



**Inner Asian & Uralic**  
**National Resource Center**  
Winter 2005 Newsletter

## Inside this issue:

<i>A Word From the Director</i>	2
<i>IU Cultural Events Feature Inner Asian and Uralic Countries</i>	3
<i>Meet Yangbum Gyal, Tibetan Language Teacher and Doctor of Tibetan Medicine</i>	3
<i>Professor Anne Pyburn on Public Archaeology in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan</i>	4
<i>Professor Laszlo Borhi on Hungary, Sovietization, and the Cold War</i>	6
<i>Graduate Student Christopher Baker on Emerging Kazakh Identity</i>	8

*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)

For further formation regarding the services of the IAUNRC, please contact:

**IAUNRC**  
**Indiana University**  
**Goodbody Hall 324**  
**Bloomington, IN 47405**

**Tel: 812.856.5263**  
**Fax: 812.855.8667**  
**E-mail: [iaunrc@indiana.edu](mailto:iaunrc@indiana.edu)**

The IAUNRC also posts regular announcements, outreach materials and services, and networking opportunities on its website at:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~iaunrc>

**Cover photograph: woman holding *guzapoya* (dried bushels of cotton) by Shavkat Boltaev, a photographer from Uzbekistan.**

## A Word From the Director

I would like to start by thanking Ed Lazzerini for serving as acting director during my year's sabbatical. We were all lucky to have him at the helm during my absence. This was especially true since Kasia Johnston, our assistant director, was also on leave for the first half of 2005. Thanks also go to Dustin Trowbridge, who replaced Kasia during her absence, doing a fine job of handling the myriad administrative details at IAUNRC.

This has been a busy fall at IAUNRC as we prepared our new Title VI proposal to submit to the Department of Education. We now sit back and wait until spring, when we will find out about the funding that will support most of our activities for the period September 2006-August 2010.

For those of you who have been at IAUNRC in recent years and know the staff, let me also mention that Nancy Boxell has left for another job at IU. We have been joined by Liz Kovács, who became our secretary almost at the peak of chaos, just as we were moving into high gear for the Title VI preparations.

With IAUNRC funding, CEUS continues this year to offer the individualized Advanced Directed Language Study (ADLS)

option to students who need instruction beyond the third year of their languages. In 2004-2005, six students took advantage of this option, studying Kazakh, Uzbek, Hungarian, Mongolian and Tibetan. Five enrolled in ADLS this fall, including one in Persian. Since we first established the program in 2003, it has been so popular that in this grant cycle we have applied for funding for twice as many students, including now also for languages which are normally offered only through the second year.

Thanks to funding from REEI, in summer, 2006, the Summer Workshop in Slavic, East European, and Central Asian Languages (SWSEEL) plans to offer Tatar for the first time. Also this summer IU will again host the migrating Baltic Summer Studies Institute, where students can attend an intensive program in Estonian and other Baltic languages. Finally, we are expecting another successful year for Central Asian languages at the summer workshop. Enrollment in the Central Asian languages at SWSEEL more than tripled between 2001 and 2005, from 17 to 63 students.

—William Fierman, Director



Alina Järvela (right) and fellow Frigg fiddler perform at Lotus Fest 2005

## IU Cultural Events Feature Inner Asian and Uralic Countries

Following last spring's popular Turkish Film Festival, the Turkish Students Association this fall organized monthly film screenings to lead up to their spring 2006 film festival. Movies shown included the romance "*Kalbin Zamani*" (Time of the Heart); Zeki Demirkubuz's adaptation of Albert Camus's French novel *The Stranger*, "*Yazgi*" (Fate); and the movies "*Egreti Gelin*" (Borrowed Bride); "*Yol*" (The Road); and "*G.O.R.A.*," wherein aliens abduct a Turkish carpet seller.

Wednesday evenings this fall Hungarian studies professor Lynn Hooker presented a Budapest Film Series. It included two films by director Istvan Szabo: "*Apa:*

*Egy hit naploja*" (Father: Diary of One Week), and "Sunshine," a 20th-century epic starring Ralph Fiennes as the man of three different generations of one Hungarian Jewish family. Also shown were "*A lany*" (The Girl), and Antal Nimrod's "*Kontroll*", about the underground and surreal lives of a group of subway ticket inspectors. Finally, the movies "*Moszkva Ter*" (Moscow Square) and "*Bolsche Vita*" both concerned the strange days of 1989, just as Hungary opened its border to the West, but before the final dismemberment of the Soviet Union.

