobility programme (inbound & outbound)

- UM has quite a large annual mobility programme. Every year, we welcome about 2,500 students who undertake mobility programmes at our campus.

- Nevertheless, while one could undertake a virtual mobility programme, it will not be the same as being on campus because the students look forward to feeling and experiencing what being in Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia is like.

- However, we have planned for online activities such as the Virtual International Day and webinars.

- We have also implemented virtual mobility, whereby students attend the online exchange programme remotely from their home country, either for the short or long-term exchanges.

- Partnerships

- While Malaysia's border remain closed, online meeting is an alternative way to connect and stay in touch with our partners all around the world.

- One of the advantages of online meeting is the extra time that can be afforded into discussing post-pandemic activities due to time

travel saved.

- Many of us also participated in webinars organised by various international organizations to share experiences, exchange ideas and best practices.

3) Remote working

- Working from home is another new norm. The third wave of Covid-19 in Malaysia which started in early October has once again forced us to implement working from home arrangement with flexible working hours.
- The presence of staff working on-site on rotation basis is to ensure that SOPs are adhered to.

2. How do you think the role of universities should change in the awake of COVID-19?

Change of focus – from one-size-fits-all “factory” curriculum (and workforce planning) to personalized, student-driven flexible education where students and lecturers can co-create.

Shifts in universities’ core identity:

- Shifts in university’s identity as degree-granting institutions
- Universities as one-step centres, niche providers, or life-long learning (as opposed to current notions of universities as “tertiary” educational institutions)
- Universities can offer the micro-credentialing for upskilling and reskilling programmes as a response to address the needs to prepare skillful or upskilling workforce for the future.

Notions of “conventional learning”

- With the current situation, online and remote learning will be the new “convention”.
- Meanwhile, physical on-site learning may be viewed as additional “value added” or even as an experiential alternative form of learning delivery.

Shifts in notion of a university “campus

- Distance learners/students may have little appreciation/use of physical on-site campus facilities and services. But they will expect universities to offer great user-interface and online functionalities, i.e. a virtual campus.
- But geographically nearby online learners may demand state-of-

the-art facilities and learning/co-working spaces.

- Some distance learners may also wish to travel and visit a physical campus for the “feel” at some point of their study.

Mindset change – from linear and fixed outcome-driven Teaching & Learning (T&L) to flexible and responsive agile T&L.

3. In your opinion, what kind of innovation the education industry needs in the era of Post-COVID-19?

Hybrid/blended teaching and learning (T&L)

- Hybrid/blended will be a new trend in education sector as a response to Covid-19 pandemic.
- Online learning will be more personalised and student-centred. However, there are certain areas, which cannot be done online, for example imparting values and developing certain attributes that require face-to-face interaction.
- At the postgraduate level, specifically in the sciences, we cannot completely abandon experimental lab and studio work.
- In this current situation, hybrid/blended T&L will be the best option.

Infostructure

- Infostructure is the technical infrastructure supporting an information system. The information technology infrastructure usually comprised of hardware, network, applications, etc. The design of an information resource, such as a website, needs to be seamless to facilitate the ease of effective navigation.
- There is a need to have a comprehensive infostructure as we move into hybrid/blended T&L.

Digital/Online Infrastructure

- In future, university development projects will focus more on online/digital infrastructure versus traditional physical facilities.
- As more T&L and research activities move online into the virtual sphere, there will be more possibilities of collaboration between institutions in terms of sharing/co-use arrangements of physical facilities.

Sharing of Online Courses

- Open up classes to students from partner universities for selected topics that are not available in the student's own university or in cases when there is no such expertise at their universities

4. Could you suggest what would be the most promising jobs for university students in the era of post-COVID-19? And what are the things students have to prepare?

Soft-skill-intensive occupations will account for two-thirds of all jobs by 2030, according to a recent report by Deloitte Access Economics. Therefore, developing and enhancing these attributes are key. To start a new career in the competitive job market, among the essential job skills that students need to thrive in a post-Covid-19 landscape are:

- Technology savviness - emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), big data, Internet of Things (IoT), and robotics are set for our near future. Therefore, knowledge of data literacy in these fields will be very useful to students.
- Flexibility and adaptability to change – being flexible and adaptable to new norm such as working from home.
- Customer service skills – the role of customer service specialist might be one of top entry-level jobs right now.
- Emotional Intelligence (EQ) – good EQ such as empathy will help students to navigate through the uncertainty of this crisis.
- Communication skills – are even more important as Covid-19 has led to a dramatic increase in employees working remotely and good communication skills is crucial to avoid miscommunication.
 - Leadership skills - being able to project clarity and self-confidence, amid stressful and uncertain circumstances is quickly becoming table stakes in our new world of work.

A recent survey, 2020/2021 Malaysia Salary Guide which was released by staffing specialist Kelly Services Malaysia has found that jobs in Information Technology (IT) and Digital Sales and Marketing will be highly in demand as Malaysia eventually emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, given that these jobs capitalise on remote working opportunities and changing consumer habits.



Mongolia

University: National University of Mongolia

Author: Mrs. Sh. Mendbayar, Head of Department of Cooperation

Country Report:

Please answer the following questions on the impacts of COVID-19 on your country.

1. When was the 1st case of COVID-19 reported in your country?

Date: March 10, 2020

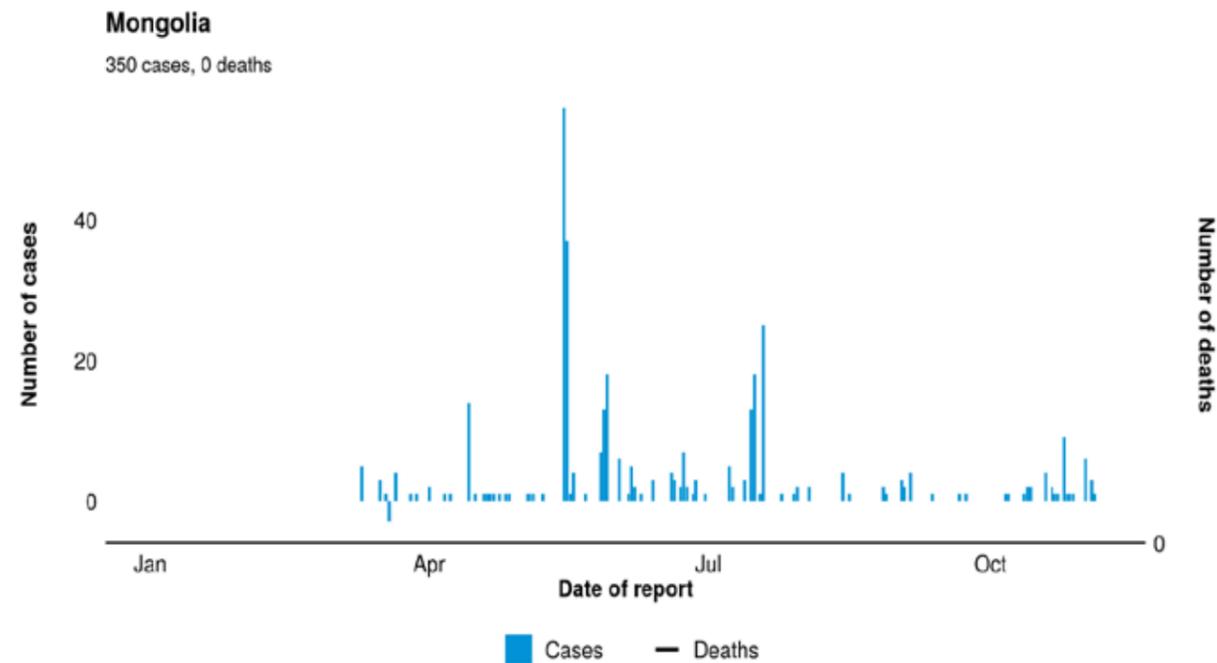
Infection origin & route: First imported case was reported. It was a French citizen who took a flight Moscow-Ulaanbaatar on March 2nd, 2020

2. Please provide a graph or a table showing the occurrence tendency of COVID-19 in your country from the date of the first reported case to the latest available date.

3. How did the education in your country have been affected by COVID-19 and what were the actions taken by the government and education authorities to cope with the problem?

As a preventative measure to protect its citizens from this risk, the Government of Mongolia has suspended all educational deliveries and facilities starting from 26 January 2020. Meanwhile, in order to continue the studies of the students, the Government has prepared online courses and tele-lessons in several languages such as Mongolian, Kazakh, Tuvan and sign language which are available to the students, their parents, and teachers and are being delivered on 16 different television channels with a fixed daily.

Since the school closure, 480 online courses and 206 textbooks have been uploaded to educational website (www.econtent.edu.mn) and so far have reached more than 100,000 overlapping users.



Source: <https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/covid/>

Mongolia has recorded no deaths from the virus, 346 imported cases and no local transmission.

Source: <https://www.who.int/mongolia/news/detail/02-11-2020-sharing-covid-19-experiences-the-mongolian-response>

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports of Mongolia has taken immediate actions to distribute the necessary education budget in the current emerging situation.

As a result of the above-mentioned preventative measures and immediate actions taken by the Government, the emerging cases of the virus are comparatively less.

Source: <https://en.unesco.org/news/>

[mongolia-students-embarked-remote-learning-response-covid-19](https://en.unesco.org/news/mongolia-students-embarked-remote-learning-response-covid-19)

For the Universities, each of them worked out own online studies that was bit challenging at the beginning stage. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, instructors and professors at National University of Mongolia (NUM), voluntarily shifted some portion of their course loads to online version. NUM took several steps to introduce online learning into the teaching activities. In 2012, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) of NUM took two courses from MIT on edX.org as SPOCs and offered as selective courses to junior and senior year students. In 2015, SEAS implemented flipped classroom version of 7 undergraduate compulsory courses and conducted on domesticated Open edX system. Also, NUM evaluated

e-learning readiness of students in 2016 and implemented two undergraduate engineering courses as MOOCs.

Every member of the university was involved to overcome the current situation in faculty and administration level. Since February 2020, all courses of NUM are delivering online using SISI (NUM's internal information system), Microsoft Teams, Open edX, and Google Classroom.

University Report:

Please answer the following questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on your university.

1. What were the major challenges your university faced in connection with COVID-19? How did the university cope with the challenges?

- The main challenge is capacity of student access. Due to COVID-19 situation, students went back to their home town. Some of students who live in rural areas of Mongolia doesn't have an Internet connection at home, where Internet access penetration is relatively different in different parts of the country. As internet access was expensive for the students National University of Mongolia requested the major mobile phone operators to launch cheap internet service and it worked successfully. "Mobicom", "UNITEL" and Gmobile corporations issued a low-cost internet application service for the students.

- As different event and ceremonies were prohibited entire the country the National University of Mongolia has sent the graduation diplomas to the private address of the students who graduated from the university in 2019-2020 academic year. National University of Mongolia made a Contract with Mongolian National Postal office and sent to the 2745 students at affordable cost.

2. How do you think the role of universities should change in the awake of COVID-19?

Role of the universities in the awake of COVID-19 is very important to distribute the information about current condition of COVID-19, improve the online contents and develop different application etc. For our universities we took following actions:

- Researchers and students of Department of computer sciences of the National University of Mongolia developed a website <https://>

tunkhag.mn/ to inform all the information about COVID-19 and related prevention activities not only in Mongolia but worldwide.

- Also, students and faculty members of multimedia laboratory of the National University developed a virtual fine arts museum Zanabazar to promote the culture and art thorough online.

- Faculty members and researchers of computer sciences and multimedia of the National University of Mongolia jointly with UN office in Mongolia and Mongolian Ministry of Education organized lectures for secondary school teachers in order to improve the quality of online subjects in August, 2020.

<https://news.num.edu.mn/?p=80749>

3. In your opinion, what kind of innovation the education industry needs in the era of Post-COVID-19?

- Different online contents for teaching, international events as conference, development of digital arts, new methods of online shopping, improvement of different delivery services for the restaurants or coffeehouse, eGovernment system etc.

4. Could you suggest what would be the most promising jobs for university students in the era of post-COVID-19? And what are the things students have to prepare?

- Psychologist/ IT specialist/ Marketing manager/ Social worker/ Design and Art



Portugal

University: University of Coimbra

Author: João Nuno Calvão da Silva, Vice-Rector for External Relations and Alumni

Country Report:

Please answer the following questions on the impacts of COVID-19 on your country.

1. When was the 1st case of COVID-19 reported in your country?

Date: March 2, 2020

Infection origin & route: First cases reported in the Northern region on Portugal (Oporto), with infection origin in Italy and Spain (travel associated with the Carnival holiday).

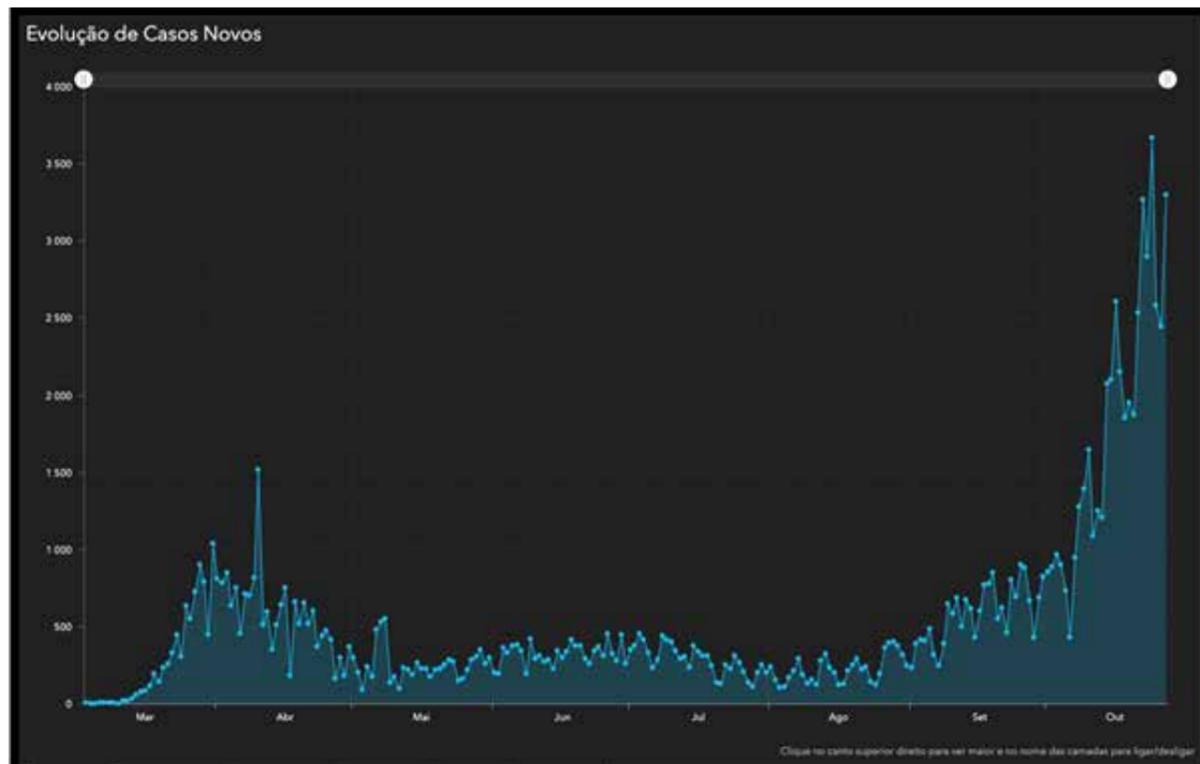
2. Please provide a graph or a table showing the occurrence tendency of COVID-19 in your country from the date of the first reported case to the latest available date.

3. How did the education in your country have been affected by COVID-19 and what were the actions taken by the government and education authorities to cope with the problem?

Within the first two weeks since the report of the first cases in Portugal, the government and national education authorities declared the suspension of face-to-face classes in all levels of education (more specifically between March 13-16), although some Higher Education Institutions had already taken that decision, like the University of Coimbra (on March 9).

As a result, schools, teachers and students had to quickly adapt to online classes' schedules, tools and methods, resulting in a great strain to work and family lives.

On a national level, in an effort to fight exclusion, the Ministry of Education implemented a daily broadcast of lessons on nation-



Graph "Evolution of New Cases" (Portugal), 2020-10-27
<https://covid19.min-saude.pt/ponto-de-situacao-atual-em-portugal/>

al TV (Study at Home) for elementary and middle school students. And in each elementary and middle school had to implement their way to evaluate the work done at home, i.e., upload the evaluation sheets, make Microsoft teams classes, and so on.

In September/October 2021, all schools resumed face-to-face classes, with the implementation of contingency plans and new safety norms (usage of masks, walking directions, appropriate distancing, hand sanitizing, etc.) The daily TV broadcast of lessons continues and schools have generally prepared to be able to conduct both online and in-classroom classes.

University Report:

Please answer the following questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on your university.

1. What were the major challenges your university faced in connection with COVID-19? How did the university cope with the challenges?

The University of Coimbra (UC) was one of the first universities in Portugal to make the difficult decision to suspend all face-to-face

classes, having to adapt its services and departments to a completely new and unexpected reality. This decision had an impact on public health and also allowed an unprecedented digital revolution.

One of the major challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic was the generalized implementation of online learning, to allow students to successfully finish the academic year. Not only this, but also the wide resource to working from home, meetings through videocalls, libraries transforming even more into accessible digital platforms and the overall dematerialization of procedures and bureaucracy. These challenges involved not only a considerable financial investment, but also an enormous collective mobilization and commitment of students, professors and technical staff, in order to keep alive the teaching, research and knowledge transfer despite the obvious difficulties brought on by the sudden change in paradigm.

The University of Coimbra also organized its internal know-how and resources to create a dedicated COVID-19 analysis laboratory at the service of the city and the center region of Portugal, in support of the Regional Health Authority.

The pandemic has also highlighted the existent socio-economical differences, exposing the difficulty that the most disadvantaged fringes have in any revolution in the most diverse fields of our collective life. It stressed the importance of social support and universal education, and demonstrated that we are still far from having a society with equal opportunities. The University of Coimbra was mobilized from the start to deliver IT resources to students who needed them, but it was clearly insufficient when there are still areas in the country with a lack of access to technological networks. Whatever the transition, there is an evident need for infrastructure and direct financing for families so that no one is left behind.

