



THIS IS Central and Southwest Asia

The Newsletter of the Central and Southwest Asia Program
at The University of Montana

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Spring 2009

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Tajik Students Go to Washington



UM students from Tajikistan, Shohina Touraeva and Umed Partov, with U.S. Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester in the Senate Office, Washington D.C. As Presidential Inauguration Seminar Fellows, Shohina and Umed had the honor of participating in the Inaugural Ceremony of President Barack Obama and met with both Montana Senators.

Nowruz in Montana

By Umed Partov and Shakib Rajaieean

The celebration of Nowruz, the Persian New Year was held in a cultural event by the Persian Student Association at the University Center on Sunday March 23, 2009. Nowruz, which marks the beginning of the new Persian year is one of the oldest and most popular Persian holidays. It is celebrated in all the Persian speaking countries (Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan), Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, parts of Iraq and many other countries in Southwest Asia.

Persian Student Association, which mainly comprises of UM students from Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan launches this event annually. As in previous years, members of Persian Student Association celebrated Nowruz with their non-Persian friends, UM staff and professors as well as members of the Missoula community. Approximately 110 guests were invited to share this joyful time of the year. PSA members worked hard to design an unprecedented festivity where invitees had a chance to taste exotic Iranian, Afghan, and Tajik dishes and enjoy a series of cultural performances. Students from Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran presented their rich and ancient culture with the guests through dance, music, and poetry.

Persian Student Association is a relatively young but expanding student organization. It continues to launch more events from the Persian speaking countries in different times of the year with the purpose of raising awareness of the Persian culture among the UM students and the greater Missoula community. Future events planned by the organization include showing movies, poetry reading nights, celebration of Yalda, another popular Persian festival, and other artistic events such as Persian dance performances.



7th Annual Central & Southwest Asia Conference

April 22-24, 2009

Beyond the Headlines: Peace and Conflict in Central and Southwest Asia

By Otto Koester

Every spring since 2002, the Central and Southwest Asia Program has hosted a major conference on the UM campus. Each year, nationally and internationally known scholars, diplomats, analysts and journalists have come to Missoula to engage the campus community and general public in discussion and learning about some of the major challenges that face Central and Southwest Asia and us as citizens of the United States. The 7th Annual Central and Southwest Asia Conference will take place in the University Center from Wednesday, April 22, through Friday, April 24, 2009.

The theme of this year's conference is "Beyond the Headlines: Peace and Conflict in Central and Southwest Asia". To be sure, American television and newspapers are giving increased attention to the "Arc of Conflict" that reaches from South Asia through Central Asia to the Middle East. What are the reasons for all this conflict? In some cases, the root causes are geopolitical, ethnic, religious, or historical, or they result from weak institutions and governance structures brought on by rapid transitions from authoritarian to more open systems. In other cases, the roots can be found in a desire for greater regional power, the growing gap between rich and poor, and the threat of globalization to traditional ideas, values, beliefs, and customs. For Central and Southwest Asia as a whole, the underlying causes are multiple and complex, as are the various ways for achieving peace. To what extent do the introduction of democracy, the protection of human rights, economic assistance, or strategies and techniques such as diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, international peacekeeping and other such processes effective in mitigating these conflicts and promoting durable peace? If they do not achieve their intended results, where and why have they failed, and what are the implications for the military and diplomatic policies of the United States? These are some of the general questions that the conference will address with a specific focus on the current and recent conflicts in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia's confrontation with Russia, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over Gaza.

Heading the list of prominent speakers who will address the conference are Maleeha Lodhi, renowned Pakistani author and journalist, United Nations

advisor, and formerly High Commissioner of Pakistan to the United Kingdom and Ambassador to the United States; and Amos Guiora, Professor of International Law at the University of Utah, author of *Constitutional Limits on Coercive Interrogation* (Oxford University Press, 2008), and former legal advisor to the Israeli Defense Forces with responsibility for Gaza.

