

## Nomadic Images Promote Naryn as Cultural Hub



A performance of *Mother Earth (Jer Ene)* by Youth Experimental Theater "ART Jashoo".

For four days, Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, was the focal point of an International Conference exploring contemporary and traditional image making practices through the transdisciplinary lens of art, sciences, and culture. From September 22-25, the Nomadic Image Conference attracted artists and international personalities who contributed to this unique cultural extravaganza making it a resounding success.

Organized by the School of Arts and Sciences of the University of Central Asia (UCA), the hybrid online and in-person Conference was a partnership that included diverse institutions such as the University of New South Wales, Sydney; the Aga Khan Development Network; Ala-Too International University, Bishkek; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Plymouth; The Museum of Fine Arts, Bishkek; The Aga Khan Museum,

Toronto; Ololohaus, Bishkek; The Regional Museum of Fine Arts, Osh; and i-DAT.ORG.

In the open space of mountains, under the vast expanse of moving skies, nomads are the measure of connectivity and movement between human beings and nature. The scene offers insights into the silence of space teeming with creative and resonating

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## Building Resilient Infrastructure in Central Asia

UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration and OECD Sustainable Infrastructure Programme in Asia (SIPA) brought together international experts and Central Asian participants for a summer school in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan (September 21-23, 2022).

Thirty civil servants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Mongolia discussed the integration of environmental factors with infrastructure development. The school introduced participants to practical tools to assess and monitor the environmental effects of infrastructure planning. New methods and tools for attracting private capital, such as blended finance, green, social, and sustainability bond issuances were also discussed.

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Participants from Central Asia and Mongolia discuss the importance of considering environmental issues in development planning.

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## Nomadic Images Promote Naryn as Cultural Hub



Danysh Akylbekov's film "The Death of a Nomad" won the Best Film Award at the Nomadic Image Conference. L to R: Nursultan Stanaliev, Asel Zhuraeva, Gulbara Tolomushova, Danysh Akylbekov, Dr Soheil Ashrafi, and Dr Michael Garbutt.

moments. Nomads tread the path of curiosity, raising questions about the meaning of the settled state. In this questioning, alternative perspectives arise, leaving the viewer with an uncanny feeling of losing grip on the settled state of being and seeing. There is no better place than Kyrgyzstan, perhaps in the world, that one can experience and appreciate the rising perspectives above the heavy demands of everyday life. A country of

mountains and steppes dispersed with moving streams of life that collapse all separation between earth, sky, mortals, and the Divine.

Over 40 local and international scholars and practitioners from a wide range of fields including the arts, science, and culture participated and shared the common theme of "nomadism", building meaningful bridges among communities across the world.

The Nomadic Image was much more than an academic conference and had an important mission to promote Naryn and its region as an educational hub and a destination for cultural tourism. A number of performances and presentations took place on the UCA campus in Naryn as well as in other towns and cities. These included a film festival for emerging directors, exhibitions of art, photography and traditional crafts, theater, fashion, dance, and music. A jury that reviewed these presentations included Dr Soheil Ashrafi, Associate Dean of the UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, and faculty members, Nursultan Stanaliev and Dr Michael Garbutt, Gulbara Tolomushova (a Kyrgyz film critic, film historian, TV director and TV Presenter) and Asel Zhuraeva (a Kyrgyz filmmaker and founder of the Fund for Art Females of Asia). The winners of the festival were announced during the Opening Ceremony on 23 September with an exotic fashion show by Kyrgyz designer, Yntymak Abdylidaev. Awards were also distributed for Best Film and Best Visual Solution. The ceremony concluded with an immersive theatrical performance, *Jer Ene (Mother Earth)*, organized by UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit.

To read more about the conference, download the magazine: <https://bit.ly/NI-Magazine>.

## UCA and NYU to Cooperate in Education and Research



New York University's School of Global Public Health, and the University of Central Asia's School of Arts and Sciences, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote their mutual objectives in education and research on October 3, 2022. The agreement includes an exchange of faculty, scholars, and researchers.

Elaborating on the specifics of the agree-

ment, Dr. Ayman Aljarbouh, Chair of the Department of Computer Science at UCA said, "An exchange of expertise and collaboration with regard to computer science and data science includes teaching and learning, research activities and projects, and writing and distribution of academic materials and information, with a particular focus on international development related to the mountain societies of Central Asia".