Having been able to successfully finish the academic year 2019/2020 mostly online, the University of Coimbra has invested largely in the timely preparation for beginning of the new academic year 2020/2021 in September and October, to be able to welcome back students to its campi with the maximum safety possible.

Classes were prepared in order to maximize the possibilities of face-to-face teaching and ensuring simultaneous access in an online format to all students and teachers who, for duly proven reasons, cannot physically attend. In this sense, UC invested in the development of a technological platform that allows the synchronous

transmission of classes in face-to-face and online format, making the teaching-learning process as coherent as possible.

In order to maximize the safety of the entire academic community, a random screening program for the COVID-19 disease was put into practice, involving the collection of around 100 daily samples (2000 people/month).

In addition to the mandatory use of masks inside buildings, regular hand hygiene, physical distance and respect for the circuits defined to access UC facilities, the University of Coimbra is implementing access regulation procedures to buildings, with validation carried out with the UC identification card, after its daily activation.

2. How do you think the role of universities should change in the wake of COVID-19?

COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated greatly the path to a digital future, where education should be more and more accessible to all. This change should be reflected also in the way institutions work. Higher Education Institutions have a central role in the dissemination of education and online learning has asserted itself as a tool to be used in multiple teaching activities.

However, the training of students and teachers in the new digital media is a priority, as well as the revision of the study plans, never forgetting that the empathy and fraternization generated by physical contact is irreplaceable.

In the future, universities should be catalysts of the crossing and convergence of knowledge, promoting interdisciplinarity studies, responding to the structural problems of contemporary society, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals expressed in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Universities should make a clear commitment to attract new audiences, favoring lifelong learning through micro-accreditation and distance learning, with the creation of virtual campi.

3. In your opinion, what kind of innovation the education industry needs in the era of Post-COVID-19?

Like in wartime, it is in time of crisis that innovation accelerates and institutional reforms take place. And this change is necessary because life in the universities will never be the same.

COVID-19 brought about a paradigm shift in public services. It

has been possible to prove that productivity in teleworking can be a reality, at the same time that we have managed to contain the immense expenditure of material resources by replacing them with digital processes. Some meetings that took place regularly gave way to the use of new technologies, while scientific conferences began to be organized on computer platforms, avoiding the tremendous pollution caused by air travel.

In the era post-COVID-19, the promotion of an open science policy between higher education institutions, society and companies will be crucial, in order to prevent knowledge from remaining closed in the academia.

All the measures put into practice during the first months of the pandemic and the results experienced will certainly be the key ingredients to face a post-COVID-19 scenario, in which there will be a recession, undoubtedly.

4. Could you suggest what would be the most promising jobs for university students in the era of post-COVID-19? And what are the things students have to prepare?

In the era post-COVID-19, we believe that, generally and broadly speaking, the areas of Information Technology (IT), Biochemistry and Bioengineering will be promising fields of employment.



Spain

University: University of Valencia

Author: Carles Padilla Carmona, Vice-Principal for Internationalisation and Cooperation

Country Report:

Please answer the following questions on the impacts of COVID-19 on your country.

1. When was the 1st case of COVID-19 reported in your country?

Date: January 31, 2020

Infection origin & route: Germany, a German citizen visiting “La Gomera” (Canary Islands)

2. Please provide a graph or a table showing the occurrence tendency of COVID-19 in your country from the date of the first reported case to the latest available date.

3. How did the education in your country have been affected by COVID-19 and what were the actions taken by the government and education authorities to cope with the problem?

In Spain, the competence in the field of Education is shared by the Spanish Ministry of Universities and the competent authorities of the 17 Regional Governments (Autonomous Communities). Moreover, Higher Education Institutions, usually coordinate their actions (through the Council of Spanish Universities), also enjoying a great deal of autonomy in adopting particular measure, under the umbrella of both national and regional authorities. Therefore, the actions taken by those national and regional authorities in relation to Higher Education institutions is always twofold, depending on the Community concerned. The Covid-19 crisis has deeply affected Education in Spain, especially during the lock down period. The reaction of the authorities has been similar and quite coordinated all over Spain. However, the particularities of some of the measures adopted in the different Autonomous Communities should be taken

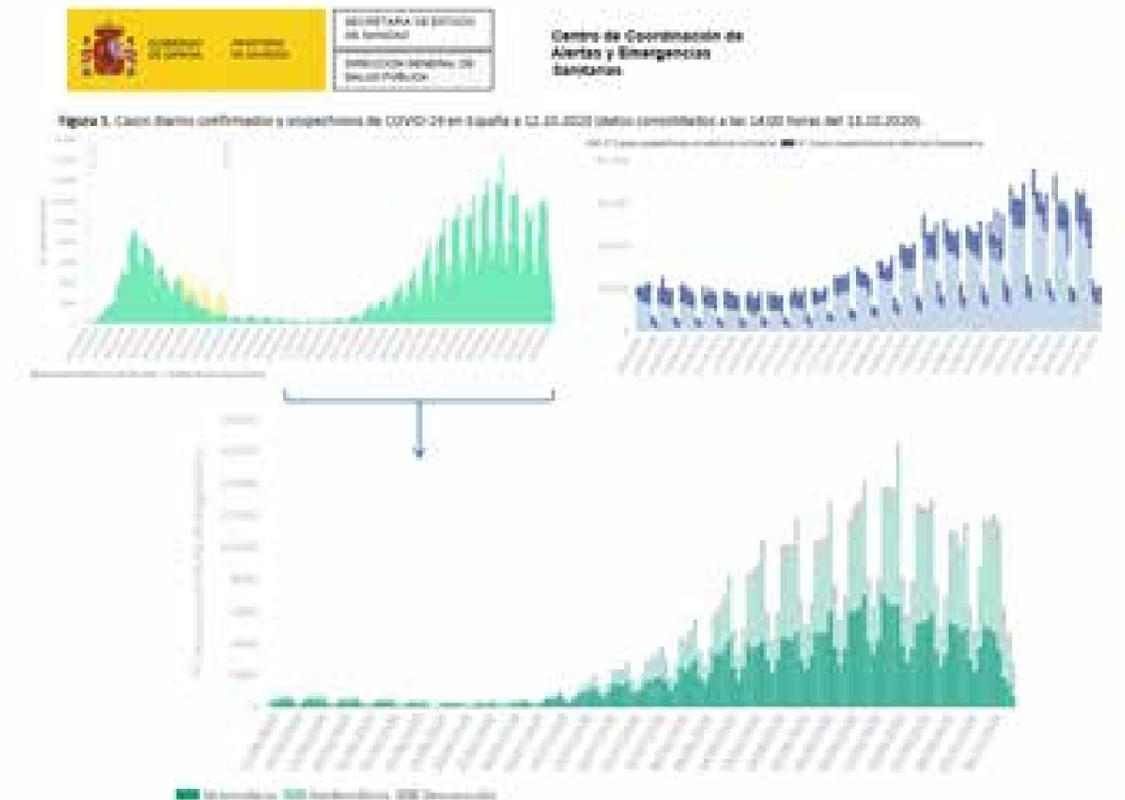


Fig. 1: Confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Spain (from 01.03.2020 to 12.10.2020). Source: Spanish Ministry of Health (in: https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/Actualizacion_227_COVID-19.pdf#page=4&zoom=auto,-239,7).

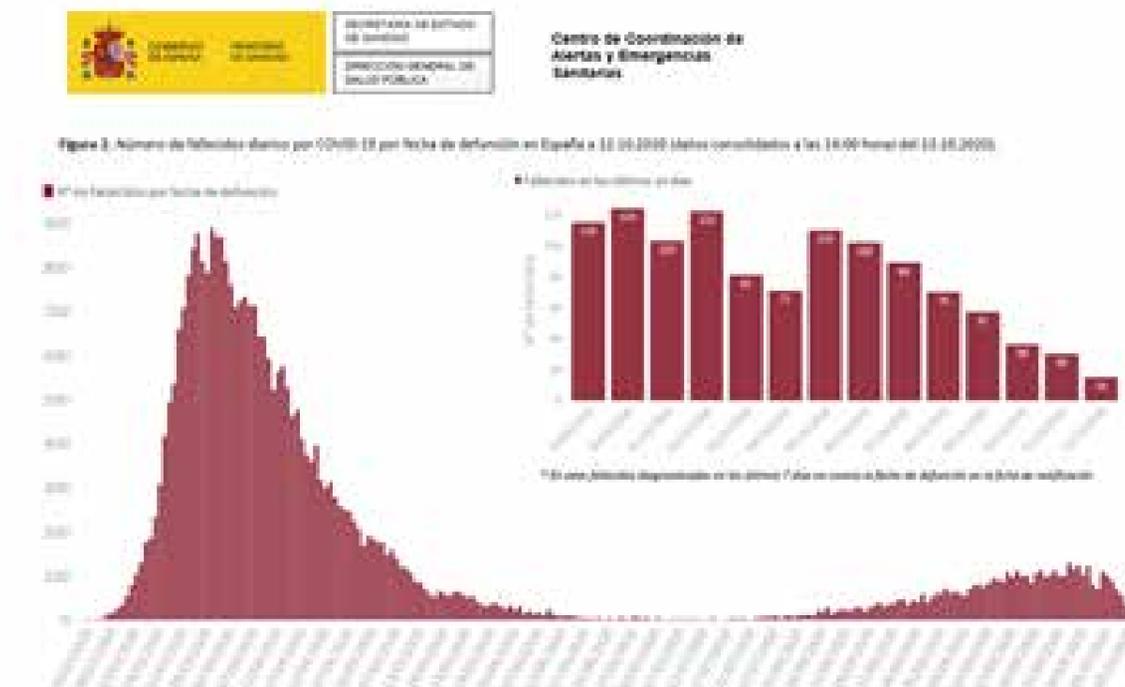


Fig. 2: Daily deaths of Covid-19 in Spain (from 01.03.2020 to 12.10.2020). Source: Spanish Ministry of Health (in: https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/Actualizacion_227_COVID-19.pdf#page=4&zoom=auto,-239,7).

into account.

From the perspective of the national Government, the Spanish Ministry of Education has both coordinated the measure adopted in the several regions (i.e. adopting numerous Recommendations and Protocols to adapt the academic year to the circumstances Covid-19), as well as has provided in respect to its own competences (i.e. those related to European and International mobility of students and staff, homologation or legalization procedures).

A reference to those measures adopted by the Spanish Ministry of Universities can be found in:

<https://www.ciencia.gob.es/portal/site/MICINN/menuitem.8ce192e94ba842bea3bc811001432ea0/?vgnextoid=90a7653022801710VgnVCM1000001d04140aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=ace15fbb878f0710VgnVCM1000001d04140aRCRD>.

University Report:

Please answer the following questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on your university.

1. What were the major challenges your university faced in connection with COVID-19? How did the university cope with the challenges?

The suspension of the physical classes and the changeover to virtual classes was the major challenge. Staff definitely committed immediately did the job in record time during the lock down.

2. How do you think the role of universities should change in the awake of COVID-19?

The role of universities should become more international and continue focusing on research.

3. In your opinion, what kind of innovation the education industry needs in the era of Post-COVID-19?

Online classes should become more present and all the tools and platforms available for online classes will play a much more important role. Universities should take advantage of this new situation and offer more online courses and enhance “virtual mobility”.

4. Could you suggest what would be the most promising jobs for university students in the era of post-COVID-19? And what are the things students have to prepare?

IT specialist, healthcare related jobs, life science specialist. STEM should be very important, but including and humanistic view.



University: The British University in Dubai

Author: Hugh Martin, Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer

Country Report:

Please answer the following questions on the impacts of COVID-19 on your country.

1. When was the 1st case of COVID-19 reported in your country?

Date: February 27, 2020

Infection origin & route: Not known

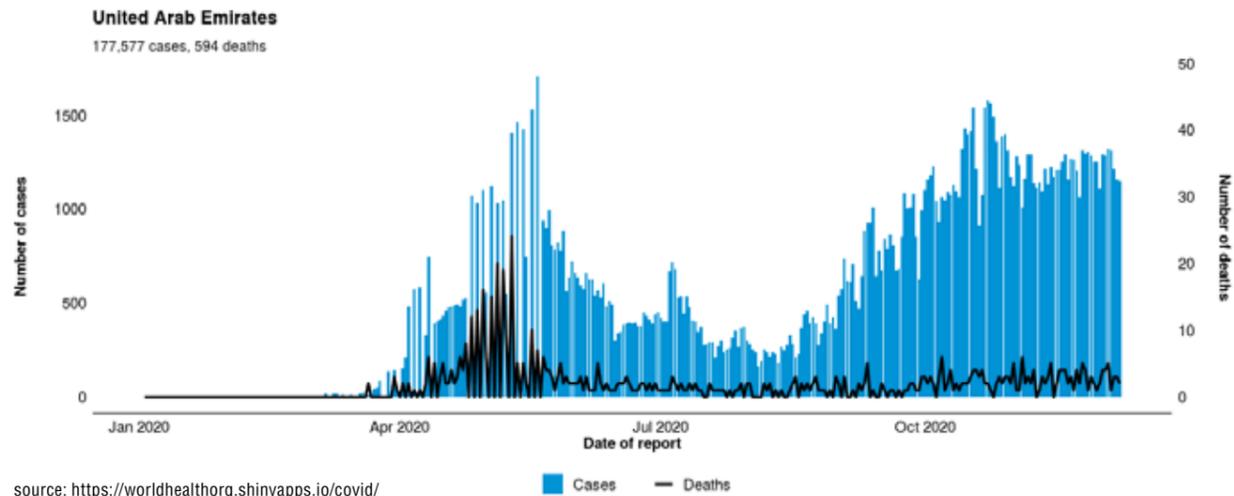
2. Please provide a graph or a table showing the occurrence tendency of COVID-19 in your country from the date of the first reported case to the latest available date.

3. How did the education in your country have been affected by COVID-19 and what were the actions taken by the government and education authorities to cope with the problem?

The UAE has made tremendous efforts to contain the pandemic, through massive testing campaigns, quarantines, and facilitating treatment for all who are infected. COVID-19 has encouraged the UAE to move quickly to open up digital channels and to employ the advantages that EdTech can bring.

Most educational institutions are opting for blended teaching although end of first term exams at universities will be held on campuses in November/December.

Events on campuses have been cancelled and graduation ceremonies in most cases postponed until 2021 or held online instead. The UAE Ministry of Education has issued protocols and policies for all educational intuitions. Updates are sent regularly and the Ministry is closely monitoring institutions' adherence.



source: <https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/covid/>

University Report:

Please answer the following questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on your university.

1. What were the major challenges your university faced in connection with COVID-19? How did the university cope with the challenges?

Students and staff are used to face-to-face communications and we needed everyone to be comfortable with online operations. We have made sure that all students, academic and administrative staff are connected. We have created email and social media groups for each Faculty, programme, and department. In this way, information cascades up and down in a matter of minutes.

The British University in Dubai (BUiD) has spared no effort in order to facilitate the online learning process and has provided all necessary technical support for its students and staff. Furthermore, in the years leading up to the pandemic, BUiD's Library had already been making the necessary investment in international e-resources to expand its considerable electronic databases and to guarantee the smooth running of the teaching process as well as ongoing research; this early adoption of e-library resources has stood us in good stead during COVID-19 as our students and researchers are already familiar with and used to working online.

BUiD has scheduled viva voce exams to be conducted virtually so all our doctoral students are able to complete their PhD requirements, with our external examiners joining us online from their universities across the world.

2. How do you think the role of universities should change in the wake of

COVID-19?

Universities need to adapt to change and adopt a blended learning approach, where physical attendance alongside online teaching and learning will enable students to become independent learners. Universities need to build up support systems for its students and the larger community. BUiD launched its Centre for Research in Digital Education in January. It has conducted webinars to share our expertise in and experience of online teaching with various educational institutions across the UAE, the GCC region and beyond.

3. In your opinion, what kind of innovation the education industry needs in the era of Post-COVID-19?

Most education institutions will use a blended model going forward – a combination of the best virtual learning and digital platforms alongside face-to-face delivery. Students and staff will actually benefit from a better and more integrated education system where online platforms and technology assist to make the student experience more rounded and diverse.

4. Could you suggest what would be the most promising jobs for university students in the era of post-COVID-19? And what are the things students have to prepare?

As the education scene is changing, we are witnessing an acceleration in digital transformation. Jobs in e-commerce, cybersecurity, and AI are expanding. COVID-19 has changed how people work and how business operations are conducted. Hiring trends also are changing, as organisations are adopting flexible work systems to allow more people to work flexibly, including from home. Job markets will be larger as more people are able to work remotely.

Instead of preparing students for narrow career paths, universities need to think more expansively. The role of the university is not to prepare 'job-ready' graduates – that is the role of industry and the job market. Universities should work with their students, as equal partners in the learning process which prepares them to be 'life-ready' so that their future career opportunities are as wide and flexible as possible.

Ibn Battuta— The emir of travels



An imaginary interview with the legendary medieval Muslim adventurer

A bŭ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Lawātī al-Ṭanjī, known as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, was an Arab traveller of Berber descent, born in Tangier in today’s Morocco. During his life, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa travelled extensively across North Africa and Asia, eventually reaching Mongol-ruled China, the furthest place from his homeland known at the time.

After coming back home after 24 years, he left once again to visit Andalusia to the north, and Mali and Niger to the south. When he returned home for good, the Marinid Sultan Abu ‘Inān invited him to write down an account of his outstanding travels. This was to become the book known as *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharā’ib al-amṣār wa-‘ajā’ib al-asfār* ‘A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Traveling’, or simply *Riḥla* ‘Travels’.

If we could have the chance to meet him for an interview today, what could he tell us? That imagined conversation would go something as follows:

Q: *Good afternoon, Sir Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. We are very honoured to be speaking to you today.*

To begin with, would you please give us a brief account of the long routes you covered during your lifetime?