Other distinguished speakers will be His Excellency Abdujabbor Shirinov, Ambassador of the Tajikistan to the United States; Shukri Abed, Chairman, Department of Languages and Regional Studies, Middle East Institute, Washington DC; Baktygoul Koubanytchbekova, International Law and Friedman Fellow at Columbia University Law School, and human rights lawyer from Osh, Kyrgyz Republic; and Mahdi Alish, Professor of Arabic and Dean of International Studies, United States Military Academy, West Point. UM faculty and students giving presentations are Mehrdad Kia, Associate Provost for International Programs and Director of the Central and Southwest Asia Program; Ardi Kia Associate Director, Central and Southwest Asia Program and Professor of Anthropology; Jeffrey Renz, Professor of Law; Khaled Huthaily, Assistant Professor of Arabic Language and Linguistics; Samir Bitar, Lecturer in Arabic Language and Culture; Nouredine Jebnoun and Owen Sirrs, both Arab Studies Professors, Defense Critical Language and Culture Program, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center; Robert Greene, Professor of History; Tamila Meladze and Aïmona Tashieva, Visiting Scholars, Central and Southwest Asia Program; and UM graduate and undergraduate students, Milena Oganessian, Abdul Saboor Jawad, Mohammed Arif Nairam, Shakib Rajaieean, Helay Rahimi, Hojamurod Hojaev, Shohina Touraeva, Mavzuna Touraeva, Rakhshonak Zaripova, Sharifkhuja Amirov and Umed Partov.

The event will be co-sponsored by UM's Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center and the Montana World Affairs Council. We are grateful to Humanities Montana for its generous grant in support of this program. All sessions will be open to the public and free of charge. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Persian at UM

Starting in fall semester 2009, Persian Language and Literature will once again be offered at The University of Montana. The Persian language instructor will be the award winning Associate Director of the Central and Southwest Asia Program, Professor Ardi Kia who has been recognized for his excellence in teaching and as one of the most popular professors at The University of Montana.

Modern Persian is a spoken language of more than 100 million people around the world. It is an official language of Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan. Persian is also spoken in Uzbekistan, southwestern Pakistan, northern Iraq, and southeastern Turkey, as well as by numerous speakers living in Europe and the United States. There are more than one million Persian speakers in the United States.

Persian is one of the world's oldest languages, a well-recognized tongue as early as the 6th century BC. Since ancient times the Persian language has had an enormous impact on a number of other languages. The place and role of the Persian culture in the development of the world civilization and its influence on the history and culture of many countries and peoples has been substantial.

Considering the recent developments in world political arena and especially in the Middle East and Central Asia, the U.S. government deems the study of Persian language as crucial to its national security and promotes the Persian language teaching programs as central to the nation's geopolitical interests.

7th Annual Central & Southwest Asia Conference April 22-24, 2009

Beyond the Headlines: Peace and Conflict in Central and Southwest Asia

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

7:00-9:00 PM KEYNOTE PRESENTATION - PAKISTAN AND THE UNITED STATES: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES, UNIVERSITY CENTER, NORTH BALLROOM

Presenter: Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, Author, Journalist and Diplomat from Pakistan.

THURSDAY, APRIL 23

9:30-11:00 AM TAJIKISTAN: AN ANCIENT NATION IN TRANSITION, UNIVERSITY CENTER, NORTH BALLROOM

Chair and Discussant: Dr. Ardi Kia, Associate Director, Central and Southwest Asia Program, The University of Montana

Presenters: Hojamurod Hojaev, Shohina Touraeva, Mazvuna Touraeva, Rakhshonak Zaripova, Sharifkhuja Amirov, and Umed Partov

12:30-2:00 PM KEYNOTE PRESENTATION - INDEPENDENCE, CIVIL WAR, AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION: TAJIKISTAN'S PATH TO PEACE, UNIVERSITY CENTER, NORTH BALLROOM

Chair and Discussant: Dr. Mehrdad Kia, Associate Provost for International Programs and Director, Central and Southwest Asia Program, The University of Montana

Presenter: His Excellency Abdujabbor Shirinov, Ambassador of Tajikistan to the United States

2:30-4:00 PM ON THE FRONTLINE: AFGHANISTAN AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TERRORISM, UNIVERSITY CENTER, NORTH BALLROOM

Chair and Discussant: Dr. Ardi Kia, Associate Director, Central and Southwest Asia Program, The University of Montana

Presenters: Helay Rahimi, Shakib Rajaieean, Mohammed Arif Nairam, and Abdul Saboor Jawal.

7:00-9:00 PM KEYNOTE PANEL - TERRORISM, COUNTER-TERRORISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, UNIVERSITY CENTER, NORTH BALLROOM

Moderator: Ian Marquand, Journalist

Panelists: Dr. Amos Guiora, University of Utah and a Former Legal Advisor to Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) for Gaza; and Dr. Shukri Abed, Chairman, Department of Languages and Regional Studies, Middle East Institute, Washington D.C.

