

**Inner Asian & Uralic**  
**National Resource Center**

Summer 2005 Newsletter



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*Reaching Out* is a biannual publication of the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center. Questions, comments, and suggestions may be sent to the Newsletter Editor at [iaau@indiana.edu](mailto:iaau@indiana.edu)

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**Cover photograph by Shavkat Boltayev, a photographer from Uzbekistan.**

## A Word From the Acting Director

As July approached and the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center (IAUNRC) prepared for the return of Director Bill Fierman from a yearlong sabbatical and of Assistant Director Kasia Rydel-Johnston from extended leave, the final weeks of my tenure as Acting Director drew to a close. The Center's last major initiative for 2004-2005—participation in the annual Summer Workshop in Slavic, East European, and Central Asian Languages (SWSEEL)—commenced on June 17, hosting 62 students from across the United States to study Azeri, Kazakh, Tajik, Turkmen, Uyghur, and Uzbek at introductory, intermediate, or, as with Uzbek, advanced levels. Eleven summer FLASes and nearly \$100,000 in SSRC funding helped many of these students cover their expenses during the summer program.

Visiting instructors Zauze Batayeva, Abdurazik Rafiev, Muhabbat Yakubova, and Gulnisa Nazarova joined familiar faces Nazik Sarjayeva, Nigora Azimova, Shahyar Daneshgar, Zemfira Zeynalova, Aliya Kuryshzhanova, Nasrullo Khodjaerov, Ejegiz Saparova, Talant Mawkanuli, and Malik Hodjaev to provide the native-speaking core for teaching the SWSEEL Central Asian languages. In addition, faculty from many divisions of the Indiana University system supplemented language pedagogy with a broad range of Central Asian cultural insights through lectures, films, and demonstrations.

Among its activities during the spring semester, IAUNRC organized or provided support for the following: a teach-in on current political events in Kyrgyzstan; the annual symposium Soyuz sponsored by the American Anthropological Association; the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning; a roundtable on "Gender and Feminism under Post-Communism"; the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Central Eurasian Studies Conference; a series of lectures on Tibetan themes; the visit of renowned scholar Börje Vähämäki to speak on the Finnish epic "Kalevala"; a screening of "Letters from Karelia," a film about Finns moving to Soviet Karelia to help build a communist paradise in the 1930s; the student-organized Navruz Festival; and the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Silk Road Bayram, a musical concert featuring Imamyar Hasanov, a young Azeri-trained kamancha virtuoso. In addition, outreach activities with K-12 schools throughout Indiana continued, drawing upon the talents and knowledge of Central Asian visitors to IU under the auspices of international exchange and support programs.

Two of our Graduate Assistants, Heidi Bludau and Leone Musgrave, will return to work at the Center during academic year 2005-2006. They will be joined by Fatima Morrisroe, a journalism student originally from Kyrgyzstan. By the time the fall semester begins, the Center expects to have hired a secretary and a fiscal officer to replace Nancy Boxell and Daniel Zaretsky.

Finally, I would like to thank Dustin Trowbridge, who braved the complex tasks of running the daily affairs of the Center during Kasia's absence. He was a bright spot in a sometimes clouded environment, and I would have survived my tour as Acting Director in much worse condition were it not for his diligence and good nature. *Edward Lazzarini*



An appreciative audience at Indiana University's 2005 Navruz festival of spring

## Students Celebrate Baltic and Finnish Independence and Film

Finnish language instructor Anna Pajunen organized a festival for Finnish Independence Day, December 6. Pajunen's husband, Ron Stewart, provided much of the traditional food, which included cold smoked salmon, glass master's herring, a beef and cabbage casserole, and beer. Introductory-level students recited poems and intermediate students delivered short speeches. Baltic and Finnish Studies Association (BaFSA) member Janet S. Rauscher gave the main address, detailing the events that led to Finland's declaration of independence.

On February 24 BaFSA celebrated Estonian Independence. The event was planned by Estonian language instructor Piibi-Kai Kivik and featured typical Estonian food, the Indianapolis-based Baltic music group the Hedgehogs, and a choir performance by BaFSA members. Graduate student Matthew Caples also delivered a speech commemorating Indiana University Uralic and Altaic studies professors Alo Raun and Felix Oin as.