A: Of course, I’m very pleased to do so. First of all, you have to know that I departed from my own town, Tangier in the Maghreb in 1325. I was only 21 years old, a young man. My purpose was to perform ḥajj, the muslim pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, and to visit the two holiest cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina. However, both fate and my own pleasure in travel and seeing new



Davide Rizzi

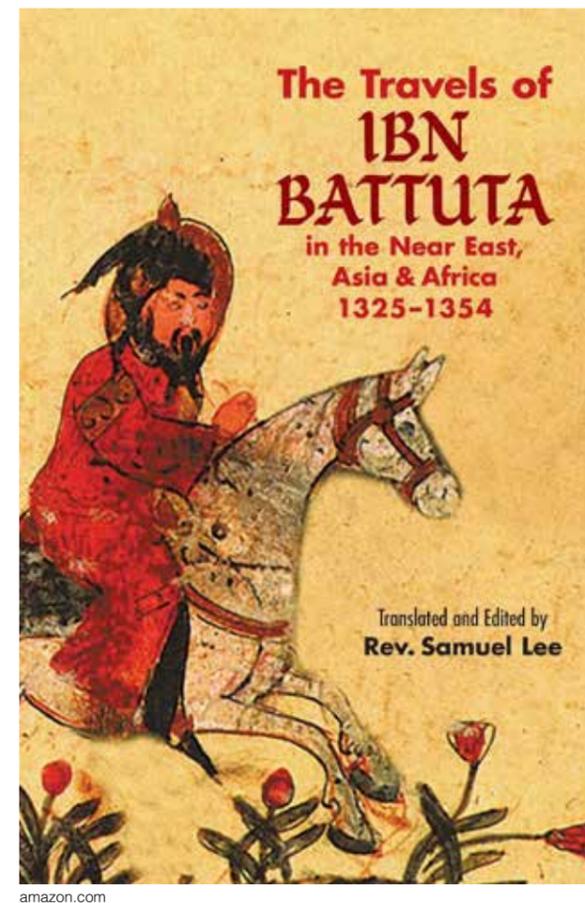
place took me much further than the Arabian Peninsula. After travelling across North Africa, the Levant, and Iraq to reach Mecca and Medina, the Hijāz – that is how that region is called – became my starting point for further travels.

First of all, I went to Iraq and Iran. Then, I reached the southernmost point of the world known to us back then, i.e. the island of Kilwa just off the coast of today's Tanzania. Subsequently, I left again the Hijāz heading for Asia Minor, the Pontic Steppes, Turkestan, and Iran, finally reaching Delhi in India. I stayed there for eight years practising my profession – I was a qāḍī, that is in your language, a judge – at the court of the Indian Sultan Muḥammad ibn Tughluq.

After my long stay in Delhi, I had an occasion to satisfy even more my desire to visit new places, as the Sultan appointed me to a diplomatic mission to bring gifts to the Mongol Khan of China, Toghon Temür. This mission brought me to see many other beautiful countries, namely the western and southern coasts of India, the Maldives, Ceylon, Sumatra, Java, and finally China. This travel was not straightforward, as my crew and I experienced several troubles: a storm along the south-western coast of India destroyed a part of our ship and several of my companions died in the accident. I had lost every trace of the other ships. Even though I tried my best to catch up with them, I had to give up and thus set out to other routes. Four years later, I managed to organize a new expedition to China. Meanwhile, I lived one year and a half in the Maldives, where I worked again as a judge at the local sultan's court, and made some journeys between south India and Ceylon. Then, I finally set sail to China, passing by the aforementioned Southeast Asian countries. In China, I could visit the marvellous and huge cities of Canton, Hangzhou as well as the capital of the Yuan Empire, Khanbaliq 'the City of the Khan' as it was called at that time. I hear it is called Beijing now.

Q: From the point of view of people living in today's world, where travels have become very quick and much safer than in the past, it would be very interesting to hear from you, on the basis of your experiences, what travelling really meant at your times.

A: Sure! As you may know, moving through North Africa and Asia at those times, although much slower than today, was



quite convenient. The Muslim sultanates I went across were endowed with a very efficient postal system. At each station merchants and pilgrims could buy all of what they needed until the next stop-over. For the night it was also possible to lodge in monasteries, that also functioned as auberges, or inns. Travellers could have a room and meals, and rest from their long and tiring journeys on horseback. In the lands of the Golden Horde, I was really surprised to see a rather different way of travelling from the one we Arabs had. We used to move by horse or by camel. Well, the peoples of the Golden Horde, Turks and Mongols, also did; however, horses and camels drew big chariots on which tents were mounted. Practically, the Turks carried their houses with them. It was so impressive to see them. It was like viewing a whole city on the move!

And, of course, this manner of travelling was extremely convenient. Since they basically always had with them all of what they needed for the travel, they could stop for the night wherever, without any problem, even in the middle of nowhere. They did not have to reach cities.

Nevertheless, also back then, there were hard times. In several occasions I really feared for my life. Let me give you one example. Soon after we left Delhi heading towards the south of India, we got assaulted by brigands. I tried to flee, however, I found myself alone in unknown lands. Soon thereafter, a group of those brigands managed to catch me again. In their company, I spent some of the most fearful days of my life. Can you imagine that, in my presence, they were constantly speaking about how to kill me?! I was able to save my life only by exchanging my new clothes with the old ones of one of the men who were to execute me.

Q: I can imagine how terrible that experience was! The next thing I would like to ask you about is communication. When you reached countries where people didn't speak Arabic, your native tongue, how did you communicate?



A: In the first years of my travel, I availed myself of interpreters who knew Arabic and the local language, be it Turkic or Persian. Then, as I spent many years in India where Persian was a widely spoken language. I eventually learned it. Knowing this language in Asia was very useful as it was vastly diffused. I could communicate with most people directly, or with the help of a Persian-speaking interpreter, since finding Arabic-speaking interpreters in Asia was more difficult. Moreover, I didn't find learning Persian so hard, especially because of the presence of many Arabic loanwords. Also, in Turkic lands it was not easy to find people knowing Arabic. I eventually learned some Turkic during the time I spent in the Turkic sultanates of Asia Minor and in the Turkic khanates of the Golden Horde and of the Chagatais. Thus, I was able to hold a simple conversation. In formal occasions, however, I still needed Persian-speaking interpreters.

Q: Could you please tell us something about local products and

foodstuffs which you tasted for the first time during your travels in Asia?

A: Of course, this was a very interesting aspect of travelling. Seeing new places - besides allowing me to admire wonderful cities and to get to know many respectable people from all over the world - it also allowed me to taste a lot of delicious dishes, beverages, and fruits I had never seen before. Among the Turks, I tasted the famous kumis, a drink made from mare's milk. They also used to make another drink they called boza which, like kumis, was white in colour, but was made from dūqī, a kind of cereal similar to millet. As for dishes, I tried their traditional soup, basically consisting of cereals and meat, and often enriched with curds. Moreover, I tasted bŭrkhānī, a kind of bread cooked in curds, and rīshṭa, that is noodles with curds, which they served us together with horse and mutton meat, the most popular and diffused types of meat among them.

In India too, I had the chance to experience several kinds of delicious and very rich dishes. Moreover, I was surprised to discover such a variety of delicious fruits I hadn't ever imagined to exist on earth! For instance, barkī, that is the fruit of the bread tree, ortandū, a fruit similar to persimmon, and three different kinds of orange. I also remember very well angŭr, a very sweet kind of fruit similar to a little pear, which when fresh tastes like grapes but when sundried tastes like figs! Amazing!

Q: *Maybe you have heard about the Venetian merchant and traveller Marco Polo. It is very interesting to see that in your respective travel accounts you often describe the same things.*

For instance, you both describe kumis, the mare's milk drink you have just mentioned yourself, or coal – as it is called in English – that you have seen in China. It is very interesting to see that both you and Marco Polo describe coal as black stones that can be burned for heating and can heat and last much longer than wood. Another thing you have in common is how your travelogue came into existence. Could you comment on this?

A: Yes, I have heard about Marco Polo and his travel account. As you may know, back then, it was common, if you were not a professional writer, to look for such a person to write down your

accounts rather than doing it by yourself. You needed a professional writer well-versed in the art of literature and poetry, because using a codified style was very important, much more than today.

I told my memories to the poet Ibn Juzayy, whom Sultan Abu 'Inān, God bless him, officially appointed with the task of making a book out of my extraordinary travel experiences.

I actually first got acquainted with Ibn Juzayy earlier in the city of Granada, in Spain. It was great to meet him again in Fez, five years after our first encounter, and to work together. He still remembered very vividly several of my travel stories.

And yes, you are totally right, Sir Marco had a similar experience. Rustichello da Pisa, a famous romance writer, who happened to be Marco Polo's cellmate in Genua, helped him in writing down his travelogue. With great pleasure I read your interview to Sir Marco in the last issue of this journal.

Q: Thank you for sharing with us the precious knowledge you have collected during your special life, Sir Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa.

A: Thank you very much for reading my travelogue and for listening to me today! Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions, ahlān wa sahlān.

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Past, present, and future of Silk Road tourism

Introduction

The Silk Road, generally known as the longest and oldest global trade route in history, was a vast trade network, consisting of land and maritime routes that connected the ancient civilizations of the East and the West, stretching from East Asia to as far West as Europe, Egypt, and other countries in Africa (UNCTAD 2009; Jackson 2011). These interconnected routes served not only as a medium for circulating goods (silk, spices, handicrafts, precious stones, minerals, porcelain), but also as a bridge for contact between people and cultures, promoting the exchange of dialogue, art, religion, ideas, and technology among the flourishing economies of China, Persia, India, Arabia, Greece, and Rome (Stanojević 2016; Kostopoulou 2019). The historic Silk Road meant connections and challenges, but also safe long distance travelling (Wojciech 2006), where many cities were built, originally founded as small transportation gateways, then gradually turned into major trade and exchange centers (Vasiliev and Shmigelskaia 2016; Kostopoulou 2019).

In modern times, the Silk Road is the longest tourist route that ever existed, a tourism complex bringing together three continents and covering more than 12,000 km, running through a vast geographical area which amounts to 55.4 million square kilometers (43% of the globe) according to statistics of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), including a large number of countries, very heterogeneous in their economy, politics, society and culture (Vasiliev and Shmigelskaia 2016). The areas along the Silk Road have a multidimensional reality, reflecting a multitude of interconnected aspects, such as all kinds of natural and artificial barriers, as well as cultural, social, economic, and political interactions.



Stella Kostopoulou

The historic Silk Road routes nowadays are revived as a wide tapestry of rising tourism destinations and products, engaging numerous countries with rich and outstanding natural and cultural heritage, such as monuments, archeological sites and architectural complexes, arts, music, customs, traditions, clothing, lifestyles, city organization, etc. (Kostopoulou 2019). The Silk Road, if developed as a unique branding tool connecting east and West, may attract tourists to visit a variety of destinations, attaining a lot more excitement than an ordinary trip. Therefore, developing the concept of the Silk Road destination may offer great opportunities for the expansion of the tourism industry, allowing better conquering new tourism markets and supporting local communities (Kour 2016; Douglas et al. 2001; Manhas et al. 2014; Kostopoulou et al. forthcoming)

Silk Road Overview: The historical perspective

Early activities along the Silk Road are generally believed to have started during the Chinese Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), stimulated by the mission to the West of the Chinese Ambassador Zhang Qian (138 B.C. to 139 B.C.), which introduced to Europe the silk items of China, as well as iron products, gold, platinum and bronze sculptures, lacquer ware, bamboo artifacts, medicines, and farming and metallurgy practices (Parvinder 2016). However, the route was already several thousand years old by then, even before the time when Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) from the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia, who followed much of it during his eastern conquests, and before Herodotus had written in his *Histories* (450 BC) about “the speed and efficiency of the Persian messengers” (Waterfield translation 1998; Kostopoulou et al. 2016).

The Silk Road flourished and reached its zenith during the time of the Chinese Tang dynasty (618–907) (Neville-Hardy 1997; Bonavia 2002; UNCTAD 2009). After the fall of the Tang dynasty, China was closed to the outside world, while military conflict in Central Asia made transportation dangerous, and new forms of transport such as shipping emerged (UNCTAD 2009; Vasiliev and Shmigelskaia 2016). By the 15th and 16th centuries, with the emergence of new trends in travel and trade, the concept of the Silk Road gradually faded and lost its significance to the then existing world (Parvinder 2016).

It was only in 1877 when the term “Silk Road” was first intro-

duced as a modern concept. It was coined as ‘Die Seidenstraße’ to denote China’s trade routes by the German geologist and geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833–1905) in the first volume of his five-volume book, *China*. The results of their own travels (1877–1911), an account of his time spent in northwest China surveying routes for a possible transcontinental train line that would carry coal to a rapidly industrializing Germany (Waugh 2007; Chin 2013; Winter 2020a, 2020b). The term derived its name from the silk first exported from China, considered to be an especially expensive and highly valuable product at the time. Richthofen laid the foundation for a new whole direction of historical research, which later became interdisciplinary (Kylasov 2019). Other scholars and explorers added further detail by gathering manuscripts, art efacts and artworks, providing unique insights into this pre-modern world system. However, up until the 1990s in the West, the Silk Road remained a vague, enigmatic concept, that rarely received sustained attention. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic reforms in China catalyzed international interest in the story of the overland Silk Road, since for the first time in generations, China and the republics of Central Asia were open to western tourists (Winter 2020).

On the threshold of the new Millennium, the idea of reviving the Silk Road appeared. The increasing strength of the Chinese economy in the late 20th and early 21st century, mostly based on export, renewed the need for transport routes to the West. The “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative, or the “New Silk Road,” was initiated by the Peoples Republic of China in September 2013, an economic and geopolitical megaproject with the aim to strengthen connectivity and commercial cooperation between Eurasian countries through infrastructure (railway, including high-speed railway, roads, oil and gas pipelines), trade, and investment (Wong and Lye 2014; Stanojević 2016; Liu 2014; Zabbini 2012). The initiative was later conceived as two projects: the overland based “New Silk Road Economic Belt” and the ocean going “21st Century Maritime Silk Road,” with a polar extension announced in January 2018 (Wong and Lye 2014; Deepak 2018; Kostopoulou 2019). The introduction of new infrastructure is expected to increase the connectivity between certain countries, creating considerable benefits for many economic sectors and regions, and tourism is likely to benefit specifically (Pechlaner et al. 2019; Schuhbert & Thees 2020).

Now the Silk Road is being revived not only as a tourist route, but also as an “economic zone’ stretching from the Western Pacific to the Baltic Sea” (Fung Business Intelligence Centre 2015), while southern European Countries such as Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, and Malta boost friendly ties with China, giving a home to large and mid-scale Chinese investments (Vangeli 2015). The project of revitalizing the Silk Road gives a chance for these countries to use the advantages of their geopolitical position with maximum efficiency (Vasiliev and Shmigelskaia 2016).

Silk Road and International Programs and Initiatives

The global significance of Silk Road tourism hardly needs to be debated, as it has been for decade’s part of projects of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

With initiatives dating back to the 1994 Samarqand Declaration, the UNWTO was an early advocate of the tourism potential of the Silk Road. Today, 34 Member States currently participate in the UNWTO Silk Road Program from Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Asia & the Pacific, in addition to various UNWTO Affiliate Members from around the globe, working together to promote the Silk Road routes as a transnational tourism adventure (UNWTO 2020a). The UNWTO Silk Road initiative functions as a collaborative platform that aims to maximize the benefits of tourism development for local Silk Road communities and foster greater cooperation between Silk Road countries and regions (UNWTO 2017).

Within a constantly evolving tourism context, UNWTO has been re-assessing the purpose, objectives and long-term goals of the Silk Road initiative within three key areas: knowledge creation, development strategies and investments, and stakeholder mobilization. Currently, Silk Road Member States and tourism partners are contributing valuable feedback, which will be reflected in the new Silk Road Action Plan to be released during the second half of 2020 (UNWTO 2020b).

UNESCO also contributed to the Silk Road revival. Between 1988 and 1997, in the framework of the program “The Silk Road: on the way to dialogue,” extensive research was conducted resulting in a tourist route map for the main objects of the world cultural and natural heritage (Vasiliev and Shmigelskaia 2016). The UNESCO

Silk Road Online Platform (UNESCO Silk Road Project) is committed to building active links between people from different communities along these routes (UNESCO International Network for the Silk Roads Program). Following missions to China in August 2003 and July 2004, UNESCO developed the Silk Roads World Heritage Serial and Transnational Nomination project, and in 2011 ICOMOS commissioned a thematic study of the Silk Roads, culminating in 2014, when the first successful Silk Road world heritage listing was introduced (Winter 2016).

Future Tourism Development on the Silk Road: Challenges and prospects

The Silk Road countries’ strengths as tourism destinations arise from their wealth of outstanding unspoiled natural resources and their wide variety of tangible and intangible cultural assets, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, ethnic groups, and local cultures. However, several weaknesses and challenges hinder tourism development in many Silk Road countries and regions (CAREC 2019). These include insufficient intra-regional and international air connectivity and inadequate transport infrastructure and services, complex visa regimes and border crossing regulations, limited appeal of local tourism products, low quality of tourism facilities and service, limited personal safety and health facilities, a shortage of skilled workers, and weak branding and destination image for the region.

Opportunities exist to address the obstacles and weaknesses identified and capitalize on the various natural and cultural heritage strengths through inter-regional collaboration among Silk Road countries. Internationally, inter-regional cooperation is an area of increased interest in the regional development planning agenda and one of the most popular subjects in border academic research in political geography, international relations, sociology, anthropology, and many other disciplines (van Houtum 2000). However, state borders have not gained much attention in the literature of tourism yet, even though the advantages of collaboration in inter-regional cross-border tourism are significant:

1. Diversifying the appeal of individual destinations by promoting access to complementary destinations that add value to existing attractions.
2. Partnerships which ensure the rationalizing of tourism investments to increase efficiency and effectiveness of invest-

ments.

3. Aligning the increased capital and labor mobility present in modern societies, thus recognizing that tourists often have a regional rather than a specific destination focus (Crozier 2011, Kostopoulou et al. 2015). Global experience indicates that tourists do not keep to strict borders and tend to visit regions, rather than an area within a defined political boundary.