FRIDAY, APRIL 24

10:30 AM-NOON KYRGYZSTAN AND THE NEW GREAT GAME, UNIVERSITY CENTER THEATER

Chair and Discussant: Jeff Renz, Professor of Law, The University of Montana

Presenters: Baktygoul Koubanytbekova, Human Rights Advocate, Columbia University; Aïmona Tashieva, Visiting Scholar, The University of Montana, Captain Galen McAllister, Montana National Guard

1:00-3:00 PM THE ROLE OF ARABIC AS A LANGUAGE OF WAR AND PEACE, UNIVERSITY CENTER THEATER

Chairs and Presenters: Samir Bitar, Lecturer, Arabic Language and Literature, Central and Southwest Asia Program and Department of Modern and Classical Languages & Literatures; and Dr. Khaled Huthaily, Assistant Professor of Arabic Language and Linguistics, Central and Southwest Asia Program & Department of Modern and Classical Languages & Literatures, The University of Montana

Presenters: Dr. Shukri Abed, Chairman, Department of Languages and Regional Studies, Middle East Institute, Washington D.C., and Dr. Mahdi Alish, Professor and Associate Dean for International Affairs, United States Military Academy.

3:30-5:00 PM CONFRONTATION IN THE CAUCASUS: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GEORGIA AND RUSSIA, UNIVERSITY CENTER THEATER

Chair and Discussant: Dr. Robert Greene, Department of History, The University of Montana

Presenters: Baktygoul Koubantchkebova, Human Rights Advocate, Columbia University; Milena Oganessian, Doctoral Student, Department of Anthropology, The University of Montana; and Tamila Meladze, The University of Montana.

7:00-9:00 PM KEYNOTE PRESENTATION- ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD, IRAN, AND AFGHANISTAN AND THE POTENTIAL FOR U.S. ENGAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY CENTER THEATER

Chair and Discussant: Dr. Mehrdad Kia, Associate Provost for International Programs and Director, Central and Southwest Asia Program, The University of Montana

Presenters: Dr. Nouredine Jebnoun, Faculty Associate, the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center at The University of Montana; Nushin Arbabzadah, International Institute, UCLA; and Owen Sirrs, Faculty Associate, the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center at The University of Montana.

Sponsors: Humanities Montana, International Programs, Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center, World Affairs Council of Montana, and the Central and Southwest Asia Program at The University of Montana. All sessions will be open to the public and free of charge.

The Tien Shan

By Rick and Susie Graetz

Tectonic forces and the ice ages that followed crafted some of their most superb masterpieces by assembling the 2,500-kilometer-long (1,500 mile) Tien Shan Range, the tiara of Central Asia and one of the most extensive and impressive gatherings of mountains on the planet. Kyrgyzstan takes in the bulk and the most spectacular of the Tien Shan's mass, allowing the range to occupy 85% of its topography. China and Kazakhstan also claim segments of them, as does Uzbekistan.

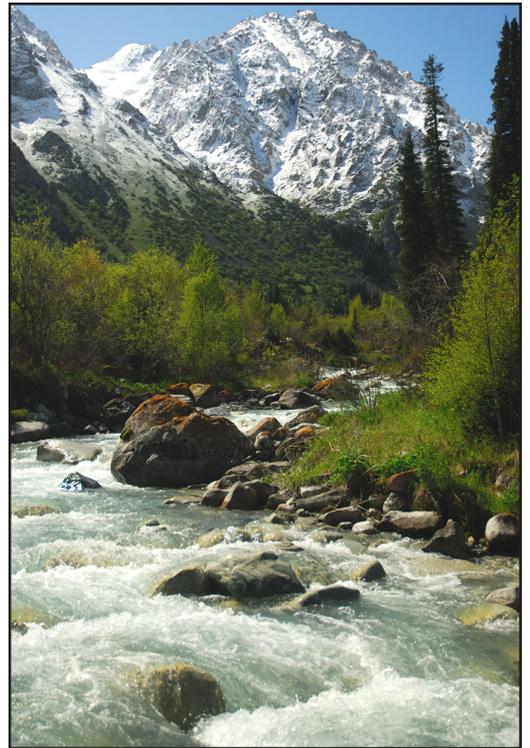
Trade caravans traversing the northern rim of the Taklamakan Desert, part of the Tarim Basin that bounds the Tien Shan on the south, had this mountain panorama in their sights as they trailed from oasis to oasis. Often times, owing to the frequent and fierce loess winds (loess is a fine yellow silt of sand or clay) blowing from Mongolia and the Gobi Desert to the east, the dust in the air made the heights appear as if they were floating in the heavens; hence, these early-day travelers called them heavenly, Mountains of Heaven or Celestial Mountains.

Both the highest of the summits and the most extensive ice fields and glaciers are located in a vast and remote cluster where the borders of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and China join.