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### Building Resilient Infrastructure in Central Asia

The Dean of UCA's Graduate School of Development, Professor Christopher Gerry, noted that the event reflected IPPA's interest in innovative, leading-edge approaches to achieving sustainability across the Central Asian region and Mongolia.

IPPA is the Central Asian implementing partner of the OECD programme on sustainable infrastructure in Central and Southeast Asia. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), works with governments to find solutions to common challenges, develop global standards, share experiences, and identify best practices to promote better policies for better lives.

## AKHP's Summer School on Central Asian Cultural Heritage



Participants at a lecture on the cultural heritage of Central Asia

In September 2022, Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) conducted a three-week international summer school 'Past, Present, Future? Critical Approaches to Cultural Heritage in Central Asia' in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The school attracted 19 young people from Germany, Tajikistan, Canada, and the United States, to improve their knowledge of Central Asian history, cultures, and languages.

Local and international scholars conducted lectures and seminars providing a deeper insight into cultural diversity of Central Asia. Students undertook mini projects, research-

ing cultural heritage, its meanings, and contexts, and participated in several fieldtrips to cultural sites in Kulob and Dushanbe, exploring museums and art spaces.

AKHP organized an intensive course of Tajik language for the international students, who then participated in a language event with UCA students in Dushanbe. Alongside lectures and seminars on cultural heritage, the students also participated in a day of Cross Debate Format (CDF) training conducted by three regional trainers, who introduced the students to the key concepts and methods of CDF.

## CHHU Showcases Diverse Kyrgyz Cultural Heritage



The performance of Chyngyz Aitmatov's "The First Teacher" in the Naryn Regional Academic Musical Drama Theater.

The Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) of UCA's Graduate School of Development, organized several cultural events during the 7th Transdisciplinary Conference Nomadic Image (22-26 September 2022) held at the UCA Naryn campus. These events brought together the local community, researchers, artisans, and UCA students who attended the conference. As Dr. Elmira Ku-

chumkulova, Director of CHHU, noted that the exhibits and performances demonstrated the diverse components of the Unit's work that includes supporting musicians, local museums, experimental contemporary theatre, and documentary film production.

During the conference, CHHU opened a photography exhibit by Malik Alymkulov and

## New Research Initiative in Afghanistan



The University of Central Asia announced the launch of the Afghanistan Research Initiative (ARI), which aims to help sustain research and capacity gains made over the last decade and continue producing knowledge critical to the country's present and future. This Initiative is particularly vital today because of the precarious state of in-country research in Afghanistan after the departure of many researchers who are now refugees in various countries. The accelerated brain drain has dispersed research capacity, and knowledge is being lost as intellectuals look to settle in new surroundings. Moreover, the Initiative seeks to create a new pipeline of researchers by assisting young scholars with admission to post-graduate studies.

The ARI programme at UCA's Graduate School of Development, is supported by a three-year grant from Canada's International Development Research Centre and the Aga Khan Foundation of Canada. ARI will develop a network that gives voice to displaced Afghan scholars and students and helps them connect with research communities. It will assist promising young scholars in gaining admission to doctorate programmes by delivering courses that build research capacity, offer fellowships to students in doctoral studies, promote knowledge creation, and host a platform for exchanging information to help forge a research community as an asset for the future.

For further information contact: [ari@ucentralasia.org](mailto:ari@ucentralasia.org).

Guliza Urustambek, who document the life of Kyrgyz people and the country's magnificent scenery. Conference participants also attended an innovative theatrical performance based on the 1962 novel by Chyngyz Aitmatov "The First Teacher".

## Employee Spotlight

# Raikhan Sissekenova's 20-year Journey at UCA

*"UCA for me is a School, a second Family and, so far, my Dream. I want to see our campus in Kazakhstan, and our city of Tekeli, changed in this regard", - says Raikhan Sissekenova, Manager Government and Community Relations (Kazakhstan), who joined UCA in 2002.*

### What was your first job at UCA?

Before UCA, I already had 20 years of work experience. I had worked in a budgetary organization, public administration, business, and social activities. I participated in great projects: the State Program of People's Health, the first medical-demographic study of Kazakhstan PMDC 99, the "Children of Russia" program, legislative projects, defended my dissertation and, importantly, met wonderful people in my country and other countries.