Co-operating across borders is never easy, because different jurisdictions have different policy priorities, administrative systems, and institutional capacity. However, there are often similarities in the geographic space, similar historic events, overlapping religious and other demographic characteristics, as well as attractive tourist sites in the borderline areas, which can delineate compatible cross-border tourist regions. The conditions and ways in which inter-regional cooperation can take place are diverse and may vary according to the type of similarity, be it geographical, socio-cultural, cognitive, institutional, or organizational.

The emergence of Silk Road tourism is a typical example for inter-regional cooperation among neighboring countries, aiming at transforming the advantages of geographical proximity and tourism complementarily into practical cooperation and joint development, as well as referencing a heritage of common cultural values (Grimmel and Li 2018; Long and Xu 2017; Kostopoulou et al. 2020). The need to develop a coherent and persuasive positive tourism image for the Silk Road countries as a whole would be possibly best achieved by a strong identification with a Silk Road brand name, while also clustering by creating sub regional partnerships between countries with shared resources and potential to attract visitors on multi-region and multi-country tours. Therefore, a fundamental need for the Silk Road countries is building a perception that the countries are, both individually and in combination, destinations that are easy to reach, and are safe and secure environments to travel in and between (CAREC 2019). This is even more imperative in light of the unprecedented COVID19 crisis, since the need for inter-regional cooperation to deal with difficulties that might arise in the provision of medical facilities of an adequate scale and standard concerning tourists' health has arisen at an extreme rate, particularly in remote rural areas.

As Shopova (2017) claims, tourism regionalization or zoning

plays an important role in tourism management, calling for the formation of regional structures as a result of territorial similarities. According to this approach, regionalization can also be considered as a territorial classification according to certain criteria (e.g. production, demography) and indicators (e.g. labor, population, urbanization) that are similar as between given territories. Therefore, tourism regionalization refers to a *modus operandi* of inter-regional cooperation, integration, and cohesion that creates a regional space (Fawcett 2005; Balázs Sárvári and Szeidovitz2016).

The Silk Road's vast geographical area, vaguely defined based on historical knowledge, could be thus regionalized into tourism regions with specific distinct characteristics. Such a primary regionalization pattern already exists, distinguishing in geographical terms the Silk Road area into, (i) the so-called 'Classic Silk Road', ranging from China to Istanbul in Turkey, where traditionally knowledge of the Silk Road and its tourism assets have focused, and (ii) the Western Silk Road, in the European region, from the Caspian Sea, around the Black Sea and along parts of the Mediterranean basin. The Western Silk Road (WSR) Tourism Development Initiative, a joint tourism project aiming at revitalizing the Silk Road heritage located within European destinations, was launched in 2016 by UNWTO in collaboration with the European Union (EU) (UNWTO 2017). However, within these vast trans-continental hyper-regions, an array of sub-regions may be further identified, e.g., geographical regions (Central Asia, Black Sea, Mediterranean, Europe), or large multi-dimensional areas and other territorial communities (e.g., supranational groups, regional and intra-country communities) that have a common cultural code, seeking the most effective use of internal and external development factors (Dergachev 2008; Tolpakova and Kuchinskaya2015).

One promising methodological approach to define such tourism spaces is the functional approach, where the tourism space is considered as a functionally distinct sub-unit of geographical and social space, based upon the need for recreation, learning, and new experience felt by modern tourists (Bjeljac & Čurčić 2006). As underlined by Briedenhann and Wickens (2004), the clustering of activities and attractions in less developed areas stimulates cooperation and partnerships between communities in local and neighboring regions and serves as a vehicle for the stimulation of economic development through tourism.

At the European level, increased frequency of inter-regional cooperation within the EU is manifested in the form of common tourism development strategies promoting territorial cohesion, cross-border co-operation, and networking, which are understood as the basis for economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable development in the EU regions (Commission of the European Communities 2006; Committee of Regions 2006). EU strategies and experience gained could thus be introduced to Silk Road tourism development strategies as best practices for inter-regional cross-border cooperation.

Concluding remarks

The revival of the Silk Road tangible and intangible cultural heritage can generate new tourism destinations and sustainable tourism opportunities. Tourism can help in overcoming socio-economic difficulties in the collaborating regions, since attractive tourist areas are considered to be important elements that may speed economic and social development. Inter-regional collaboration in tourism provides a means of coping with global shifts and changes in regional cross-border dynamics, as well as preparing the way for more sustainable tourism development for the sustainable exploitation of local resources and the maintenance of a durable tourism industry (Inskeep 1994; Hall 2000).

For Silk Road tourism to be successful, it should thus adopt an inter-regional cooperation agenda based on a comprehensive regionalization logic to identify flexible “moving frontiers” regions and enable them to work together and integrate attractions, capital, infrastructure, and natural and human resources to serve the domestic and international (inter- and intra-regional) tourism sector. This is in line with the new regionalism approaches that underline the importance of non-state actors in a more multidimensional and pluralistic way (Söderbaum 2015), claiming that there are no ‘natural’ regions, but these are made, remade and unmade, intentionally or non-intentionally, in the process of global transformation, by collective human action and identity formation.

Inter-regional cooperation initiatives in academic research and project activities are necessary to support sustainable cultural tourism development throughout the Silk Road regions. Within this conceptual framework, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki established in 2017 the European Interdisciplinary Silk Road Tourism

Centre, to function as a hub for joint research projects on how to enhance prospects for tourism development and cross-border collaboration, as well as cultural exchanges among countries on the Silk Road, based upon the untapped Silk Road cultural heritage.

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Chinese architecture scholars and Foguang Temple

By Wu Hao

Since the New Culture Movement at the beginning of the last century, the academic development of China has had a close and complex relationship with that of the rest of the world. At the same time, the paradigm of the contemporary Chinese system of academic discipline has been established and come down in one continuous line. In order to make an in-depth study of human civilization, for the protection and inheritance of the achievements of human civilization, and to get out of the trap of the “Clash of Civilizations” narrative, Chinese and foreign academic, intellectual, and cultural communities have worked together to carry out extensive academic exchanges, developing valuable insight on how to promote “interpersonal exchanges,” especially for mutual understanding among intellectual elite.

Chinese scholars began to systematically review Chinese academic history and civilization from modern perspectives and scientific methods. This development began in 1919 with Hu Shi, the advocate of the Vernacular Movement in China and Professor at Peking University, where he published the article “Significance of New Ideas” in the first issue of the seventh volume of *New Youth*. In this article, Hu Shi put forward the idea of “studying problems, introducing the scientific method, reviewing national heritage, and reconstructing civilization.” The New Culture Movement, also known as the “Chinese Renaissance” in English, involved academic and cultural exchanges, as well as mutual learning about civilizations between China and foreign countries, brought about by the powerful intellectual impetus of the “Chinese Renaissance.”

The investigation and study of ancient Chinese architecture by Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin, husband and wife founders of



Full map of the Wutai Mountain

Chinese modern architecture and him the principal designer of the national emblem of the People's Republic of China, involved them “introducing the scientific method” (modern architecture with scientific methods such as surveying and mapping) to “study problems,” and the “review of national heritage” and “reconstruction of civilization” under a new paradigm. (History of Chinese Architecture.) We can find a model for studying the nature of things through academic exchanges in the academic research program for Chinese architectural history initiated by Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin, and then in subsequent academic and cultural activities surrounding that project carried out by foreign academic and cultural circles.

When studying at the University of Pennsylvania during his youth, Liang Sicheng found that the European countries already were engaged in the systematic review and study of their ancient architecture, but despite its ancient civilization, China had not studied its own architectural history. He developed the noble ambition to document China's architectural history. After finishing at the University of Pennsylvania and moving to Harvard, Liang Sicheng began to prepare his doctoral dissertation, *History of Chinese Palaces*, but the existing materials couldn't support his research. Therefore, he returned to China to make field investigations of ancient Chinese buildings.

Due to age, wars, and other factors, Tang Dynasty era wooden buildings in China were thought to no longer exist. Japanese scholars asserted that no Tang Dynasty wooden buildings remained in China and that people would have to go to Nara in Japan to see wooden buildings from the Tang Dynasty period. But Liang Sicheng always had the belief that there must be Tang Dynasty wooden buildings that still remained in China. By chance, he saw the *Dunhuang Grottoes Album (Les grottes de Touen-houang)*, shot on location in Dunhuang Grottoes by the French sinologist Paul Pelliot. In Grotto No. 61, there is a Tang Dynasty mural, "Wutai Mountain Full Map." It shows a panorama of Wutai Mountain, a Buddhist shrine, and lists the names of each temple. One of them is called "Foguang Temple" (Temple of the Buddha's Light). This greatly raised Liang's hope of finding extant wooden architecture of the Tang Dynasty.

In the summer of 1937, before the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin, after many hardships, finally found the first known and still existing Tang Dynasty's wooden architecture in China – the Foguang Temple, in a lonely mountain village called Doucun in the periphery of Wutai Mountain. Their research showed it was constructed in the 11th Year of Tang Dazhong (A.D. 857). A number of Tang Dynasty statues, murals, and inscriptions were also found. After this discovery, Liang Sicheng conducted scientific mapping and research at the site, and wrote an investigative report of *The Foguang Temple Architecture of Wutai Mountain*, and kept numerous precious historical photos. Unfortunately, when Liang Sicheng and his wife came down from Wutai Mountain, they heard about the Japanese invasion of China. Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin, among the flames of the war of resistance, travelled across almost half of China, mostly in southwest of the

country.

In the grim and grave situation and amidst the flames of war, in the face of disease, hunger, death threats, and bleak living conditions, Liang Sicheng didn't stop writing and continued to investigate and research Chinese architectural history. In 1942, on the basis of his investigations of ancient architecture over the past ten years, Liang Sicheng began to write his *History of Chinese Architecture*, and completed it after 2 years. This is the first complete and systematic book about the history of Chinese architecture written and compiled by someone Chinese, with its academic achievements recognized by scholars both at home and abroad. John Fairbank, a founder of China research in the United States and then Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the United States in Chongqing, when visiting Liang Sicheng and his wife Lin Huiyin in Lizhuang, was deeply impressed by their perseverance: "If it were Americans, I believe they would have already put aside books and focused on improving their living conditions. However, these highly educated Chinese can be completely content with the original life of the peasants and devote themselves to their work."

Later on, Liang Sicheng wrote a concise English version of *A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture*, based on his *History of Chinese Architecture*. In 1947, during an academic visit to Yale University in the United States, Liang Sicheng took with him the wonderful drawings, pictures, and manuscripts of the book and wanted to publish it in the United States. But because Lin Huiyin needed major surgery, Liang Sicheng ended his visit ahead of schedule and returned home. He took away the manuscript while leaving the drawings and photos with John Fairbank's wife, Wilma Fairbank. After nearly 40 years facing the vicissitudes of life, under the joint efforts of Lin Zhu (Liang's second wife after the tragic early death of Lin Huiyin) and Wilma Fairbank, the manuscript was published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press in 1984 and won the "Professional and Academic Books Gold Award" by American Publishing Federation.

The story of Liang Sicheng's discovery, investigation, and study of China's ancient buildings has become legend in Chinese architectural history and the world of architectural history more broadly, touching and inspiring younger scholars for further architectural history study based on it. Vimalin Rujivacharakul (Chinese Name: Xu Guaner), scholar born in Thailand and Associate Professor of

Art History at the University of Delaware in the United States, is one such intellectual protégé. After graduating with distinction from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Dr. Xu Guaner studied Chinese during her graduate study at Harvard University and the University of California–Berkeley. She went to Tsinghua University in Beijing more than 10 years ago for an academic visit. During her period of study at Tsinghua University, moved by Mr. Liang Sicheng's academic practice of discovery and his investigation of the Foguang Temple of Wutai Mountain, Dr. Xu Guaner, together with Luo Deyin, Associate Professor at Tsinghua University, were determined to translate Mr. Liang Sicheng's research achievements on the Foguang Temple into English so as to introduce it to the worldwide community of scholars of academic architectural history. After 14 years of effort, *Liang Sicheng and the Temple of the Buddha's Light*, compiled and translated by Xu Guaner and Luo Deyin, was published in 2015.

In the process of translation, because many technical terms of Chinese architectural history were involved and in order to ensure preciseness of the translation and be faithful to the original text, the two translators made several trips to the Foguang Temple for on-site investigations. By referring to Liang Sicheng's manuscripts and drawings, and through textual research, they kept refining the translation. In the meantime, Princess MahaChakri Sirindhorn of Thailand and Dr. Prappard, former dean of School of Arts and Sciences at Chulalongkorn University, gave guidance and support to Dr. Xu Guaner regarding the translation. Dr. Xu Guaner expressed her special thanks to Princess Sirindhorn in the book and gave a copy of the book to the Princess as a gift. During her visit to Beijing last spring, Princess Sirindhorn made a special trip to Tsinghua University to attend the publishing ceremony and academic symposium honoring the book. *Liang Sicheng and the Temple of the Buddha's Light* not only shows the achievements of sincere cooperation between scholars in Thailand and China, but also embodies the love of Chinese culture and friendship to the Chinese people of Princess Sirindhorn, Dr. Xu Guaner, and other Thailand scholars.

Mr. Liang Sicheng's study on Chinese ancient buildings had been highly appreciated by American Sinologists such as John Fairbank and Wilma Fairbank, as well as Thailand scholars such as Princess Sirindhorn and Dr. Xu Guaner. This is not only a study of particular Chinese problems by scholars from all over the world, but the

intellectual exploration has risen to the height of mutual learning among civilizations. In a sense, this is "the study of the nature of things and academic exchanges" that was dreamed of by Hu Shi, Liang Sicheng, and Lin Huiyin, and a true example of working together to construct the intellectual Silk Road.

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Indian elephant: Past and present



Om Prakash Singh

The Indian elephant is a sub-species of Asian elephant, a species which in addition to the Indian elephant also includes the Sumatran elephant, the Sri-Lanka elephant, and the Borneo elephant. Scientifically known as *elephas maximus indicus*, the Indian elephant is the most widely distributed of the four Asian elephant sub-species. It is found throughout south-east Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Laos, Peninsular Malaysia, Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand, and Vietnam,

India is home to more than half of the wild elephants and about one-fifth of the captive elephant population of Asia. With such a significant population, the elephant is not just an animal in India. Elephants have been part of the religion, myth, history, and cultural heritage of India since time immemorial. With such a close association, many Indians consider the elephant as the national animal of India, even though technically it is the tiger. It is aptly commented that one cannot imagine India without elephants.

Historians and archaeologists have traced the beginning of the domestication of elephants as early as about 6000 B.C., based on rock paintings. Evidence of seals from the Harappan Civilization from about 2000 B.C. reinforces the early date of domestication. The God Indra's association with Airavata, the white elephant, reminds us of the continuity of tradition during the early Vedic period, and the later Vedic literature also confirms that by the sixth century B.C. the capture and taming of elephants had become quite a refined art. The early literature reveals that kings and their officials were duly instructed in the art of handling elephants. In Kautilya's Arthashastra, we find details of officials and departments related to elephants. It prescribes the setting up of elephant sanctuaries on the

periphery of the kingdom that were to be patrolled by guards. Killing an elephant within the sanctuary was to be met with capital punishment. It also prohibits the capturing of elephant calves and diseased elephants. During the reign of Emperor Ashoka (273-232 B.C.), the elephant became the symbol of Buddhism, and Ashokan edicts even refer to the setting up of hospitals for the treatment of elephants and other animals.

The elephant has been a very important part of Indian religion. Be it Hinduism or Buddhism, the elephant is very closely associated with spirituality and belief. One of the most well-known elephants in religion is the Hindu god Ganesh, depicted as a human with an



Decorated Indian elephant at the Annual Elephant Festival, Jaipur, Rajasthan

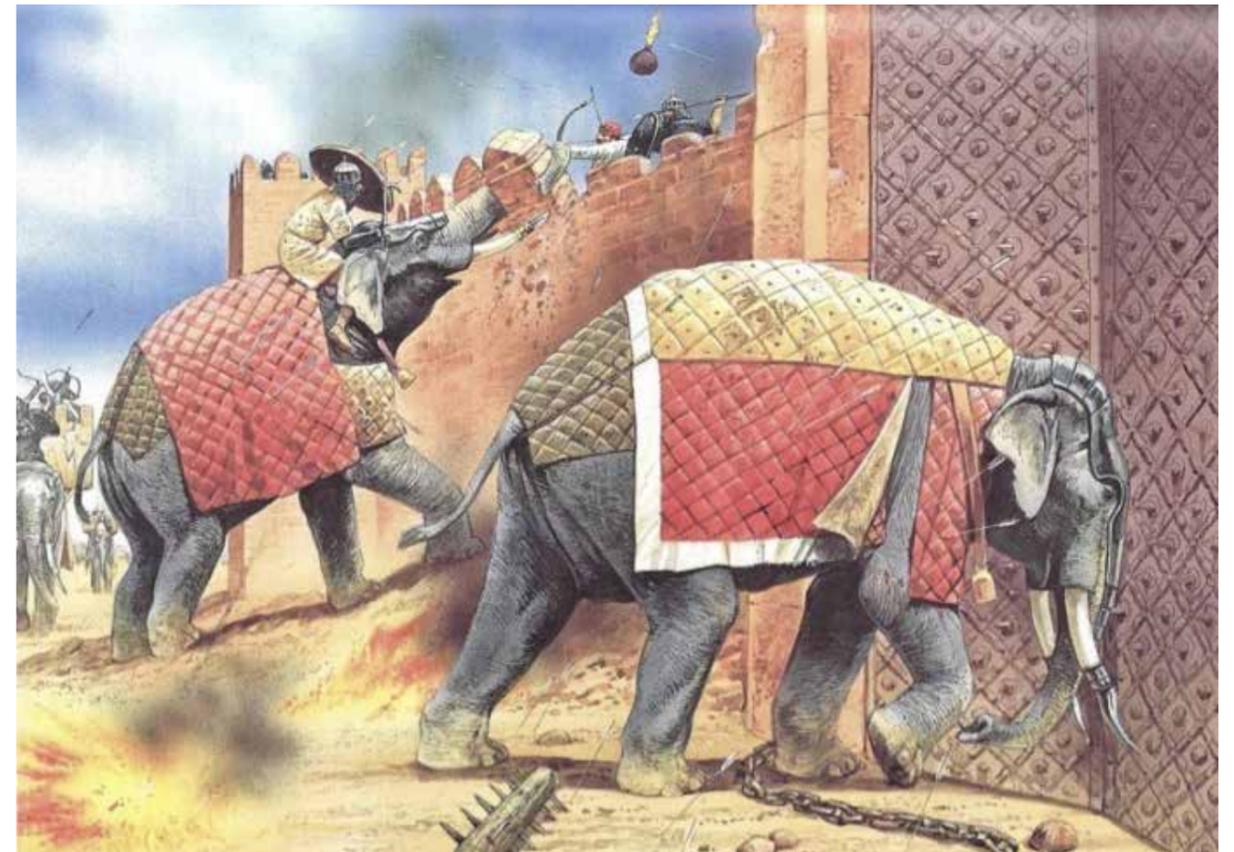
Courtesy of worldfestivaldirectory.com

elephant's head. There are several Hindu legends that focus on the power and strength of elephants. One legend depicts them as the guardians of the world. According to Hindu faith, there are eight elephants placed around the edges of the world who are sometimes joined by eight Gods that the elephants bear on their backs. Each of these pairs guards an area of space and helps to protect the world. It is suggested that when one of these elephants moved it causes an earthquake. Even today, in Kerala, elephants are kept within temple premises and are part of significant temple ceremonies.