On April 9 BaFSA hosted a lecture titled "Kullervo, the Kalevala's Most Troubled Son," by Professor Börje Vähämäki, director of Finnish Studies at University of Toronto's Department of Slavic Literature and Languages. BaFSA then screened the documentary film "Letters From Karelia," which was followed by a discussion with the film's historical consultant, Professor Varpu Lindström of the Departments of History and Women's Studies at York University, Toronto.

The Baltic and Finnish Studies Film Festival 2005 played Thursday evenings in March. Films shown included "The Cuckoo," "City Unplugged," "Ariel," and "Good Hands." "The Cuckoo" is in Russian, Finnish, and Sami, and it concerns the fate of a condemned Finnish sniper and a disgraced Russian army officer, both taken in and sustained by a Sami war widow in the final days of the Soviet-Finnish Continuation War (1944). "City Unplugged" is a thriller laced with ironic commentary on the days following Estonia's secession from the USSR, while "Ariel" is a parodic Finnish road movie, and "Good Hands" is a popular comedy bridging Latvia and Estonia.

*Reporting for this article was provided by Hilary Virtanen and Michael Coppejeans.*

## IU Celebrates Annual Navruz Festival of Spring

The multiethnic and multireligious holiday of Navruz has been celebrated for thousands of years by many groups of people, from Zoroastrians and Muslims in Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, the five Central Asian republics, and Western China, to Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iraq, and Bashkirs and Tatars in southern Russia. Not directly comparable to any one U.S. holiday, Navruz is associated with the New Year (the Persian word means New Day), the sun (especially its return), creation, forgiveness, thanksgiving, and love. Navruz is often accompanied by ceremonies of housekeeping, smoking out of bad spirits, and inviting luck into one's home. Heads of household grant requests of family members and dependents, insults and debts are forgiven, and the wealthy give gifts to the poor, (indeed, different classes have traditionally celebrated Navruz on different days and even different weeks). Common Navruz gifts include flowers, perfume, branches, and incense. Sweets are also particularly abundant at Navruz, and some cultures prepare special meals of only dishes beginning with s or sh. Others honor the sun god Mithra, jumping over fires, or sprinkle water, hoping for rain and a plentiful crop. Many ride on swings or participate in public bouts of horse racing, singing, and storytelling. IU held its own annual Navruz celebration this spring, marked by dances from Kazakhstan, Dagestan, Azerbaijan, and Turkey; music from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Egypt; short speeches by the participants; and video clips and foods from areas where Navruz is traditionally celebrated.



**Munara Mailybekova playing the komus, the traditional instrument of her native Kyrgyzstan, at the 2005 Navruz festival**

## IAUNRC Hosts Panel on Revolution in Kyrgyzstan

In the wake of Kyrgyzstan's late March revolution, on April 11 IAUNRC presented a panel discussion on the nature of the events and their implications for the region at large. IAUNRC acting director Edward Lazzarini, also a professor in IU's Central Eurasian studies and history departments, introduced the panelists and mediated the question-and-answer session. Framing the discussion was IU political science professor Henry Hale. A specialist in post-Soviet elections and ethnicity, Hale set the stage by providing background on the political structure and climate in Kyrgyzstan both before and after the revolution. Much of the discussion at the roundtable concerned the relationship of the movement in Bishkek to recent peaceful takeovers in other post-Soviet states. In the winter of 2003-2004, a largely student-based movement effected Georgia's "Rose Revolution." This past winter mass protests also culminated in Ukraine's "Orange Revolution." Professor Kelly McMann of Case Western University's political science department, who recently completed a survey of comparative democratization in post-Soviet republics, followed Professor Hale. Professor McMann discussed, among other matters, the socio-economic pressures contributing to revolutionary sentiment in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere. According to McMann's studies, poor living conditions were a common grievance among citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Ukraine. Other common factors in the revolutions included widespread corruption and fraudulent elections. Finally, McMann observed, as in the previous two upheavals, the fact that Kyrgyzstan's incumbent powers decided not to respond to the unrest with violence facilitated the change of power. Nazikbek Kydyrmishev, a visiting political science scholar from southern Kyrgyzstan who had been in touch with opposition organizations, discussed details of strategy, such as the movement's beginning in the south rather than in the country's capital, and prospects for stability under the new government. While many worry that continued patronage politics will only perpetuate instability in the region, McMann sees hope if Kyrgyzstan can decrease economic dependence on the state. Speaking last, visiting scholar Ulan Begozhin of Kazakhstan discussed the likelihood that the revolution would spread to his country, concluding that the kind of grass roots movement and communications networks necessary for a similar overthrow did not exist there. The well-attended panel was followed by a brief reception. The event was generously co-sponsored by the Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies Chair, the School of Public and Environmental Affairs, the History Department, and the Political Science Department.