I first heard about UCA in 2001, when there was a competition to recruit the first starting group in Kazakhstan. The last stage of the competition was held in 2002 in Alma-Ata. And I won. My position was called Director of the Division of Continuing Education. And the concept of Continuing Education was heard for the first time in the educational community of my country. By that time the proposed location of the university was already decided to be in Tekeli, before that there was a plan to build the campus in the city of Taldykorgan, which until 2001 resembled a post-war city - without light, heat, empty, and abandoned apartments.

But in 2001 the situation changed dramatically; the city became a regional centre. The recovery began, and people started to return. Naturally, the question was asked as to where the construction of UCA would be most beneficial, considering its mission, which is not only to provide educational services but, above all, to promote the development of the region through education, science and culture. That is, it should become a point of growth in the place where it will be built and operate. Then the regional government proposed Tekeli, a mining town 30 minutes away from Taldykorgan, whose future was very uncertain because its reserves of ores mined were already exhausted. That's how Tekeli became the site of the University of Central Asia in Kazakhstan.

### You are celebrating 20 years at UCA. What do you find most exciting about working here?

First of all, it was a long road to this point



in my life. All my knowledge and skills from before I came to UCA came in handy in this project, and I'm continuing to learn more here. I love the mission of our university! The reason I have stayed two decades is mostly defined by the people and my relationship with them.

The first people I met at UCA were Fairuz Nishanova and Professor Frederick Starr. He handed me the "UCA Strategic Development Plan" and said: "Think about where you want to start and don't be afraid to make mistakes - it will be a valuable experience for you and UCA." I very much appreciated this trust and it motivated me to work hard and help make UCA a success.

In my daily work I sometimes worry that we are not moving fast enough, but when the time comes to preparing reports, I look back and realize that a lot of work at UCA is progressing steadily. Many paths have been travelled, some solutions have been effective, others not, but I know that the most important steps are yet to come.

### What were some of the challenges you faced?

The first steps in any endeavour are always the most precious to remember. When I joined in 2002, everything was new to me, with members scattered all over the world. Moreover, at UCA I had to represent my country, and in my country, I had to represent a foreign organization. Not everyone was supportive. At each meeting with government officials I had to explain why UCA worked in the mountains and not in capital cities; what AKDN does; and that UCA is not involved with religious education. This lack of understanding about UCA was sometimes overwhelming.

### How is the work culture at UCA different from other places you have worked?

From the first days of its activity, the culture at UCA emphasized the value of Human Resources above all. We began teaching courses at the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) that people needed, and today many are among the best teachers in the country in English, tourism, and finance. Quite a few have established their own businesses.

Today UCA has grown considerably with beautiful buildings, campuses, equipment, machinery, but the people remain the university's main value in all three countries! And values are what define the working culture at UCA.

### New AKDN Logo and Website



The Aga Khan Development Network has launched its new logo and website. Please visit the website for a wealth of information on its worldwide activities in over 30 countries: <https://the.akdn>.

Significance of the new AKDN logo: The AKDN logo expresses interconnectivity. Polygons of three, five, and seven, form 49 different yet congruent units which interact with and reinforce each other to become one. They represent the Network as an interconnected programme encompassing social, cultural, and economic dimensions to improve the quality of life of individuals and the societies in which they live.

# Scientists Gather in Khorog to Study Mountain Environments

On October 1-2, 2022, the University of Central Asia's (UCA) Khorog Campus hosted a seminar, "New Research on History, Environment, Society and Development in the Pamirs," organized by the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, in collaboration with the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation (OSIAF).

The initiative was undertaken within the framework of the SAS research cluster "Modernity in Central Asia: Identity, Society, Environment". The seminar brought together local and international researchers to explore various aspects of history, environment, and development in the context of the mountainous regions, particularly the Pamirs.



Participants of the seminar.

Speakers and participants included scholars from academic institutions in Tajikistan, Germany and Switzerland, as well as students and staff from Khorog State University, the Institute of Humanities of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan, and UCA.