In Buddhism, the most significant legend is Queen Maya's dream. After being childless for several years into her marriage, one day Queen Maya dreamed of a white elephant with a lotus in its trunk which entered into her womb. She conceived the young Siddhartha soon thereafter, who grew up to become the Buddha. White elephants are thus regarded as symbols of power and fertility, and as the most auspicious of all animals. The Buddha is said to have incarnated as a white elephant several times. He once manifested as Chaddanta, a white elephant with a scarlet face and feet and with six tusks, and lived in a golden cave with two wives, Mahasubhadda and Chullasubhadda.

Indian history is also replete with instances where elephants not only contributed significantly, but even changed the course of history. During sixth century B.C., one of the significant reasons for the rise of the Magadhan kingdom and its ultimate culmination into an empire was the elephants which were abundantly available in the region, and which contributed extensively in warfare and transportation. The easy availability of elephants in its vicinity gave Magadha an obvious edge over other contemporary kingdoms, which led to its supremacy. In the north-west of India, when Chandragupta Maurya confronted the Greek governor Selucus Nicator, who had been deputized by Alexander the Great, a treaty was concluded between the two rulers. Per the terms of the treaty, Selucus and the Greeks ceded the Hindukush, Punjab and parts of Afghanistan to Chandragupta Maurya, all in return for Chandragupta Maurya's gift of 500 war elephants to Selucus. These elephants would later prove their value in the decisive Battle of Ipsus of 301 B.C., where Selucus defeated his major rival, Antigonus I.

In Ain-e-Akbari, a popular text of during the medieval times of the Mughal ruler Akbar, elephants figure prominently because Akbar took a deep interest in them. One hundred and one elephants



Medieval Indian war elephants

Courtesy of Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov

were reserved for the king. Akbar himself took the place of the mahout, that is, he sat on the neck rather than at the shoulder or in a howdah behind a driver. Paintings of Akbar and other Mughal rulers with elephants during war and hunting show the importance elephants enjoyed during medieval times.

The significance of elephants in India can also be seen in its popular culture. No religious or marriage procession is complete in India without the participation of elephants. Many movies have been produced in India on the theme of the relationship between man and elephant. *Hathi Mere Sathi* ("Elephants are My Companions") is one such movie, produced in 1971, and one of the biggest hits of Bollywood. This movie is about the relationship and bond between a man and four elephants. The elephants play a very central role in the life of the protagonist in the movie, and the movie revolves around this relationship, and continues to inspire many such works in the popular culture of India.

Despite all the cultural affection for elephants, in the real world Indian elephants are threatened by habitat loss as well as poaching. Concern for the threat to the elephant led to the formation of

the government backed Project Elephant in 1992. This scheme was intended to preserve habitat and establish natural corridors for elephant herds. Addressing human-elephant conflict issues and improving the welfare of domesticated elephants was also a central part of the project. Project Elephant has made a huge difference and provided a focus for conservation efforts. Although there are still many remaining problems, these efforts are beginning to bear fruit and the results are very encouraging.

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Morin Khuur – an Integral part of Mongolia’s nomadic culture

In the history of human migration, the ancestors of the nomadic Mongolians have made their distinctive contributions to world culture. The Mongolians created a variety of musical instruments, including the famed two-stringed fiddle, the morin khuur. The morin khuur features an expansive musical range, excellent sound expression, and perfect harmonization of its melody.

The origins of the morin khuur trace back to the ancient times of the Huns, who existed in the Mongolian territory around the third century BC., according to the historical records of the Tan Dynasty. Moreover, the horse-headed fiddle is referenced in oral and written sources attesting to the Mongol Empire of the 13th and 14th centuries, as well as the diary of the French missionary Guillaume de Roubruck, who visited Mongolia in between 1253-1255.

The materials used to build the morin khuur traditionally are derived from the body of horses, and the instrument is related to the cult of the horse. Its strings and bow are made of horsetail hair and the soundboard is covered with animal skin. The sound is similar to that of a violin or a cello. The diversity of musical instruments belonging to different Mongolian ethnic groups retains some of the traditional tunes, called ‘tatlaga’ (meaning short compositions), specifically intended for fiddle.

An ancient legend about the origin of the horse-headed fiddle, ‘morin khuur,’ says: Once upon a time, there was a man traveling on a long journey. On the way, his horse died. While watching his horse, the grieving traveler noticed that the mane and tail of his horse were whistling in the strongly blowing wind. Inspired by this, the traveler crafted his horse’s head with wood and coated the sound-box with the thin skin of groin of his horse and furnished



T. Otgontuul



D. Otgontuya



it with his horse's tail hair as strings. He stroked the instrument with a stringed-bow and melodiously described his horse's neighing sound, and his steps in trotting and cantering, which consoled the traveler's heart. This is the ancient legend about how the morin khuur was first invented.

The morin khuur is an instrument that integrates the cultural and customary traditions of the Mongols and is played during festive events, social gatherings, ceremonies, and various rituals related to animal husbandry. This is why each Mongolian family prefers to have a morin khuur in their homes, and why they place it in the most honored spot. It is also played to 'expel home frost,' as well as a symbol of well-wishing to each family for a new year without pain, trouble, and struggle.

An interesting tradition is still being practiced among the people of the Gobi region, wherein herders use the charming melody of the morin khuur to help coax mother animals to accept baby animals that have been orphaned or rejected by their mothers. The use of the morin khuur for taming animals came to the attention of the public in the West with the introduction of the German ethnographic film named 'The Story of the Weeping Camel.'



It is significant that the morin khuur was added to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008. On the occasion of this memorable event, 1000 morin khuur musicians played both Mongolian melodies and western classical music, such as 'Concerto in D minor' by Bach and 'Melancholy Serenade' by Tchaikovsky.

The morin khuur, a beautiful sounding instrument, serves as an identity for promoting Mongolia worldwide, and contributes to intercultural understanding, peace, and harmony.

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The Spanish mantilla and the Silk Road : A five-century relationship

By Valentin Martinez Garcia

There is no clear, general consensus on when the mantilla (a lace or silk veil) was first introduced as a traditional garment in Spain. Some authors claim that its use comes from the clothing tradition of the Iberians, who inhabited the Iberian Peninsula from the 6th to the 1st century BC. Examples supporting this theory are the well-known Dama de Elche or Dama de Baza, key sculptures from that period which have generated much research on the topic.

Throughout the 19th century, Spain saw a change in the dress codes (related to which types of garments were appropriate to use by the different social classes and in the different contexts). Of course, these new dress codes affected how and when the mantilla could be used. These new dress codes were closely related to social events in Spain, such as bullfights, or to the prevailing Catholic traditions in the country, such as at Easter, Christmas, or Catholic weddings. By the 19th century, the mantilla became a common element of the lower class wardrobe. However, it also became popular among the upper social class when Queen Isabel II (1833 - 1868) was portrayed using it as part of her usual dressing style. The mantilla thus gained great prestige in important social events, making it an element of the upper social classes as a sign of distinction and elegance. Not only was the mantilla prevalent in social events, but it was also adopted as a symbol of protest by women, vindicating Spanish traditions against the emergence of foreign traditions and fashions.

Different fabrics were used to make mantillas, but lace came to be the most favored. Lace is normally made with silk and it follows an intricate floral design, commonly made in matte colors. The silk

used to create these mantillas (as well as other items of clothing common in that period) came to Spain following the Silk Road. As Professor Mariano Bonialain points out, we can confirm the existence of imports of silk from Asia since 1580, which explains the long tradition of importing this material to Spanish territory (and in that period of time to its colonies in Central and South America).

This leads us to consider that trade has always been a source of progress and development of different societies. Over time, societies have grown through commercial interactions with other territories, not only through the import and export of goods, but also of ideas. The Spanish mantilla, a clearly identifiable, world-renowned element of Spanish culture, is the result of international exchanges. The Silk Road has allowed the arrival of silk in Spain, a material that is fundamental to create the mantillas, one of Spain's most characteristic and representative pieces of clothing, its most socially rooted domestic fashion tradition, but a result of international trade



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Țuică: Romanian plum brandy



Jeong-O Park
Translated by **Euijin Lee**

It is known that the history of alcohol began in China around 7000 B.C., and the world's first spirited liquor was made in China as well around 3000 B.C. Chinese liquor is classified into hongjiu (red liquor), huangjiu (yellow liquor), and baijiu (white liquor) according to its color. Hongjiu refers to fruit wine like western wine, huangjiu is a fermented wine made from yellowish grains, and baijiu is a distilled wine made by fermenting grains. Among these, white wine has the highest alcohol content, and Kaoliang is the most popular liquor.

Distillation technology, which was originated from China, gradually spread to India, Egypt, Greece, and Romania over time. At that time, the Arabs called the distilled liquid as alcohol, which originally was used to make medicines and perfumes.

In the 6th century, as Arabs invaded Europe, the art of distillation naturally spread to Europe, where local alchemists and monks developed the craft further. It was recorded that the first distillation of alcohol in Romania was done in 1570 in the village of Turț in Satu Mare. In general, alcohol made by distilling fruit is called brandy. Romanian popular liquors such as Țuică, Horincă and Pălincă (also known as Palinca; in Hungary, Pálinka) belong to this group. It was recorded that Pălincă was produced in a part of Slovakia in 1630, and is believed to have passed down to Transylvania, which is also Romania, via Hungary. Țuică in Romania is a popular liquor which is usually produced from plums. Of course, it is also made from other fruits such as apples, pears, apricots, mulberries, raspberries and cherries depending on the region. Theoretically, in Romania, the alcoholic drink made from plums is called Țuică, and when other fruits are used, it is called Pălincă. However, Roma-

nians mostly use the term Țuică for liquor with relatively low alcohol proof (usually 40 degrees) and Pălincă for those with higher alcohol proof (usually 50 degrees or higher).

Plums and sugar are put in a distiller made of copper, called alambic (also known as al-ambiq in Arabic, and cazan in Romanian), and the distillation begins when they are sufficiently fermented. Once distilled, its proof reaches about 40 degrees, but if it is distilled again once or twice, the alcohol proof rises to 50-60 degrees (legal allowance of alcohol proof in Romania is 53%).

The liquor which is distilled once still has high purity, but the one distilled twice or more has very high purity that it causes no hangover. If you visit the house of a local family in Romania, they will suggest you have some Țuică which has aged more than 10 years in an oak barrel. It gives a subtle brownish scent covering the tip of your tongue. In Oltenia, Țuică is referred to as “clean poison,” and in Transylvania, it is called “rainwater” because it tastes good but has low alcohol proof. In Maramureș region which is the home of Țuică, the liquor is called “clean medicine” as the legend has it that anyone who drink a bottle of Țuică can overcome any disease.

Romanian plum production is the 3rd or 4th largest in the world. Surprisingly, about 75% of the fruit is used to make Țuică. Moreover, as each Korean family makes kimchi in, many Romanian families make their own Țuică that have different taste and aroma. Therefore, you must try Țuică when you travel Romania.

Although Romanians drink Țuică without diluting it with other beverages most of the time, they sometimes enjoy Țuică with different flavors by adding extracts from various kinds of fruits such as blueberries and cherries. They include blueberry plum brandy, cherry plum brandy, and apricot plum brandy.



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Naengmyeon: Korea's favorite cold noodle dish



Hyosun Ro

Noodle dishes are a quintessential component of every cuisine in Asia. Koreans have their fair share of warm and cold noodles with many variations. One of the most iconic noodle dishes is naengmyeon! It's made with chewy buckwheat noodles and commonly served in icy cold, refreshing broth or in a red spicy sauce. Naengmyeon is enjoyed all year round, but most popular during the summertime.

There are a great number of restaurants specializing in naengmyeon in Korea, many of which have been around for decades after being established by people who fled North Korea.

Naengmyeon is also commonly served at Korean barbecue restaurants as a main source of carbohydrates and a light and refreshing accompaniment to help round off the heavy meal.

There are largely two types of naengmyeon depending on how it's prepared – mul naengmyeon and bibim naengmyeon.

Mul naengmyeon consists of noodles that are served in refreshing and icy cold broth that's typically made with flavorful beef broth and/or dongchimi (radish water kimchi) brine. Mul means water, referring to the broth in this dish.

The origin of mul naengmyeon is Pyongyang, North Korea, and its history dates back over 700 years to the Goryeo Dynasty when buckwheat was first introduced to Korea. Ironically, this summertime favorite wasn't always a summer dish. Buckwheat is harvested in autumn, and people in the North would make noodles using plentiful buckwheat flour and serve their noodles in icy cold brine from their winter water kimchi, dongchimi.

In 2018, naengmyeon came under the global spotlight during the historic summit between the leaders of North and South Korea.

The images of the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and South Korean president Moon Jae-in eating Pyongyang naengmyeon together were highly publicized all over the world. This led to a naengmyeon craze with people in both North and South Korea lining up to eat the dish at their favorite naengmyeon restaurants to celebrate “noodle diplomacy.”

If the noodles are mixed in a spicy, tangy and sweet sauce, it's called bibim naengmyeon. The word “bibim” translates to “mixed.” A popular type of bibim naengmyeon is Hamheung naengmyeon, which often includes the addition of raw fish, hoe, usually marinated skate or pollack. Unlike mul naengmyeon, bibim naengmyeon traces to the city of Hamheung, North Korea.

Naengmyeon noodles are thin and distinctly chewy due to the starch in them. Pyongyang naengmyeon noodles are made with much more buckwheat than starch and have a light brown color, while Hamheung naengmyeon noodles are made more with potato or sweet potato starch, so they are chewier.

Both types of naengmyeon are served with a variety of toppings which typically include slices of beef, cucumbers, Korean pear, pickled radish and a hard boiled egg. Additionally, spicy mustard sauce or vinegar can be added as condiments.

There are also many other different regional adaptations of



Mul naengmyeon



Bibim naengmyeon

naengmyeon. In the southern port city of Busan, milmyeon is a specialty. Translated to "wheat flour noodles," milmyeon is lighter in color because the noodles are mostly made with wheat flour, as opposed to buckwheat.

Milmyeon was evolved from naengmyeon by North Korean refugees in Busan during the Korean war.

Jinju is a city in South Gyeongsang Province in South Korea, and its naengmyeon also comes in mul or bibim varieties. Jinju-style mul naengmyeon consists of a cold seafood broth made with dried anchovies, dried pollock, clams or mussels, which is served with buckwheat noodles.

Here's a recipe for Pyongyang-style naengmyeon so you can make this restaurant-favorite dish at home.

Ingredients

For sweet and sour radish

- 400 grams Korean radish (mu)
- 3 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt

For beef broth (makes about 10 cups - 4 servings)

- 250 grams beef brisket
- 150 grams Korean radish, mu 1/2 medium onion
- 6 plump garlic cloves 3 thin ginger slices
- 2 large scallion white parts
- 1/2 teaspoon peppercorns
- 2 tablespoons Korean soup soy sauce, guk ganjang 1 teaspoon sugar
- salt to taste

For noodles 4 servings of naengmyeon noodles

- 2 boiled egg cut into halves
- 1 cucumber
- 4 thin half-moon shape slices of a Korean pear - optional vinegar to taste
- Hot mustard paste

Instructions

For the sweet and sour radish:

Clean the radish by scrubbing with a brush and/or scratching off the stubborn impurities with a knife. Place cut side down and slice lengthwise as thin as you can. Gather the slices and cut into about 2 to 3-centimeter strips.

Add the vinegar, sugar, and salt. Mix well by hand until the sugar is dissolved. Taste and add more vinegar or sugar to taste.

For the broth:

In a large pot, bring the meat, onion, scallions, garlic, ginger, peppercorns and soup soy sauce to a boil, uncovered, in 14 cups of water. Reduce the heat to medium, and skim off the scum. Continue to boil, covered, until the meat is tender, about 1 hour.

Remove the meat and cool. Discard the vegetables. Cool the broth. Remove any excess fat floating.

Stir in 2 teaspoons of sugar and salt to taste (about 2 teaspoons if used soup soy sauce). You can also add 1 or 2 cups of dongchimi brine, if available, and reduce the beef broth by the same amount. Also use less salt if using dongchimi brine. Keep it in the freezer for an hour or two until the broth becomes slushy. Keep the remaining broth in the fridge or freezer for later use.

Cut the cucumber in half lengthwise. Thinly slice crosswise, lightly sprinkle with salt, and let it sit until the cucumber slices are wilted. Thinly slice the beef against the grain. Thinly slice the pear into a half-moon shape if using.

For the noodles:

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Prepare an ice bath while water is boiling. Cook the noodles according to the package instructions. Drain quickly and shock in the ice water to stop cooking. Drain and rinse again in icy cold water until the noodles are very cold.

Make four one-serving size mounds, placing in a colander to drain.