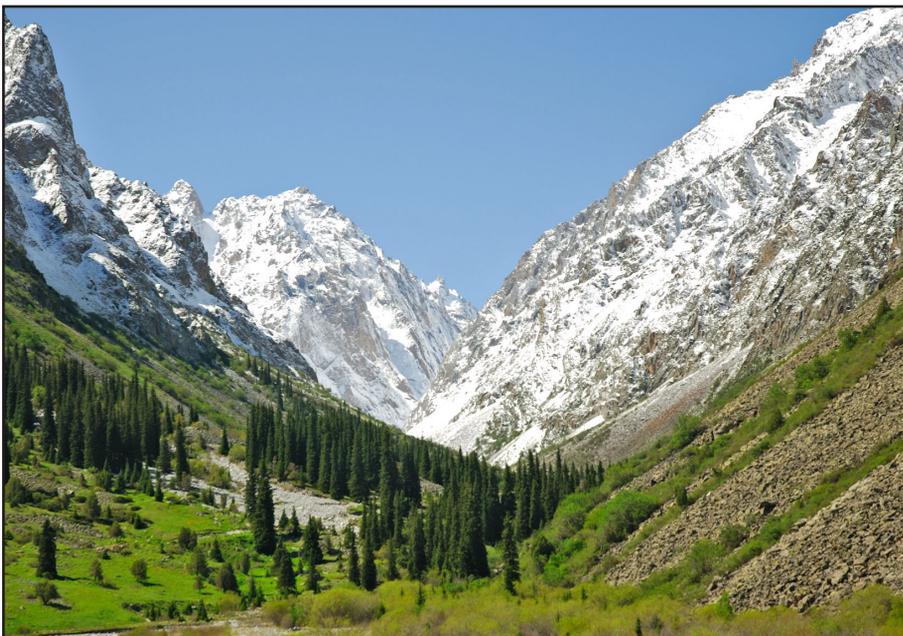
Here, two massifs separated by 16 km (10 miles) were thrust more than 7,000 meters into thin air: Khan Tengri at 7,010 meters (23,133 feet) and Jengish Chokusu (formerly Pik Pobeda) at 7,439 meters (24,450 feet). They are the most northerly of the world's 7,000-meter mountains. Eighty crests ascending beyond 5,000 meters rose at the same time, surrounding and spanning out from these giant peaks. Moreover, immense glaciers tumble off of many of them, including the Inylchek, which, at 60 km (38 miles) long, is one of the largest single rivers of ice outside the polar world. It is estimated that Kyrgyzstan's mountains hold over 6,240 km² of ice and more than 6,500 glaciers. These Heavenly Mountains are indeed a water tower for Central Asia.

Heavy rain and snowfall on the range create a mountain environment that contrasts dramatically with the arid desert terrain of the southern foothills. Lush juniper and spruce forests interspersed with fields of grass grace the lower slopes. As summer approaches, these high-altitude meadows that flank the peaks shed their snow cover, making way for a magnificent display of wildflowers. As pastoral herders move their livestock up high into the rich, verdant summer pastures, the Kyrgyz national house (the yurt) appears. These semi-nomadic people add a bit of instant free enterprise to the mix, selling organic honey and fermented mare's milk (kumis) to travelers.

South of Osh, Kyrgyzstan, in the Pamir Alay (the range that separates Tajikistan's Pamir from the Tien Shan) soars Peak Lenin at 7,134 meters (23,406 feet), one of the most prominent and beautiful mountains in the range. It is also one of easiest 7,000-meter peaks on the planet to climb. Lower mountains surrounding Lenin offer many hiking opportunities and make the area one of the most popular trekking regions in the country; hence, many climbers come to Osh to set off for this snow and ice covered uplift and its trails.



Ala Archa National Park North of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



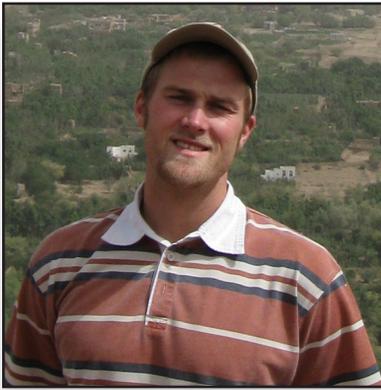
The Tien Shan Range, Kyrgyzstan

All of the mountain regions of Central Asia contain passes that are of importance to history and the world today. The Tien Shan, however, provided gaps for perhaps two of the most significant of these lofty passageways for early trade between the Chinese court and Europe. Torugart Pass (3,752 meters, or 12,310 feet) leads north from Kashgar, China, a 3,000-year-old former Silk Road oasis town on the western periphery of the heat and depths of the Taklamakan Desert and now located in the Xinjiang Province, to the Kyrgyz border. It then continues to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as well as Almaty in Kazakhstan.