The workshop was the first of its kind to identify and assess the current state of ac-

ademic science and knowledge production in mountain regions, such as the Pamirs, at various institutions in Central Asia, the Russian Federation and Western academia. It is expected that the proceedings of the seminar will be published in a separate volume of New Research on History, Environment and Development in the Pamirs.



## Roman Mogilevskii Moves to ADB

Dr. Roman Mogilevskii, who served as the Associate Director of the Institute of Public Policy and Administration has left UCA to join the Asian Development Bank as Senior Economist in the Central and West Asia Department. He steered IPPA from its inception in 2011 and was responsible for its emergence as a leading centre of research on social and economic issues facing Central Asia. As one of the region's most prominent economists, he organized major research projects, authored numerous studies, developed teaching programmes, and mentored a new generation of researchers. He played a key role in the intellectual life of the university and will be much missed by his colleagues. We wish him all the best in his new endeavours.

## UCA and AKF Invest in Skills of the Future: Story of Salima

Salima Marodbekova, a 22-year-old resident of Khorog, is working her way into the IT sector.

"I never bought the idea that the IT sector is only for males, although it is currently dominated by them. She was looking for an opportunity to make her dream a reality when along came a Digital Marketing course, sponsored by Local Impact, an initiative of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and World Education Foundation in partnership with UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE).

"I immediately took the opportunity and applied for the course. During the 2-weeks intensive course, I was able to get the skills and knowledge needed for my future growth in tech," reflects Salima.

The course included a tour to the Pamir Innovation Hub (PIH), where the participants learnt about internship and job opportunities, including the internship program of AKF's Coalition of Employers and PIH. The Coalition of Employers was established under the Local Impact project in Tajikistan and



Salima (right) at her new job after training at SPCE.

Kyrgyzstan and brings together employers across the country comprised of leading and likeminded businesses, global outsourcing firms, and development partners, committed to investing in youth skills and creating gainful work for disadvantaged youth in Central Asia.

Salima applied for the internship program with PIH and was selected. After three months of internship, her work performance was assessed and based on her high performance, she was hired as a full-time employee. "I just embarked on my work adventure and very glad of this opportunity."

## VIP visits to UCA Khorog

On October 3, 2022, the European Union (EU) delegation consisting of Ms. Terhi Katriina Hakala (left), EU Special Representative to Central Asia; Mr. Raimundas Karoblis, Head of EU Delegation; and Gulru Dodkhudoeva, Head of Partnerships from AKF Tajikistan visited UCA's Khorog Campus.

The EU delegation showed keen interest in UCA's MSRI activities, especially how benefits of its research could reach local communities.



On October 5, 2022, the delegation from the UN Human Rights department Mr. Pavlo Byalyk (second from right), UN Human Rights Advisor; Mr. Andrey Khanzhin and Mr. Parviz Najmidinov from UN Regional Centre for Central Asia; Ms. Aycan Akdeniz from DCO/UNDP, Istanbul; and Ms. Enkhtungalag Ganbold from UN RCO Tajikistan visited UCA's Khorog Campus and met with faculty and management.

Another delegation to the Khorog campus on October 5 included Ms. Teresa Miller (second from left), Director of Education office of USAID, Tajikistan; Ms. Mavjuda Nabieva, Education Management Specialist, USAID; Mr. Nakhat Abdulofizov, Deputy Chief of Party, Chemonics; and USAID "Learn together activity" representatives. They met with Dean Maxim Khomyakov and Associate Dean Kholiknazar Kuchakshoev and discussed future partnerships.

## How Sino Shakhbozbekov's Persistence and Hard Work Paid Off



Sino (right), with his colleagues at UCA.

Since childhood, Sino was especially fond of mathematics, but nevertheless by grade 7 he realized he was falling behind in English and Math. After talking it over with his parents he decided to join SPCE's Academic Achievement Program in Dushanbe.

"The lessons in the Academic Achievement Program not only influenced my admission to the University of Central Asia in Khorog, but also pushed me to participate and win places in English Olympiads not only in my school, but also in other cities in Tajikistan," says Sino.

From 7th to 11th grade Sino regularly attended classes 3 times a week. During

these 5 years of continuous education the program helped him not only to write and express his thoughts in English, but also improved his knowledge in math. The knowledge he gained made the entrance exams to the University of Central Asia in Khorog easier. Today, Sino is one of the top students at UCA, studying Earth and Environmental Sciences.