To serve, place one serving of noodles in the middle of the serving bowl and top with the pickled radish, slices of beef, cucumber, and pear if using, and the egg half. Pour 2 to 2.5 cups of the icy broth around the noodles. Repeat for more servings. Serve with vinegar and hot mustard paste on the side.

Hyosun Ro is a Korean-American mom who authors the Korean home-cooking blog, Korean Bapsang (table). She started the blog in 2009 which has become the go-to site for easy-to-follow recipes on classic Korean cuisine, with over 250 authentic recipes. She was a contributor to the Korea Herald for 5 years, and her recipes have been published on the Guardian, the NBC News, Buzz-feed and several other food-related websites. She works for the U.S. Government in Washington, D.C. and lives in Northern Virginia.



Mountains of Pamir: The “Roof of the World”

By Boboev Farrukh

The President of Tajikistan declared 2019-2021 to be years of the development of tourism and folk crafts. In that spirit, consider the natural beauty and cultural richness of Tajikistan, the high mountains of Pamir, and the unique nature of this republic with seven great lakes, all of which are of great interest to foreign tourists and guests.

The necessary conditions have been created for the development of a tourism industry which undoubtedly can attract foreign visitors, because from year to year the number of tourists visiting Tajikistan is growing. The success of tourism in the country is developing rapidly, and suggests that the number of foreign guests will grow even more in the future. The rapid growth of tourism in Tajikistan has attracted the attention of world's large information agencies, such as New York Times, BBC, World Tourism Organization, National Geographic, the British magazine “Wanderlust,” “The Independent”, and many others.

In 2020, the New York Times, in its famous annual 52 places to visit, lists Tajikistan in 33rd place, while the World Tourism Organization considered Tajikistan as taking second place in the development of tourism in the world. The BBC declared Tajikistan among the top ten destinations in the field of adventure tourism. National Geographic admired Pamir Highway along with its mountains, and says: “Pamir Highway [is] among ten beautiful mountain passes in the world.”

Pamir itself is a U-shaped valley surrounded by high mountains, lakes, and many glaciers. The highest peak is Ismoil Somoni Peak at 7495 meters, and the longest glacier, named Fedchenko, is 77 km. Today, Pamir has become one of the top destinations in the world for tourists. The principal attractions in Pamir include Tajik National Park (known as Pamir Mountains), Pamir Highway (M41 road), and the natural wildlife of Pamir alongside some of the greatest lakes of the world.

Fedchenko Glacier

I want to take the opportunity to introduce you this boundless, mysterious land in Asia and the Tajik National Park (mountains of the Pamir), known as the “Roof of the World.” This region has always stolen the hearts and minds of the visitors from all around the world. The land of Pamir once was a place for Great Persian Kings, the mysterious Bactria, the troops of Alexander the Great,

Tamerlane, Babur, Marco Polo, and dozens of other historic figures.

Tajik National Park is an area of more than 2.5 million hectares, located in the east of Tajikistan; in the center of the so-called Pamir mountain cluster. The park has 170 rivers, more than 400 lakes, and at least 1,085 glaciers, including the longest glacier in a mountain valley outside the Polar Regions. The Pamir Mountains Park is the first natural site in Tajikistan to be included in the World Heritage List.

More than 60 percent of the Tajik National Park is located in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province. Its territory includes the most popular natural complexes of the Pamirs, and covers almost all the range's mountains of seven thousand meters, the largest glaciers and lakes, and several high-mountain plateaus.

The region contains a number of magnificent natural phenomena, including the Fedchenko Glacier, the longest glacier in the world (77 km) outside of the polar regions; Lake Sarez, a very high, deep lake created a century ago by a severe earthquake which generated a huge landslide which the Uzo Dam, the highest natural dam in the world; and Karakul Lake, likely to be the world's highest large lake of meteoric origin.

Sarez Lake

Valuable landscapes, rare and endangered species of flora and fauna, monuments of nature, culture and history are protected here. You can see such rare species as the Marco Polo mountain ram, snow leopards, Siberian ibex, and the red wolf.

The Tajik National Park is a pearl of highland nature, which is more and more widely known throughout the world. It contributes to the expanding popularity and growing attractiveness of our country, reflecting not only the beauty of our nature, but also our efforts to take care of the ecology of highland areas, preserving its unique flora and fauna.



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Hiking on Brasov's city guard: Tampa Mountain

By Cristina Maria
Păcurar

Brasov is one of the largest cities in the central region of Romania, and one of the most visited and appreciated tourist destinations in the country. The city, although no longer protected by its old city walls, has always had a faithful guard through time: the Tampa Mountain.

Shadowing the city from its earliest settlement, Tampa Massif gave Brasov a popular alias: “The Town at the Bottom of Tampa.” The story of this mountain is the story of the city, a beautiful *mélange* of collective and individual history.

Archaeological digs discovered traces of Romans who occupied the city and named the Mountain Tempus (tempus is the Latin word for time) or Temporize, as a tribute to the God of time. Even today, Tampa remains a symbol of the passing of time, as its appearance marks the gentle transition to each new season: in winter an intransigent image of snow-covered naked branches of the broadleaf trees, blending with the solemnity of evergreen trees, transitioning to

the pairing of birth and everlasting in the hopeful spring, followed by the triumphal festival of life, when the slopes of Tampa are bathed in the warm summer sun, and the cycle culminating with a carefully designed canvas where splashing colors are perfectly mixed.

At the bottom of Tampa, there is a promenade bounded not only by the mountain and the forest but also by the old city walls. Here you can find numerous different spots to admire the Mountain. During winter, you can combine sports with sightseeing and go to the outdoor skating ring available at the bottom of Tampa, right at the beginning of Schei neighborhood, which offers the perfect view of the snowy peak. The parks which can be found along the promenade are an ideal choice for every season, and so are the simple benches which ward over the forest, as well as the alley. You can even find a bench carved in stone which was documented in 1817.

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The bench is not only special because its age, but also because an emotional love story related to it, of a couple who found their end as a stone fell from the Mountain. The story of the bench does not make it a funeral stone which bows to death, but rather, a celebration of love, which greets life, as the bench welcomes everyone to take a moment and sit down to contemplate the most beautiful love anthem, sung by nature itself.

Along the alley, there is also a restaurant, with an outdoor terrace surrounded by the forest, which offers a wide range of delicious food. Also, every year, an outdoor food festival is hosted on the promenade, which brings together local food and international specialties.

The best way to feel the Mountain is to take one of the four paths which lead to the top, each with a different degree of difficulty and with distinct, marvelous, hidden gems. The hike takes about an hour and will give you astonishing views of the city and its surrounding. There is also a cable car available to whisk you to the top of Tampa. From here you can see not only some of the most beautiful tourist attractions in Brasov, like the Black Church, the Council Square, Saint Nicholas Church, the old fortifications, and many others, but you can also admire the breathtaking surrounding landscape, with Bucegi Mountains to the South, Piatra Craiului Mountains to the west, and Fagaras Mountains further in the distance. You can have a picnic on the top of the Mountain and admire the view, or you can descend to the bottom of Tampa, and choose one of the many restaurants with Romanian specialties which face



the mountain Tampa in the old city.

Tampa offers wide biodiversity, being a natural reservation. The forest is a mixture of broadleaf and evergreen species which create a special color palette which changes with every season. The rich flora is doubled by the impressive fauna, as Tampa is home to bears, deer, wolves, lynxes, foxes, squirrels, and other mammals, as well as unique birds, reptiles, and amphibians.

As far as accommodation is concerned, Brasov offers a wide variety of lodging options. Tampa can be seen from most parts of the city, as it is partially

surrounded by the city. Being situated in the city center, the mountain is easily reachable by any means of public transportation, by car, or even on foot.

Tampa is the symbol of Brasov and carries within it the history of the city. The mountain is in the middle of the city, being present at all of its changes and changing along with it. Tampa Mountain is the canvas that nature and people share. It is definitely a place to visit and resonate with.



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Cristina Maria Pacurar is a PhD student at Transilvania University of Brasov majoring Mathematics.

The Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival

By Li Ke

The four major traditional festivals in China – the Mid-Autumn Festival, Spring Festival, Ching Ming Festival, and Dragon Boat Festival – all have profound historical origins.

The Mid-Autumn Festival, originating from the worship of celestial phenomena, and evolved from the autumn eve of ancient times. Originally, the "Jiyue Festival" was on the 24th "solar term," or the autumn equinox in the Ganzhi calendar. Later, it was adjusted to the 15th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, though in some places, the Mid-Autumn Festival was set on the 16th day of the lunar calendar. The festival was popularized in the Han Dynasty (202 BC-220 AD), finalized in the early years of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), and has prevailed from the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279) to this day.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is a day for family reunion. Our country has always attached great importance to this long-standing traditional festival, and the law provides for a three-day holiday. During the holidays, I sometimes go back to my hometown with my parents and join the Mid-Autumn Festival party with the whole family. Sometimes we would go hiking at night, admire the moon and eat moon cakes on the top of the mountain. Sharing moon cakes with family members is the most important ceremony in the festival.

In the documentary record, the word "moon cake" first appeared in the Meng Liang Lu written by Wu Zimu of Southern Song Dy-



Moon cakes

nasty (1127-1279 AD). Moon cakes were originally used as a tribute to worship the moon god. As it is usually round, people gradually combine viewing the moon with moon cakes, which symbolizes family reunion and is a reminder of their feelings for missing family members. Moon cakes have slowly evolved into a specialty for the Mid-Autumn Festival. In the past, the filling of moon cakes mainly used raw seeds, such as walnut kernels, almonds, sesame kernels, melon seeds, hawthorn, lotus seed paste, as well as red beans, jujube paste, and others, which were thought to have certain health effects on the human body. Now the flavors are more diverse, such as various fruits, chocolate, and even entirely new styles, such as ice cream moon cakes.

The Mid-Autumn Festival uses the full moon to signify the reunion of people. It is a rich and precious cultural heritage for yearning for our hometown, the longing for loved ones, and praying for the harvest and for happiness. There are countless poems related to the Mid-Autumn Festival. I will end this article with the

popular "Watery-Prelude-Melody" written by Su Shi.
Happy Mid-Autumn Festival to everyone!

Watery - Prelude - Melody

Su Shi

How rare the moon, so round and clear!
With cup in hand, I ask of the blue sky,
I do not know in the celestial sphere
What name this festive night goes by?
I want to fly home, riding the air,
But fear the ethereal cold up there,
The jade and crystal mansions are so high!
Dancing to my shadow,
I feel no longer the mortal tie.
She rounds the vermilion tower,
Stoops to silk-pad doors,
Shines on those who sleepless lie.
Why does she, bearing us no grudge,
Shine upon our parting, reunion deny?
But rare is perfect happiness--
The moon does wax, the moon does wane,
And so men meet and say goodbye.
I only pray our life be long,
And our souls together heavenward fly!

- Translated by Lin Yutang

The Globe: A classy restaurant and lounge in Riyadh

The Globe is Riyadh's most exclusive fine-dining restaurant, perched atop Al Faisaliah Tower in a glassy orb. The restaurant is a three-story venue serving Arabic dishes and modern European dishes with a French emphasis. The Globe offers three full-course menus created with an eye on flavor and budget. The traditional High Tea is not to be missed on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 4 pm.

By Alhanouf Alrowaili

The Globe Lounge is a signature venue at Al Faisaliah Hotel, and is one of the most unique in Riyadh. What's special in this lounge, restaurant, and cafe is not only the different sections, but the place itself – it's located inside the crystal rounded shape made from strong glass on the top of Al Faisaliah Tower in Riyadh, the Saudi capital. When guests look through the glass they will see an amazing panoramic view of Riyadh while enjoying their food, coffee, or smoking cigars. The whole atmosphere is quiet, cozy, and relaxing. The lounge is not large, so the number of guests is limited, providing privacy and closeness with your companions, or even by yourself. The Globe Lounge won the 2015 Saudi Excellence in Tourism Award for Best Fine Dining at a Hotel Restaurant, which added to the many awards the Globe Restaurant and the five-star Al Faisaliah Tower have received over the years.

Al Faisaliah Tower is a 267-meter-highskyscraper that is the centerpiece of a mixed-use complex in the heart of Riyadh's premier business district, and cost \$800 million when completed in the year



2000. The Tower was the first skyscraper built in Saudi Arabia, and is known for its outstanding overall design, as well as specific features such as the stunning stained glass wall in its lobby. The Tower is still a striking part of the city skyline, but is now accompanied by three even taller structures – the Kingdom Center, Burj Rafal and Avraj, Al Bait, though it still ranks among the 300 or so tallest buildings in the world.

This is a fabulous place for couples, or friends' in groups large or small. It's a place for fine dining, as well as for gatherings and business meetings. Looking for a place for thoughtful writing? Come and get inspired by the amazing view. Even the selection of music is inspiring, including saxophone jazz, classical music, and songs of celebrations. The food is tasty and done to high professional standards. The art of serving is very beautifully executed here, and guests can further decorate their plates with everything down to well organized desserts from fruits to chocolate mousse cake.

The Globe is one of the most refined and high class dining places in Riyadh, and is owned by sons of King Faisal al-Saud, including



his Royal Highness Prince Khaled al-Faisal, the noted poet and artist, who spent time in his office in the tower, which made it even more popular for people to go to the Globe in hopes of catching a special moment with him.

Alhanouf Alrowaili is a student at the Canadian university of Dubai.

SUN NEWS

The 6th General Assembly of SUN



Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the 6th General Assembly (GA) of SUN was held online, hosted by Ankara University in Ankara, Turkey, on December 3, 2020. The GA, which ran for three hours from 8 a.m. UTC to 11 a.m. UTC, included meaningful and rich programs. More than 100 participants including rectors, presidents, chancellors and vice-chancellors, professors and students from 29 member universities of SUN attended the meeting. The theme of this year's GA was "The Past 5 Years and Future of SUN as a Joint Intellectual Platform for Enshrining Cultural Diversity, Peace and Co-prosperity along the Silk Roads." The participants celebrated and reflected the past of the SUN, and shared creative ideas about its future.

The 6th General Assembly consisted of four parts. Part I was the opening ceremony which began with a performance of students from Ankara University. Before the procla-

mation of the start of General Assembly, all participants observed a silent prayer for the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic and the tragic event that had struck Kabul University, a member of SUN, in November. In Chul Kim, president of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies which chairs the SUN, gave an opening address and Rector Necdet Unuvar of Ankara University, the GA host university, delivered a welcome speech.

Part II was the main session of GA. Professor Sungdon Hwang, the secretary general of SUN, reported a review of activities of SUN in 2020 and its financial report, and the GA approved them. Profs. Rohullah Bayat and Sunju Kwak, the auditors of SUN, reported the audit result. The election of the second secretary general was held in the session as the 5-year term of the first secretary general of SUN was to end on December 31, 2020. Prof. Sungdon Hwang was re-elected for a





new five-year term.

After a break, UPSUN and USSUN Workshops were held separately. In the UPSUN Workshop, the participating heads of member universities presented and discussed about agendas related to the theme of the 6th GA. Student participants of the General Assembly of SUN also participated in the General Assembly of the United Students of SUN (USSUN), the student of body of SUN.

Part IV was the closing ceremony. There was the award ceremony for the PHOCOS and WRICOs, and the General Assembly of SUN ended after designating National University of Mongolia, Mongolia as the official host of the 7th General Assembly of SUN in 2021, hoping that the coronavirus pandemic will end and all the SUN members will assemble together in Mongolia celebrating Naadam Festival.

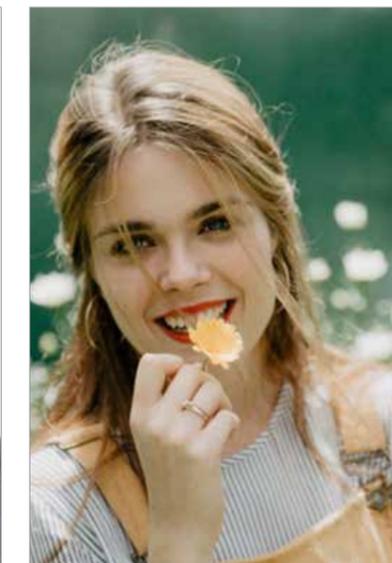
The 5th Photo and the 4th Writing Contests

The 5th PHOCOS and the 4th WRICOS in 2020 were held successfully with the active participation of member universities. In the PHOCOS, 73 students from 34 universities submitted a total of 275 photos with the theme 'Colors of the Silk Roads'. Jose Luis Santos of

the University Of Coimbra, Portugal, won the Grand Prize, with a photo that captured the image of a labor in Banddar Abbas, a local market in Iran. In the WRICOS, 92 students from 21 universities submitted poems about 'The Wisdom of the Silk Roads for the Surviv-



José Luís Santos
University Of Coimbra,
Portugal
PHOCOS Grand Prize Winner



Maria Diakaki
Aristotle University
WRICOS Grand Prize Winner (Poem)



Ganchuluun Erdene
National University of
Mongolia
WRICOS Grand Prize Winner (Essay)

al of Civilizations' and essays about 'The Silk Roads Reconnected'. Maria Diakaki of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, won the Grand Prize in the poem section with her work. The Grand Prize in the essay section went to Ganchuluun Erdene of the National University of Mongolia, Mongolia, who wrote about Urban Economic Research.

The 1st Speech Contests

The hosting of the 1st Speech Contest of SUN was announced on November 12, 2020. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, SUN had cancelled this year's Debate Contest of SUN (DECOS). As an alternative, SUN decided to hold the speech contest, and named the contest as S-DECOS, which stands for Speech and Debate Contest of SUN. The SUN Secretariat encourages many students from the member universities to participate in the event and grab the great opportunity to share



their ideas and talents. The theme of the 1st S-DECOS is 'Speaking Hopes in the Era of COVID-19'. Any ideas about promising jobs, innovative start-up businesses, revolutionary changes in higher education in the post-

COVID-19 era, and any other relevant topics are welcomed. More information on the S-DECOS can be found in the poster and notice posted on the SUN website (<http://www.sun-silkroadia.org/>).

Welcome New Staff of SUN Secretariat

In September, 2020, there was a personnel change in the SUN Secretariat. Here are the new staffs of the SUN Secretariat 2020.