## Uyghur Studies Flourishing at IU

The field of "Xinjiang studies" is flourishing in academia around the world – even if its composition and its very name are much debated – and this is an excellent time to be at IU working in it. The scholarship on Xinjiang has grown dramatically over the last decade. Important recent monographs that focus substantially on the region and its peoples include Justin Rudelson's *Oasis Identities* (1997), Linda Benson and Ingvar Svanberg's *China's Last Nomads* (1998), James Millward's *Beyond the Pass* (1998), Michael Dillon's *Xinjiang* (2004), and Peter Perdue's *China Marches West* (2005). A 2004 collection edited by S. Frederick Starr has showcased the work of historians, anthropologists, economists, and political scientists, providing a tour d'horizon of the field. IU PhDs have been contributing to this wave of new scholarship. The work of Nicola di Cosmo, who received his PhD from IU's Department of Central Eurasian Studies (CEUS), has illuminated the long history of interactions between nomadic and settled populations in the region. Another CEUS PhD, Nathan Light, has for years maintained the definitive website in English for Uyghur studies. Taken together, all of this academic energy has dramatically expanded our knowledge of the region's complex history; its demography; the interests and actions of various regional powers toward the region and its inhabitants; the emergence and shaping of Uyghur nationalism; and Xinjiang's place in the development of both China and Central Asia. Where Xinjiang had once been depicted as an arcane land of mystery, perhaps more arcane even than Tibet, this new scholarship joins vivid detail with admirable analysis.

Further proof of the vitality of Xinjiang studies lies in the number of academic panels and conferences on the region. There have for some years been panels on Xinjiang at annual meetings of the Association for Asian Studies and the Central Eurasian Studies Society. In the last year there have been two major conferences devoted entirely to the region. In November 2004, the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies hosted an enormous conference on Xinjiang attended by dozens of scholars from Europe, North America, Japan, and Xinjiang. A month later, an "International Workshop on Xinjiang Historical Sources" took place in Hakone, Japan. Scholars from around the world attended, including CEUS professor Christopher Beckwith and CEUS graduate Nicola di Cosmo.

CEUS, the only department of its kind in the country, provides an ideal venue for a Xinjiang studies curriculum commensurate to a region spanning both East and Central Asia. With specialists on Central Asian history, culture, and politics, as well as on Tibet and Mongolia, CEUS provides students an extraordinary opportunity to study Xinjiang in the round. Interested students can focus on Xinjiang's place in Central Asia or in China. They can confine themselves to the study of Uyghurs or they can study border-spanning populations such as Qazaqs or Mongols or Chinese. Beyond its wide-ranging curriculum in Xinjiang studies, IU has one of the best library collections in the US on the region, with materials in Uyghur, Qazaq, Chinese, and Russian, not to mention in Japanese and European languages. It also offers summer language courses in first- and second-year Uyghur, and plans are being laid for instruction at more advanced levels. Finally, IU continues to host scholars from the region. Rahile Dawut, a folklorist and anthropologist, visited in spring of 2004. Rushangul Rozi, a specialist on Uyghur vernacular architecture, visited in the same period and has now returned. Omer Dawut, a linguist with a special interest in language pedagogy, was a visiting scholar in spring 2005. Another Uyghur visiting scholar is expected in the fall.