At 2,841 meters (9,375 feet), Irkesham Pass, was arguably the most noteworthy of all of the Silk Road-era passes. It boasted the most heavily used trail: a path leading west from Kashgar to Osh, Kyrgyzstan, a major 3,000 year-old center for trade, and onward to the other great Silk Road cities in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Students of Arabic Receive CLS Scholarships

By Dr. Khaled Huthaily and Samir Bitar



Walker Kuhl

Students of Arabic at UM are harvesting the advantage of enrolling in Arabic studies. A number of governmental agencies, including the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), offer scholarships to study intensive courses in this critical language. In Spring 2009, two of our students—Aimee Ryan in ARAB 102 and Walker Kuhl in ARAB 396—received CLS scholarships to study Arabic in summer 2009. Such an opportunity helps our students further improve their Arabic communicative skills and broadens their cultural knowledge and competence.



Aimee Ryan

Walker is a business major student who finished three years of Arabic at UM. He visited Yemen in summer 2008. Based on that experience, he wrote: "The Middle East has really captured my imagination. It is an

unstable region where the old tribal culture is finding its own uses and interpretations for modern technology and political systems, where Islam and western backed governments are drawing tense and violent lines in the sand. Yet, through it all, it is hard to walk down a street without being offered sweetened tea by welcoming strangers. The more I learn the more I realize how much I didn't know. Every desert sunset draws me in a little more."

Aimee is in her junior year studying Political Science, Philosophy, and Arabic. She cannot wait to start "saving the world." For her, "that means being an instrument in cultivating peace in the Middle East, and more specifically to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict." She adds: "I am in my first year of learning Arabic, but have quickly learned that, despite Ustaz Samir being an amazing educator and mentor, the classroom can only teach so much; studying abroad and immersing one's self in the culture is essential in order to fully grasp the language. It is this premise that drove me to apply for the U.S. State Department's Critical Learning Scholarship. After months of waiting, I have just received notice that I have been awarded the scholarship, which means I get the honor and privilege of studying Arabic, for free, in Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, or Egypt, for approximately 10 weeks this summer. I am still in shock; my dreams are on their way to fulfillment, and I couldn't be more excited."

Congratulations to Walker and Aimee!

Turkish at UM

By Selin Bitti

The University of Montana (UM) has begun offering Elementary Modern Turkish in collaboration with exchange scholars through the Fulbright Foreign Languages Teaching Program since Fall 2008. Introduced only a short time ago, it seeks to stimulate student interest in studying a language that has a long history and plays an important role for understanding the culture, history and traditions of the Turkic-speaking peoples in a vast area of Eurasia that stretches all the way from Siberia to the Mediterranean Sea and several countries in Western Europe. Our aim in starting this program is to introduce students to the Turkish language and provide them with the basic communication skills needed to understand and use modern Turkish as it is spoken among the Turkic peoples living in this vast region. The course covers the fundamentals of the language for students with no prior background in it and also introduces them to basic aspects of Turkish culture and society.



Modern Turkish is an Altaic language spoken by almost 85 million people worldwide, predominantly in Turkey and various communities in Cyprus and the Balkan Peninsula, and among immigrant communities in Central and Western Europe, above all Germany. The roots of the language are traced to Central Asia, which was the motherland of the early Turkic nomads. Earliest written records, consisting of the two monumental Orkhon inscriptions, were erected in honor of the prince Kul Tigin and his brother Emperor Bilge Khan between 732 and 735. With the rise of Turkish power during the 6th-11th centuries, the Turkish-speaking peoples began to spread across Central Asia and, with the adoption of Islam, to borrow many words from Persian and Arabic. As a result, the literary and official language of the Ottoman Empire (ca. 1299-1922), termed Ottoman Turkish, became a mixture of Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, which differed considerably from everyday spoken Turkish at the time and can be regarded as the mother of today's Modern Turkish.

After the creation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the new government initiated a script reform that converted the alphabet from Arabic to Latin. In addition, the Turkish Language Association launched a language reform that replaced loanwords from Arabic and Persian with Turkish equivalents, either by reviving old Turkish words from Central Asia that had gone unused for centuries, or by deriving new words from Turkic roots.

Modern Turkish is an essential key for understanding Ottoman Turkish and communicating with Turkish communities in Asia and Europe. The University of Montana will continue to provide its students with the opportunity to be a part of this rich and varied culture by offering Modern Turkish in the future.

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The University of
Montana

**The Seventh Annual
Central & Southwest Asia
Conference will be held April
22 to 24 in the UC Center**

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