The main advantage of the Academic Achievement Program is that it allows participants to prepare for international certificates such as TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, SAT and ICDL, which are in high demand by universities around the world.

## Student Talent Show in Khorog



UCA Preparatory Program student Sherzod Pallaev displays a drawing he made of American President John F. Kennedy.

On September 30, 2022, the UCA Khorog campus student life group organized a talent show. Students sang songs, danced, read poetry, presented their paintings, and played musical instruments. Children

of UCA's faculty also took part in the performance. While many students were involved in the performance, many more guests came to watch and appreciate their talents.

## New Internship Opportunities for SPCE Graduates in Tajikistan



The School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Dushanbe and Khorog have partnered with Employer Coalition to provide paid internship opportunities for graduates between the ages of 18 and 29 at various partner organizations.

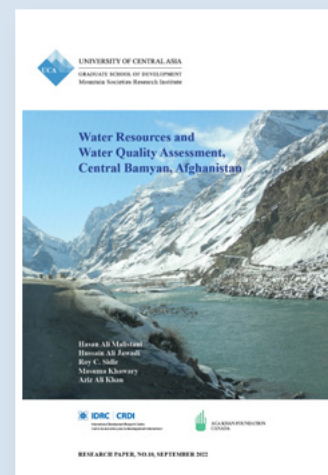
The Employer Coalition is a new initiative of the Aga Khan Foundation to develop the skills of youth and create jobs with an eye to the future. Currently, the Coalition has been established in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

and includes more than 60 companies and training centers. A Coalition of Employers is planned for more than 10 countries around the world.

The partnership between SPCE and the Employers' Coalition also helps SPCE students improve their knowledge and skills and assists in their career development. The initiative is supported by USAID and AKF's Local Impact: Transformational Partnerships in Asia and Africa project.

UCA Publication for free Download

## Water Quality in Bamyan, Afghanistan – UCA Publishes Landmark Paper



University of Central Asia's Mountain Societies Research Institute, as part of UCA's "Pathways to Innovation" project, supported a major study on "Water Resources and Water Quality Assessment in Central Bamyan, Afghanistan". The project is funded by IDRC Canada and Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

Read Paper: <https://bit.ly/bamyanwater>



Azamat Azarov, UCA's MSRI Research Fellow and CAFDP alumnus presented his research at the international conference "Can agroecological farming feed the world? Farmers' and academia's views" in Prague, Czech Republic in September.

## Announcement

The University of Central Asia announces graduate and postdoctoral fellowship opportunities at the University of Cambridge, UK ([UCA-Cambridge Trust Scholarship](#)) and in Germany ([UCA-DAAD Doctoral Scholarship Programme](#)).



### UCA-Cambridge Trust Scholarship Programme for Young Scholars 2023-2024

Join UCA's Online Information Sessions in October and November 2022



Attend UCA's online information sessions in October and November, learn more:

- [Cambridge Trust](#) master and doctoral degree scholarships.
- UCA-DAAD online information session "[How to apply for UCA-DAAD scholarship](#)"

### UCA-DAAD Doctoral Scholarships for Academic Year 2023-2024



Join UCA's Online Information Sessions in October and November 2022



## Conference on Intelligent Robotics



On 25 September, Dr Ayman Aljarbouh (right), Chair of the Computer Science department at the University of Central Asia, co-chaired one of the sessions at the IEEE 5th International Conference on Intelligent Robotics and Control Engineering 2022.

The conference fosters interdisciplinary and international collaboration opportunities and strengthens domestic and international recognition in pure and applied research for the participants. The session on "Intelligent Control System and Technical Analysis" was chaired by Dr Aljarbouh.

## UCA and NSU Students Compete



UCA's School of Arts and Sciences brought together UCA and the Naryn State University students to participate in an International Collegiate Programming Contest 2022.

The Beginners League Selection Round was held on 28 September at UCA's Naryn Campus, where students from both universities competed against each other to be shortlist-

ed for the local, regional and international rounds.

ICPC is an international algorithmic programming contest for college students which trains them to solve real-world problems, fosters collaboration, creativity, innovation, and the ability to perform under pressure.

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