Euijin Lee

Studying for a master's degree in counseling psychology at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Responsible for General Assembly, IASS and Webzine



Zhanara Khairolla

Studying for a master's degree in Russian & CIS studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Responsible for General Assembly, Membership and Social Media Management



Amali R. Thantrige

Studying for a bachelor's degree in international studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Responsible for Webzine, S-DECOS and Communication with USSUN



Sunwoo Lee

Studying for a bachelor's degree in English literature & culture at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Responsible for WRICOS, SPO and Website Management



Heeyeong Kim

Studying for a bachelor's degree in Romanian Language at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Responsible for Website Management and Expedition



Jinyi Kim

Studying for a bachelor's degree in English linguistics and language technology at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Responsible for PHOCOS and Expedition

USSUN NEWS

August 2020

USSUN has started a series of musical events, called 'Tune in to the Silk-Roads' on the Instagram platform since August 2020. The first round consisted of five renowned musicians from every corner of the world. It was held on 19 August 2020 at 12:00 UTC. It started with the ancient instrument of Oud, played by Mohammad Amirbeygi. He is the B.A student of Iranian music at the University of Tehran. Each performance was arranged to take 5-7 minutes. Subsequently, the Molana group from Afghanistan performed some wonderful instruments with mesmerizing tunes. They played Ney, Dutar, and Rabab for 15 minutes. It must be added that they were on the stage of one of the popular channels of Herat, Asrtv. The musicians were among the legends of Afghanistan:

The program continued with the fantastic musical instrument of Italy, the Hurdy Gurdy. The member of the International Music Summer Campus, Harpeggio, and Giovanni Damiano kindly accepted to be part of this event

and prepared two themes for the Instagram live. Mehdi Sangi Kermanshahi was the next guest who humbly welcomed us and played Daf, the ancient musical instrument of mostly Kurdish region. Master Sangi is the head of Jouan Daf Group and had 20 years of experience playing in various musical groups and concerts under his belt. This amazing event was concluded by the ineffable beauty of the Japanese instrument, Koto, who was played by the Russian musician, Lubov Vitavskaya. She is a member of the Russian Police Orchestra and a student of Yamada Midori from Yamada School.

September 2020

USSUN and Eco Heritage agreed to publish one issue of this quarterly cultural magazine on the cultural rituals of the ten countries located in the ECO region. This issue is going to be published in January 2021.



October 2020

The second round of musical events, called 'Tune in to the Silk-Roads' was held on 18 October at 15:00 UTC. In this live session, four popular musicians in four countries took part to introduce Tabla (Indian drums), the ancient Iranian Harp: Kanun, Panflute, Piano, and drums. Ajinkya Deshmukh from India had the Teental performance with a 16-bit rhythm structure. The renowned composer, Rabeh Zand, is also the master of building this old instrument and successfully optimized the sound. Granny Gems had Alexa, Jp, and Joshua as its bass guitarist, pianist, and drummer. USSUN had the honor to have Mariana Preda from Romania; she is an active member of the Cununa Ensemble, Conservatory of Amsterdam, and the winner of the IBLA Grand Prize.

November 2020

The fourth round of the 'Tune in to the Silk-Roads' held on November 22 where four another amazing performances done by four different groups. South Korean group calls 'Variety, IS_A' played traditional Korean music instruments, Kkwaeungwari, Jang, Janggu and Buk. And the Iranian Musicians played Daf, Sitar, and Flute which mainly included traditional music from the northern part of Iran. Meanwhile introducing the central Asian traditional music instruments the Kazakhstan team 'HASSAK ethno- folk ensemble' also did a successful performance. Following that 'Golden Autumn Group' from Afghanistan also joined the live performance introducing Afghan music instruments.

NEWS FROM MEMBER UNIVERSITIES

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), Greece

NKUA becomes the first Greek university to launch undergraduate program in English, exclusively for international students.

In September 2020, the first 4-year undergraduate program taught in English at a Greek university, the "BA Program in the Archaeology, History, and Literature of Ancient Greece", welcomed its first foreign students in the Great Hall of the University. Students from Albania, Canada, China, Egypt, El Salvador, Kenya, Morocco, Palestine, United Arab Emirates and United States of America joined the University's international students' community which already numbers 7,600 international students registered in undergraduate and postgraduate programs of the NKUA.

The Minister of Education and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, Mrs. Niki Kerameus, the Rector of the NKUA, Professor M.A. Dimopoulos, and the Academic Director of the program, Professor Eleni Karamalengou, had the opportunity to salute the students in section groups due to special pan-



demographic protective measures. The orientation ceremony was streamed live for the students' family and friends to attend it from abroad.

Subsequently the students attended the introductory course and had the opportunity to meet their professors.

Except from the students who have been selected for the entire 4-year program, foreign university students were accepted to study for one year in this program. Throughout the 32 courses of its curriculum and in combination with educational visits to archaeological sites and other sites of cultural interest, students will have the opportunity to investigate the forces that led to the survival of the Greek civilization and Greek literature, and among others, they will focus on the interaction between Greek and Roman literature and civilization, which facilitated the dissemination of the Greek culture in the European West. They will obtain a degree with direct benefits in the labor market and unlock diverse career paths by gaining a versatile assortment of skills, including creativity, critical thinking, research, problem-solving, and communication.

Postgraduate studies in English

For the academic year 2020-21, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens announced 205 postgraduate programs at master level; the instruction language of 26 of these programs is English (or another foreign language). s and official delegations visited the institute.



NKUA ranked as top university in the world

According to the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2020, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens has been ranked 79th in the world for the quality of education provided (SDG 4 - "Quality Education"); 26th in the world for its significant impact on reducing social inequalities (SDG 10 - "Reduced Inequalities") and 86th in the world for SDG 5 - "Gender equality". Finally, for the SDG 3 - "Good health and well-being" - which is of special interest this year due to the covid-19 pandemic - the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens has been ranked 98th in the world for the improvement of healthcare and well-being of students and staff, as well as research on key diseases and conditions. Also, according to Webometrics 'Top Universities by Top Google Scholar Citations' rankings, which was published in late July 2020, NKUA has been ranked 86th in the world, 17th in Europe and 1st among Greek institutions.

The QS World University Rankings by Subject for 2020 has ranked the NKUA as 40th worldwide in the field of dentistry, classified it in the top 51-100 Universities in the field of Nursing, in the top 101-150 Universities in the topics of pharmacy and archeology, etc.

Ural Federal University

UrFU celebrates 100th anniversary

Ural Federal University, one of the leading and largest universities in Russia which is ranked 331st in the QS World University rankings, has turned 100 on October 19, 2020.

Ural Federal University, established in 1920, has a long and successful history of high-quality research and training of top-class specialists and is continuously improving its position and competitiveness on the world education and research stage.

Ural Federal University is proud to carry the torch of the two former higher educational institutions in the Ural region - Ural State and Ural Polytechnic Universities.

Located in Ekaterinburg, UrFU takes pride in creating an international research and education hub in the heart of Russia. Today UrFU offers 450+ educational programs of all levels in Russian and English taught by top-notch professors and researchers of national and international level. The university is home for 35 000 students, including 4300 foreign students from 101 countries.

UrFU has strong global ties through partnership with nearly 500 academic institutions from all over the world and participation in international network projects: Silk-Road Universities Network, Erasmus+, BRICS Network University, CIS Network University, Shanghai Cooperation Organization University, University of the Arctic, Association of Sino-Russian Technical Universities, etc.

On the day of its 100th anniversary, the University received hundreds of congratulations from its partners from all over the



world, including German President Steinmeier, Czech President Zeman and the first President of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev. All three are Honorary Doctors of Ural Federal University.

Ural Federal University receives Order of Sukhbaatar, Mongolia's highest honor

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mongolia to the Russian Federation Dulamsuren Davaa presented the Order to UrFU rector Victor Koksharov during the solemn ceremony of the university's 100th anniversary in October 2020.

Ural Federal University has a long and successful history of cooperation with Mongolia. The university has been making a significant contribution to the development of Mongolia - hundreds of UrFU graduates hold high positions in the government, business, industry and media of the country. Apart of that, UrFU has partnerships with prominent Mongolian industrial enterprises.

Ural Federal University has already held the Order of the Red Banner of Labor issued in 1981 by the parliament of Mongolia - State Great Khural - for "great achievements in training specialists for the Mongolian Peo-



ple's Republic”.

Mongolian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary DulamsurenDavaa noted in his congratulatory speech that UrFU has trained thousands of top-class professionals for Mongolia, who have realized their potential in different areas, making a great contribution to the economic growth and social welfare of the country.

DulamsurenDavaa also stressed that Ural Federal University makes a worthy contribution to the comprehensive development of Mongolian-Russian relations within the framework of strategic partnership.

Ural Institute of Hainan Institute of Economics and Business to be established in Hainan Province

A joint cooperation project of Ural Federal University and Hainan Institute of Economics and Business has been approved by the government of China's Hainan Province in October 2020. The Ural Institute will be a joint vocational and technical educational institution for full-time study.

For Ural Federal University this is the second such project. UrFU already implements 5 joint educational programs with Ural Institute of North China University of Water Resources and Electric Power (NCWU). A total of 932 students from China are currently studying under this project, and 400 additional places are available in 2020.

As the government of Hainan Province reports, they attach great importance to expanding external relations in the field of education. The establishment of the new educational institution with UrFU is aimed at developing innovative models in training highly qualified specialists, increasing the level of internationalization of the organization and assisting in the construction of the Hainan free-trade port.

According to this project, the Ural Institute of Hainan Institute of Economics and Business will launch 4 educational programs in tourism management, financial management, computer software technologies and technologies for integration of electronic and mechanical systems. The period of study will

be 3 years.

In accordance with the admission plan, this joint educational institution will enroll 200 students every year starting in 2020. Hainan Institute of Economics and Business was established in 1984 and is located in the new Jiangdong district of Haikou, the administrative center of Hainan Province. The Institute offers 38 majors and has 12,000 students.



University of Coimbra, Portugal

University of Coimbra application selected as one of the new European inter-university campuses

The Universities of Coimbra (Portugal), AlexandruIoanCuza of Iasi (Romania), Friedrich Schiller University of Jena (Germany), Pavia (Italy), Poitiers (Coordinator, France), Salamanca (Spain) and Turku (Finland) announced on July 9, 2020, that their proposal for the creation of the Alliance “European Campus of City-Universities, EC2U” had been selected by the European Commission at the 2020 call of the pilot phase of “European Universities”.

Created in 2017, the EC2U Alliance forms a multi-cultural and multi-lingual pan-European campus consisting of seven long-standing, education- and research-led, locally and globally engaged universities. It represents a community of 160, 000 students and 20, 000 staff, in direct reach to more than 1, 600, 000

citizens.

The EC2U Alliance's ambition is to develop an innovative space allowing mobility to flow freely between the seven universities and associated cities.

Series of online lectures about Portuguese literature through BFSU-UC center

The Sino-Lusophone Academy of the University of Coimbra, through the BFSU-UC Centre for China-Portuguese Speaking Countries, is promoting a weekly series of 14 online lectures about Portuguese Literature, between September 21 and December 21, 2020.

The lectures are given by Professors of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra and are directed mainly to students of the 3rd year of the undergraduate degree in Portuguese Language and Culture of Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU).



Carlos Robalo Cordeiro elected president of the European Respiratory Society

On September 11, 2020, Carlos Robalo Cordeiro, dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Coimbra, was elected president of the European Respiratory Society (ERS), the largest European scientific society dedicated to research and training about respiratory diseases. It is the first time that a Portuguese specialist has held this position.

730 Years of UC: 73 harps in Mondego

On September 13, 2020, the University of Coimbra was transformed into an open-air stage for a concert purposely created to celebrate the University's 730th anniversary.

The show, titled "730 Years of UC: 73 harps in Mondego", included several national and international musicians (physically or remotely), also with the participation of local



Coimbra artists.

President of the Portuguese Republic present at the opening ceremony of classes 2020/2021

On October 14, 2020, the President of the Portuguese Republic, Professor Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, attended and made a speech at the Solemn Opening Ceremony of Classes 2020/2021 of the University of Coimbra, alongside the Rector, Professor Amílcar Falcão, and other distinguished members of the academia.

In the context of the pandemic, the ceremony was held privately, with live broadcast, abiding to the guidelines from health authorities.



Commemorative coin of the 730th anniversary of the University of Coimbra

The Portuguese Mint and Official Printing Office (INCM) has launched a commemorative 2€ coin in honor of the 730th anniversary of the establishment of the University of Coimbra (1920), the oldest university in the Portuguese-speaking countries and one of the oldest in the world.

The commemorative coin displays on the national side the representation of the Tower of the University of Coimbra and a composition of triangles representing the roofs of the institution's buildings.



Portuguese Space Incubator wins European RegioStars 2020 Award

The incubation centre of the European Space Agency (ESA) in Portugal (ESA BIC Portugal), coordinated by the Pedro Nunes Institute (IPN), founded by the University of Coimbra, won the RegioStars Prize on October 15, 2020. The RegioStars Prize is promoted by the European Commission with the aim of identifying good regional development practices, highlighting projects supported by European funds.

Canadian University of Dubai, UAE

COVID-19

COVID-19 is the first global pandemic of the digital age, and Canadian University Dubai (CUD) persisted and evolved in unprecedented ways. CUD acted without exception to comply with national directives to shift to distance learning across all programs and services. During this change, CUD hosted the world's tallest graduation ceremony, published and collaborated internationally, obtained international accreditations, and opened their Admissions Office at City Walk.

2020 Graduation

Canadian University Dubai made history as it became the first university to display images of its graduating class on the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa. It was a fitting event for a deserving class.

Opening at City Walk

The CUD Admissions Office is now open at City Walk. The office is open for information, registration, and document review from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day.



CUD's new Admissions office marks the first step in CUD's bright future. City Walk is the perfect place to inspire learning and development. Its urban, downtown location offers an energetic atmosphere where students and staff can collaborate and relax while interacting with the many shops and services.

PRSA certification

Canadian University Dubai becomes the first CEPR-certified university in the MENA region after receiving the Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) for its Bachelor of Arts in Communication – Public

Relations major.

CUD obtains ACCA accreditation

Canadian University Dubai achieved another milestone in its degree program accreditations. After fully assessing the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Accounting and Finance of CUD, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) has awarded students who are going to graduate from CUD on or after January 1, 2021 and up to December 31, 2025, a total of seven exemptions in the professional ACCA examination papers, particularly those related to applied knowledge and applied skills.



Publications

A research paper by Dr. Firuz Kamalov, Associate Professor, Faculty of Engineering, Applied Science Technology at Canadian University Dubai, in collaboration with Dmitry Denisov of Deloitte/Careem, on finding a solution to deal with imbalanced data using the Gamma distribution was published in the leading AI journal, Knowledge-Based Systems.

A study led by Dr. Naveed Yasin, Associate Professor in Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management at Canadian University Dubai, co-authored with Dr. Zeinab Khansari (Ryerson University, Canada) and Kaiser Tirmizi (Muscat, Oman) entitled 'Exploring the Challenges for Entrepreneurship Business Incubator Hubs in the United Arab Emirates' has been accepted for publication in the International Journal of Globalization and Small Business in a Scopus indexed journal.

Published in Higher Education Digest, Dr Naveed Yasin, CUD's Associate Professor, Faculty of Management, described 'teaching-informed research,' a flipped approach to research that results in research being informed by pedagogy rather than pedagogy being informed by research. Within the field of enterprise and entrepreneurship/business management education, the purpose is to achieve more practical and relevant teaching and learning.



International collaboration

In collaboration with The London School of Economics & Political Science, Dr Aseel Takshe, Assistant Professor and Head of the Environmental Health Sciences Department and Dr David Contu, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Management, were two Canadian University Dubai faculty members on an important project to find and assess measures that could help make climate change mitigation measures more acceptable in the Gulf region.





Shanghai International Studies University, China

Shanghai International Studies University holds China-EU dialogue with diplomats to promote mutual understanding

The China-EU Dialogue which aims to discussing the current and future situation between China and Europe, was co-sponsored by Shanghai Academy for Global Governance and Area Studies (SAGGAS), Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) and the Consulate-General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Shanghai on October 16, 2020.

The theme of the event is "EU-China Re-

lations in a Challenging Year". SISU's faculty members and students, as well as 19 senior diplomats from 17 EU members and 3 delegates from the Chamber of Commerce of the EU and Germany attended the event. The heated discussion, among which burst many brilliant ideas, lasted for about four hours. The participants have fulfilled a candid, comprehensive and constructive dialogue with rational statements, blunt responses, deep exploration and targeted suggestions.

Beijing Foreign Studies University, China

The 80th Anniversary of Beijing Foreign Studies University on Sept. 26, 2020

After eight decades of ever-growing excellence, Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) will celebrate its 80th anniversary in September 2021. We would like to extend

our best regards to all alumni at home and abroad as well as to students and staff, and express our sincere gratitude to leaders and friends from all walks of life for their consistent understanding and support.

For 80 years, BFSU has been forging

ahead with undeviating aim. It currently teaches more than 100 foreign languages and covers a wide range of disciplines. It is the first in China to offer courses in some less commonly taught European, Asian and African languages. While best known for its excellence in foreign languages & literature, BFSU has also launched programs in more fields such as humanities, law, economics, management, etc.

It adheres to the motto of "Inclusiveness, Diversity, Knowledge and Dedication," which highlights "internationalized, specialized, high-quality and general education," and in this way has cultivated a great number of professionals, who have become a leading force in various fields in the world. Among them, more than 400 ambassadors and 2,000 counselors have won for BFSU the reputation of "the cradle for diplomats of the People's Republic of China".

For 80 years, BFSU has moved forward with great vigor to achieve more. In this period of major changes in the world, BFSU will shoulder its new mission, undertake its new responsibilities and strive for new accomplishments. BFSU will step up its efforts to build a world-class foreign studies university by implementing new strategies of talent cultivation, academic excellence and global outreach. In contributing to efforts to build a community with a shared future for mankind, BFSU's strategic vision and rigorous actions in bridging China and the world will enable its voice to be heard and its impact to be felt.