*Contributed by Gardner Bovingdon*

## Students Give Lectures on Central and Inner Asia, New and Old

On April 1 Indiana University political science graduate student Barbara Junisbai presented a paper entitled "The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan: A Case Study in Economic Liberalization, Inter-Elite Cleavage and Political Opposition." According to Junisbai and her husband Azamat, the emergence of the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) movement in fall 2001 represented a dramatic departure from Central Asia's political norm. Using the DCK as a case study, their paper addresses the relationship between economic liberalization and elite cleavages, and the role of elite cleavages in generating democratic challenges to authoritarian rule. The Junisbais argue that in Kazakhstan the most significant sources of pressure leading to political reform result from elite cleavages based on rival economic interests (as opposed to clan-based or other traditional divisions). Their central argument is not the commonplace assumption that democratization will simply occur once these countries reach some specified level of economic development. Rather, the potential for change lies in competition among elites for their share of economic spoils which do amass concomitantly with economic liberalization, and in the elites' resultant commitment to the rule of law. The paper grew out of a class Junisbai took on comparative democratization in Indiana University's political science department in fall 2003. Before coming to IU, Junisbai worked for USAID/Central Asia Regional Mission. It was then that the DCK movement arose and caught Barbara and Azamat's attention. This summer Junisbai returned to Kazakhstan for intensive advanced Kazakh language study.



**Barbara Junisbai, co-author of new paper on Kazakhstan**



**Venturi in Sa skya, Tibet, where she conducted research in August 2004**

Central Eurasian Studies (CEUS) graduate student Federica Venturi was invited to speak to a group of students and faculty at Harvard University on March 23 as part of its Sanskrit and Indian studies department's lecture series. Her talk was entitled "Inner Asia at the Time of the Tibetan Empire: The Ethnographic Portrait in Pelliot Tibétain 1283." The paper grew out of an annotated translation Ms. Venturi did of a document known to Tibetologists as PT#1283. Venturi worked first with Professor Christopher Beckwith and later with Professor Gardner Bovingdon, both at IU. Her initial paper was the 2003-04 winner of the Sinor prize, established in honor of CEUS professor emeritus Denis Sinor and given annually for the best paper submitted in a CEUS class during the school year. The document Venturi translated belongs to a group of handwritten texts discovered in a series of grottoes at Dunhuang in 1900. These particular documents are referred to as "Pelliot Tibétain" after the French Scholar Paul Pelliot, who took them from Dunhuang in 1908 and deposited them in the National Library of France. The Paris documents, along with others from the same grottoes, constitute one of the main sources on early Tibet and more: though rendered in Old Tibetan, this document actually appears to be the intelligence report of several envoys sent by an Uighur king to the countries north of his kingdom. For that reason, the document contains a fascinating wealth of ethnographic and demographic detail on the various peoples of Inner Asia during the time of the Tibetan Empire. Since translating it, Ms. Venturi has sought to answer such questions of how and when (she thinks in the late eighth or early ninth century) the document was written.

# IU Welcomes Ron Sela

This fall, Professor Ron Sela joins IAUNRC and the Central Eurasian Studies department to teach the history of Central Asia. Having previously taught at the University of Michigan and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Sela was pleased to move to a school with what he considers one of the best departments for Central Asian studies in the world. In many respects, Sela says, IU's program actually serves as a model for other departments. Whereas other schools are still in the process of developing their programs on countries such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, at IU Sela found a ready host of specialists on Central Asia from such diverse disciplines as anthropology, history, and politics.

While Sela himself is first and foremost a historian of Central Asia, he considers history to be a sort of umbrella subject, which often covers such other

topics as philosophy, literature, mathematics and more. In one class Sela has taught, for example, students focus on travel literature. Reading these old travelers' accounts is one of the best ways to find out not only about the history of Central Asia itself, but about the attitudes of the people who were traveling there and how they thought of themselves. To figure out how the travelers' stories of foreign lands might have been influenced or biased by their own background, by previous travelers' accounts of the same places, etc., Sela has used the critical reading skills so important to literary criticism. Those critical reading skills, in turn, help students to be smarter readers of

other kinds of sources on Central Asia, such as chronicles, official documents, personal letters, religious literature, and family histories.

Sela's interest in travel literature was, in fact, one reason he first started studying Central Asia. "For example," he says, "when I was just a boy I received, under odd circumstances, an anonymous Hebrew translation of the diaries of Sven Hedin, the noted Swedish explorer of Inner Asia...A completely different connection [to Central Asia] is my own family's history. My mother and grandmother fled the Nazis from Poland and were directed—like many other Jews—by the Soviets to Central Asia, where my grandmother ran an orphanage in Bukhara during WWII."

Born and raised in Tel Aviv, Israel, Sela went to college at Tel Aviv University and earned his masters and doctoral degrees here at Indiana University under the direction of Professors Yuri Bregel and Devin Deweese. When Sela visited Bukhara he was able to identify the location of the orphanage his grand-

mother had directed there. An avid traveler to many regions of the globe, Sela has now visited approximately fifty different countries. One of his particular favorites is India, where he has spent more than a year and where he hopes to return at some point. The Central Asian professor actually had considered studying various other regions of the world when applying to graduate school. As an undergraduate, he studied how people in different places and times have converted to Islam, especially in areas that are considered the periphery of the Islamic world, such as West Africa. In fact, these "edges of the Muslim world" contain a great part of the world's total Muslim population. Furthermore, places like Central Asia have contributed much to the nature of Islam, how it is taught, and how it functions in society.



**Historian and fearless explorer Professor Ron Sela at Tashkent Zoo**

For Sela, this is a key reason for studying the history of Central Asia and its role in world Islam. "Developments in Central Asia today," he writes, "have deep roots that go back to the near and distant past. These roots touch upon every sphere of life, from politics to religion to codes of social behavior, and they cannot be understood without a proper historical background. Religious environment, patterns of local economy, national symbols, the search for identity, have always been there, and are not things that simply sprang to life once the Soviet Union collapsed ... Ignoring these traditions may give way to many misinterpretations." If the media and public had better understood Central Asian history, Sela continues, recent events in Central Asia and elsewhere

might not have seemed so surprising.

To encourage this broader understanding of the region's history and of its role in the development of Islamic civilization, Sela will teach a survey class this fall that introduces students from many different departments to the study of Central Asia. Another class Sela will teach would deal specifically with the history of relations between Russia and Central Asia. Because the five republics that make up Central Asia were members, along with Russia, of the Soviet Union for many years, Russia and the Central Asian countries to this day have both strong ties and strong disputes. Sela's class would examine relations between the countries from various angles, including law, education, economy, religion, and so forth. Such a background would help students to analyze potentially volatile current concerns, such as the control of natural resources and citizenship procedures. For example, many people born in one republic but living in another when all were part of the USSR are today being deported to their birth countries, despite the fact that some have no re-

On a more academic note, Sela also looks forward to this spring, when he plans to teach a seminar for doctoral students on the sources used in studying Central Asian history. Like the class on travel literature, this course will focus on the methods and difficulties of doing historical research. Aside from deciding which old documents you can and cannot trust, or how much, Central Asian historians have an added difficulty. While many countries have printed documents beginning many centuries ago, even relatively recent Central Asian documents are often in manuscript form. Reading the handwriting can itself be difficult, even if one does know the rarely taught languages in which the documents are written. Able to read texts in nine languages, including Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, German, and Chaghatay, Sela is an ideal teacher for the subject. With his wide experience and boundless interest in other cultures, he is a wonderful addition to the Central Eurasian Studies faculty at Indiana University as well.