In September 2021, we sincerely welcome all alumni and friends from home and abroad to join us for an unforgettable celebration! We expect to meet you at BFSU to mark not just its birthday, but also our ever-lasting friendship and ever-promising future.

International University of Cambodia, Cambodia

Graduation Day

This event is such a precious one among others. This fulfill with both medical and non-medical skill students coming out to be successful in the future. Yet, since the pandemic of COVID-19 the university going to

set up the event in the end of this year very soon.

Outstanding Day

Once a year International University way to celebrate the Outstanding Students Day. This



enhance that we provide student quality also the achievement in further circumstance. Students will be meet their target in the future as well.

International Event

International University had cooperated with Japanese Assistance Council of Establishing Dialysis Specialists System in Cambodia working on the 4th Annual Workshop on Dialysis Techniques and treatment of kidney disease



Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea

HUFS, Big Hit Edu, and KF work hand in hand on Korean language project overseas

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies(HUFS) partnered with Big Hit Edu, an education content subsidiary of Big Hit Entertainment, and Korea Foundation(KF) to promote Korean language education overseas.

HUFS announced on August 12, 2020, that it signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Big Hit Edu and KF, and launched a full partnership to foster Korean education overseas. The three parties will contribute their own expertise for this joint endeavor, meeting the rapidly increasing demand for Korean language learning and, at the same time, raising global understanding and awareness of Korea and the Korean language.

Under the MOU, starting from this fall semester, KF will offer the KF e-School Korean Language Course at leading universities abroad using a textbook 'Learn! KOREAN with BTS'.



Developed by Big Hit Edu using the existing content from global super group BTS, the remote-learning Korean-language content aims to make learning Korean easy and fun for global fans who have difficulty enjoying BTS's music and content due to the language barrier. More specifically, by listening and repeating phrases frequently used by BTS members, they can pick up the Korean alphabet, basic Korean expressions, and Korean culture.

An HUFS research team led by Professor Heo Yong of HUFS Korean Language Content Institute has joined in the textbook develop-

ment and editing. Since March, Big Hit Edu has already been sharing one episode of the same-titled three-minute educational content each week on WEVERSE, the fan community platform.

President Kim InChul of HUFS, which is responsible for developing the course curriculum and sharing it with overseas universities, said, "Many foreign universities are showing great interest in 'Learn! KOREAN with BTS'. We are now in talks not only with our partner universities overseas but also with other foreign universities currently offering Korean language courses. KF and HUFS also plan to unveil an offline course if the COVID-19 situation improves. So, we hope that this course will be adopted by more and more universities in the future."

Choi Young-Nam, General Manager of Big Hit Edu, said, "It is encouraging to see universities from abroad selecting 'Learn! Korean with BTS' as their Korean teaching materials. Since our partners, HUFS and KF, have a deep understanding of our content, we will be able

to create even greater synergy in the future. We will promote Korean studies overseas with a strong sense of responsibility towards the quality of the content."

President Lee Geun of KF, which has provided foreign universities with online Korean studies and Korean language lectures through the e-School Project since 2011, said of the MOU, "We are witnessing a rapid growth in interest in the Korean language, as BTS, other K-pop stars, filmmaker Bong Joon-Ho's Parasite, and other Korean cultural content are earning global recognition." Expressing high hopes for the program, he added, "At this juncture, this 'Learn! KOREAN with BTS' course will spark Korean language learning overseas and help spread the charm of Korean culture and language abroad."

HUFS, Big Hit Edu, and KF will work on following projects, including the Fellowship for Korean Language Training, and continue their Korean language promotion endeavors overseas in the years to come.

Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy

Ca' Foscari University of Venice appoints new rector

Ca' Foscari University of Venice has chosen its new Rector: the first woman in the history of the institution, Tiziana Lippiello is now the 23rd Rector of the Venetian University and will guide the University for the next 6 years.

Tiziana Lippiello is Full Professor of Classical Chinese Language, History of Philosophy and Religion in China at the Department of Asian and North African Studies. Since 2014, she has served as Vice-Rector in charge of

relations with Asia (2014-2017) and International Relations (2017-2020)

She has also held the positions of Director of the Department of Asian and North African Studies from 2011 to 2014 and Director of the Department of Eastern Asian Studies from 2009 to 2011.

She served as a member of the Academic Senate from 2006 to 2009 and of the Venice International University Board of Directors from 2006 to 2011, since 2015 she also coordinates the Double Degree on "Chinese stud-



ies" (LICSAAM) with the Capital Normal University Beijing, as well as the Double Degree on "Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language" with the same University. She also supervises the RobinBA project called "The role of books in non bibliometric areas".

Rector Lippiello has advocated for a more participative way of managing the University and for the strengthening of the relationship with other universities. During her mandate, she also aims to tear down the wall that separates the various departments and encourage cooperation and the sharing of ideas, initiatives and projects.

"As a humanist - stated Lippiello - I also want to work towards more inclusion and diversity in the various disciplines, taking into consideration and respecting the different peculiarities and strong points of each dis-

ciplinary area and department. To this end, I want to introduce a new modus operandi, based on open communication and the valorization of professional skills, with a special focus on the needs of our students."

The newly-elected Rector also expressed interest in renewing the link with the territory, by building new bridges not only between the university and the city, but also between Ca' Foscari and the rest of the world. "I see Ca' Foscari as a public university, and internationalization is a great opportunity to shape an outstanding educational path for our students, to help them become active citizens in a globalized world."

Internationalization was one of the key points in Lippiello's campaign, as well as one of Ca' Foscari's historical strong suits. "Not only we offer our students a great number of

international experiences, but we also have a dedicated International Relationships Office and a whole unit focused on the internationalization process."

The Rector's aim for the next 6 years is to consolidate existing strategic partnerships both in Europe and outside the Union's borders, while also promoting Italy and Italian culture by working with foreign universities that have an interest in Italian studies.

An important tool in the rector's strategy for reinforcing the University's connection to and meaningful collaboration with its vast network of international partners, is Ca' Foscari's active participation in organizations like SUN itself. Ca' Foscari has been a member of SUN for a number of years and even had the

great pleasure of hosting its annual General Assembly in Venice in 2018. Rector Lippiello strongly believes in the power of SUN and other university consortia of a similar spirit to generate new ideas and opportunities, especially for students.

Even though the Covid-19 situation is hindering international mobility, Rector Lippiello believes that "current limits can also become a big opportunity. As we're all 'stuck' so to speak, and this could give us the push we need to create new forms of international partnerships, for example with online exchanges of academic modules and remote internships. We need to be proactive and come up with new ideas for internationalization, aiming for strategic choices and goals."

University of Malaya, Malaysia

UM lauds life on Venus discovery and leads Malaysia in astronomy through MOU with EOU, Hawaii

The remarkable discovery of phosphine, a colorless and pungent gas which could indicate a sign of bio-life in the Venus atmosphere was first detected using the James Clark Maxwell telescope (JCMT) at the East Asian Observatory (EAO) in Hawaii. The discovery is lauded by the global scientific communities including Associate Professor Dr. Zamri Zainal Abidin, Head of Radio Cosmology Research Lab (RCRL), Department of Physics, Faculty of Science, Universiti Malaya (UM).

This discovery is a testament of EAO's capability in producing high-impact scientific results. EAO was once a huge part of the team that photographed a black hole for the first time, which also won the 2020 Break-

through Prize in Fundamental Physics.

Dr. Zamri, who is also the Head of the Malaysia-EAO Observer Consortium (MEASOOC), said that astronomical science is a highly significant field especially to the telecommunications industry and few others. With the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Universiti Malaya and the East Asian Observatory last year, the EAO acknowledges that UM represents the interest of Malaysian astronomers and researchers through its close relationship with the Malaysia Space Agency (MYSA) and other local varsities.

Dr. Zamri said that Malaysian astronomers and researchers, which were nominated by UM through MEASOOC, will have the opportunity to collaborate with EAO. The Radio Cosmology Research Lab (RCRL) at UM also

boast Dr. Juan Carlos Algaba Marcos, a senior lecturer hailing from Spain, who is part of the Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration (EHT) that won the 2020 Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics.

Dr. Juan Carlos Algaba Marcos obtained his PhD from University College Cork, Ireland, before furthering his research pursuit at Academia Sinica Institute of Astronomy

and Astrophysics (ASIAA) in Taiwan for four years and then another four years at Korea Astronomy and Space Science Institute prior to working in UM. His research interest is in investigating the radio waves of Active Galactic Nuclei, an energetic phenomena that are produced in supermassive blackholes of galaxies.

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece



AUTH's New Building of the Faculty of Sciences

The Aristotle University research excels in computer science

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is ranked first among all Greek universities for the impact of its members' research work in computer science in the world ranking announced by the academic online platform Guide2Research on August 25, 2020. In the world ranking, Aristotle University is ranked 189 on the list of the best Universities in the world.

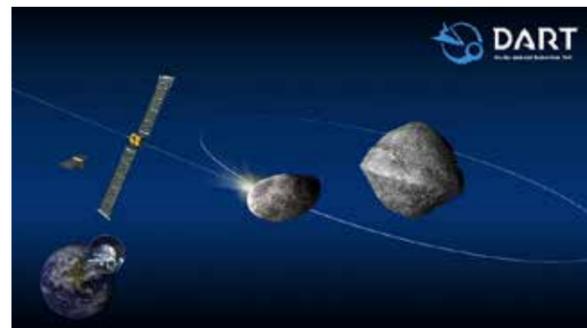
Its name shall be called "Dimorfos"! AUTH puts its stamp in the naming of asteroid

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki officially became a "godfather", as the name chosen to be given to the asteroid-target

of the first planetary defense mission was proposed by the Associate Professor of the School of Physics of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Kleomenis Tsiganis. And his name shall be called ... "Dimorphos".

The official name of the satellite of the asteroid "Didymos" was approved by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the announcement of the name was made on June 23, 2020, with simultaneous press releases from the IAU, NASA and ESA.

The satellite of the original asteroid "Didymos" is the target of the first historically space mission of planetary defense, in which AUTH also participates. In July 2021, the US space agency (NASA) will launch the 600 kg DART (Double Asteroid Redirection Test)



spacecraft to the Didymos-Dimorphos pair, in order to collide with Dimorphos a year later, in 2022, at a speed of about 25,000 km / hour. Thus, this experiment will test for the first time in practice the deflection of an asteroid potentially dangerous to Earth.

The DART mission to Dimorphos will be followed in 2024 by the European Space Agency (ESA) Hera mission, which will study in detail the effects of the collision, both morphologically and kinetically. This collaborative mission by NASA and ESA is also known as "AIDA" (Asteroid Impact and Deflection Assessment). "The name Dimorphos testifies to the morphological changes that our target will undergo with the impact of DART. Dimorphos will be the first celestial body in history to be known to man in two different forms: the one that the DART mission will face before it hits it, and the later one, which will be "seen" by Hera, a few years later", Mr. Tsiganis explained about the choice of the name.

Aristotle University's research team wins iGEM Thessaloniki's Gold Medal in the International Genetically Engineered Machine Competition with 'POSEIDON'

iGEM Thessaloniki, is a multidisciplinary team of students of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki that participated in the widely known Synthetic Biology "iGEM" competition, which is held annually in Boston, U.S.A. The team presented the project "POSEIDON" and was rewarded with a gold medal for designing and experimentally proving their innovative idea. "POSEIDON", which stands for Programmable Orthogonal Systems Engineered Into DNA Oligo Networks, is a DNA Computer which can provide novel solutions to basic science puzzles by being able of quantifying DNA-Protein interactions.

POSEIDON is providing scientists with a universal and cost-effective method which can measure the binding affinity of a certain DNA sequence to a protein molecule or a Complex and provides an extra tool for the study of diseases and the testing of drugs, targeting specific proteins.

A photo of the team members attending the Giant Jamboree in Boston



Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran

Academic cooperation of Allameh Tabataba'i University with Silk Road Universities during the COVID-19 pandemic

During recent months, Allameh Tabataba'i University, the biggest Humanities and Social Sciences University in West and Central Asia, has taken effective steps toward cooperation with other universities especially the Silk Road universities. During the pandemic, a new chapter of communication began by Allameh Tabataba'i University in the framework of online programs and established new close relations with other partner universities. The following is a brief overview of these collaborations:

Afghanistan Universities

Afghanistan is one of the countries of the Silk Road whose universities, both public and private, cooperate with Allameh Tabataba'i University in various fields.

Herat University: It is the largest university in the west of Afghanistan and a member of Silk Road Universities Network. Allameh Tabataba'i University has collaborated with this university in the form of online educational workshops such as "The Role of Media in Peace Building" for Afghan professors and students.

Khurshid Institute of Higher Education: it is located in Kabul, Afghanistan. It has collaborated with Allameh Tabataba'i University and has

held joint online meetings with lectures by professors from both universities. One of these meetings was "Coronavirus and the Commitments of Governments and International Organizations", which was held online on April 14th.

Ghalib University: Ghalib University is another university in Afghanistan that operates in the cities of Herat and Kabul. Some workshops were held for the professors and the students of this university. Professors from both universities participated and were active in these workshops. In collaboration with the university, the Summer School of Political Science and the Summer School of Psychology, as well as the School of Research Methods, were held last summer.

Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies: It is an independent research institution that was established in October 2012 and has become a top research center in Afghanistan. Also, it has a stable and proper relationship with Allameh Tabataba'i University. In recent months, joint meetings and seminars have been held for Afghan researchers. One of these meetings was "The World after Covid-19" with an emphasis on Iran-Afghanistan relations, which was held online on April 13 with lectures by professors from both countries.

Mediothek Afghanistan: Since 2001 this institute has been involved in various capacity building and peace building programs in the cultural, artistic, social, and media sectors, but for several years now, these programs have been working with a modern approach for the youth of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and

Tajikistan. It also has very good cooperation with Allameh Tabataba'i University. They have also held many meetings and workshops.

China

Chinese universities also are in close cooperation with Allameh Tabataba'i University and have held numerous joint meetings and workshops in the summer of 2020.

Allameh Tabataba'i University held several meetings with the Shanghai University of International Studies in China and the Beijing University of Language and Culture, each of which addressed a variety of topics, especially the areas of universities' cooperation during the pandemic.

During this period, the Student Secretariat of the Silk Road Universities Network examined Chinese cities along the Silk Road in a series of programs introducing Silk Road cities. In the field of language and culture education in Iran and China, workshops were held which were well received by students from both countries.

Turkey

During the months following the Corona epidemic, Allameh Tabataba'i University held online workshops and meetings with Turkish universities and professors. One of these meetings was the introduction of the Silk Road cities in Turkey, organized by the Student Secretariat of the Silk Road Universities Network, where professors from Ankara University and Marmara University gave lectures. Moreover, a Turkish language learning workshop was held in ten sessions in which students eager to learn Turkish participated in these workshops.



Write for us

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please send to sunwebzine@gmail.com

SILKROADIA



SILKROADIA seeks student reporters

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

What SUN student reporters do?

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

Qualifications

Students of the member universities of SUN

Must be fluent in English

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

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

What they get

Articles and images published on SUN webzine and website.

Receives the official certificate from SUN

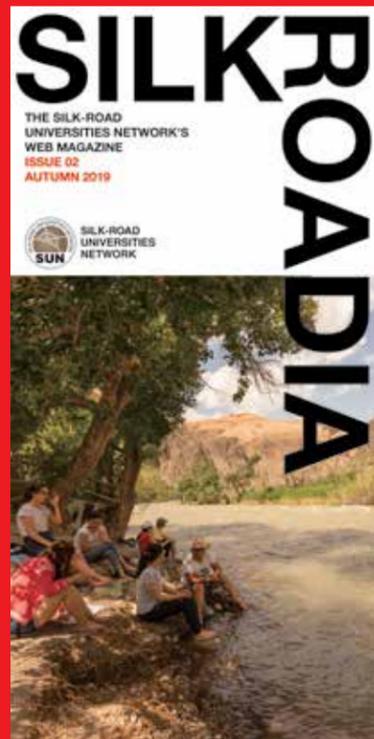
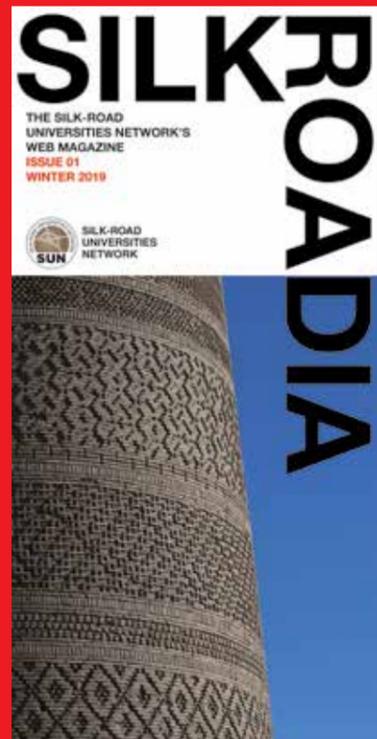
The student, who is annually selected as the best reporter by the SUN secretariat, will be invited to attend the annual General Assembly of SUN with full coverage of the air travel and accommodations.

How to apply

Click the link below for the google form of application:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSel6Bps3q05KUX1FdvZfJcl5Wg4x-1o8eLVBDfFjuhdARo3Ag/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1>

SILKROADIA



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 four editions-published so far are available at the website of SUN, including the latest one published on the occasion of the Sixth General Assembly of SUN held online on December 3, 2020.

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 commentaries authored by experts to easy-to-enjoy stories on heritage and travel on the Silk Roads. We are proud of having published genuinely original contents – like the

imaginary interview which highlighted people like Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, the legendary travelers and adventurers who are identified with the ancient Silk Roads.

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

Carrying advertisements on SILKROADIA has two objectives: First, advertisement revenue will certainly help SUN stand on its own financially, which has become more urgent in the wake of the ceasing of support from the Gyeongsangbuk-do Provincial Government. Second, advertisements on SILKROADIA will help the webzine raise its standard to a

higher level. Good publications draw good advertisers and a genuinely popular publication cannot go without advertisements.

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

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

We expect active support from SUN members. Thank you.

Ad rates (tentative)

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