Csaba Pléh dressed as St. Mikulas for Hungarian Christmas

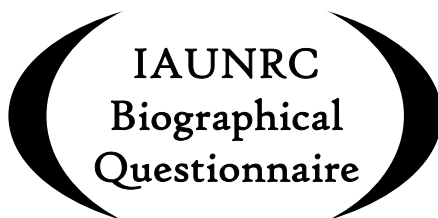
## IAUNRC News in Brief

CEUS student Nicole Willock arranged a packed concert on February 25 featuring Tibetan doctor and self-taught musician Palgon. Hailing from the Amdo region, Palgon writes his own songs, sings, and plays the dram-nyan (a Tibetan lute). During the 1980s Palgon also developed a style of his own that eventually became the predominant folk mode throughout Amdo.

Indiana University's Students for a Free Tibet, in conjunction with the International Tibetan Independence Movement and Department of Central Eurasian Studies, presented a traditional Tibetan dinner of momos, noodles, and tea, followed by the documentary, "Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion" and a discussion with Tibetan residents. The proceeds from the 100 admissions were donated to Gu-chu-sum, the Tibetan ex-political prisoners' association located in India.

2004-05 IU Visiting Hungarian Chair Csaba Pléh was elected to the position of Deputy Secretary General of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. To take this government post he must leave his faculty position as head of the department of cognitive science that he founded at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. Also, April 2-3 IU hosted an international symposium organized by Pléh, entitled "Creativity, Mind and Brain in Hungarian Scholarship: Past and Present." In addition to the distinguished scholars, the Hungarian ambassador to the U.S. also attended the symposium.

June 17-August 12 IU hosted the Summer Workshop in Slavic, East European, and Central Asian Languages. Besides language instruction, students enjoyed a rich cultural program including lectures, movies, cooking demonstrations, and other activities.



## Help the IAUNRC help you!

The IAUNRC strives to sustain the interests of those who have taken coursework in Inner Asian and Uralic studies over the years through continued educational and funding opportunities. If you'd like to help us do so, please provide any of the information requested below by mail, fax or email or email.

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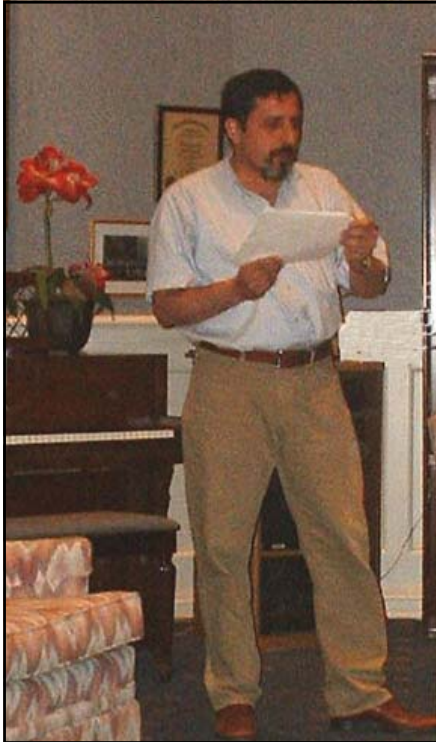
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# A Celebration of Central Eurasian Poetry



Turkish poet Abbas Karakaya reading from his poem "Tanker"

On April 22 the Association of Central Eurasian Students presented a two-hour-long reading and reception to celebrate the poetry of Central Eurasia. Teams of students and teachers from the U.S. and Central Eurasian countries read poems in Tibetan, Turkish, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Persian followed by their own English translations. Poetry from as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century and as late as the 21<sup>st</sup> century was represented. Visiting scholar Munara Mailybekova played the traditional Kyrgyz lute, the komus, to accompany the Kyrgyz poetry and later also sang traditional Kyrgyz lyrics. In addition to others' translated works, Gedun Rabsal also read one of his own poems in Tibetan, and Abbas Karakaya read his poem, "Tanker," in Turkish. Presenters also discussed the history of poetry in their countries and the biographies of the poets represented. Professor Paul Losensky, for example, noted how Sohrab Sepehri cleverly derived his abstract poem, "The Address," in which the audience receives confusing spiritual directions, from a bit of vernacular speech. The evening was hosted by CEUS student Nicole Willock and supported by the Department of Central Eurasian Studies, IAUNRC, the Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies Chair, and International Programs.



Farzona Zehni reading Tajik poetry from the 15th century

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