The Baltic and Finnish Studies Association and Finnish teacher Anna Pajunen celebrated Finnish Independence Decem-

ber 6th, and Scandinavian group Frigg performed traditional Finnish fiddle music in September at the Lotus World Music Festival.

On November 10th Students for Global Democracy held a panel discussion on Azerbaijan's recent contested parliamentary elections. Professor Daneshgar of IU's Central Eurasian Studies Department gave an introduction to Azerbaijan's political history, Professor Bielasiak, from Political Science, discussed democratization models, and Azerbaijani Muskie Fellow Ahad Kazimov addressed the election itself, as well as the role of various groups, such as youth, women, and the media, in Azerbaijani politics.

## Tibetan Language Instructor Yangbum Gyal at IU to Stay

Many reasons induced Yangbum Gyal, Tibetan language teacher and doctor of Tibetan medicine, to choose to teach at Indiana University's Department of Central Eurasian Studies. Not only is CEUS one of the few departments in the country to offer both several levels of Tibetan language instruction and academic programs in Tibetan and East Asian culture, Bloomington also has a thriving Tibetan cultural community, including the Tibetan Cultural Center and the traditional Tibetan medical practice at the Center for Wholism. Bloomington is also home to the Dalai Lama's brother.

Gyal was born in Amdo, Tibet, where he went to medical school. Before moving to Bloomington, he taught Tibetan language for foreigners and worked as resident doctor, medical research fellow, and professor at the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute in Dharmasala, India. Asked about the differences between practicing medicine in the various countries, Gyal humorously observes that his American and Indian clients always followed the doctor's orders, while the Tibetans, as a rule, did not. Also, while the Tibetan medical tradition, which has been developed in Tibet for 2500 years, is still relatively new in the United States, India has its own ancient tradition of Ayurvedic medicine. Hence, while Americans often need a comprehensive explanation of the diagnostic and treatment processes, Gyal's clients in India seem to already have a good grasp of the basics of Tibetan medicine.

Some of those fundamentals, as Gyal explains them, are: to take an approach focusing on the patient's physiology, rather than on the pathology of the disease; to stress the importance of a healthy and balanced diet and lifestyle; to derive cures from practical experience with common, naturally available sources; and to prescribe gently rather than aggressively.

Gyal originally left Tibet for India because of a lack of freedom and educational opportunities at home. Upon graduating from medical school in Tibet, Gyal was assigned a job by the local health department, where he was forced to sign an agreement and deposit his diploma. Under contract and without documentation, he was unable to leave the area to accept a job anywhere else or to continue his studies. Having escaped to India, he was able to accomplish his goal of furthering his education. Though he managed to see his parents, who remained in Tibet, in 2002, Gyal now cannot return to his home country. Despite China's easing of immigration restrictions in recent years, Gyal says, as an escapee, he is not welcome home. The motive behind the easing of border restrictions, he continues, is in any case only to showcase progress in Tibet—progress which has been, unfortunately, more economic than political.

Gyal encourages his students not to be concerned about the difficulty of the Tibetan language, which, like other languages, he says, is hard at the beginning,

but gets easier once you get going. Gyal himself has translated both Solzhenitsyn's classic account of life in a Soviet labor camp, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and Henrik Ibsen's famous Norwegian family drama, *A Doll's House*, from English into Tibetan.

Having taught here and returned to India once before, Gyal is now in Bloomington to stay. After all, he says, "It is blooming!" Besides its natural beauty, Bloomington has cosmopolitanism of its own: in his spare time on Sunday afternoons, Gyal, a sometime Lakers and Pacers fan, can be found at the Tibetan cultural center—playing basketball with the monks.



Yangbum Gyal, teacher and doctor

# Pyburn leads IU Archaeology Projects in Central Asia

*Anne Pyburn is an IU Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies; Adjunct Professor in Central Eurasian Studies and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies; Director, Center for Archaeology in the Public Interest; Director, Chau Hiix Project, Belize; Affiliated Faculty Member of the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center; and Principal Investigator of the MATRIX Project. She will this year establish a modular museums program in Central Asia, as well as an archaeology field school in Kyrgyzstan, where local and American students together will work on digs and learn about anthropology. We interviewed her this fall regarding the museums and cultural resource preservation project.*

## **IAUNRC: How did you become interested in and involved in Central Asia?**

AP:...IU has a special relationship with the American University of Central Asia, which is in Bishkek....My original agenda was just simply to learn; [Central Asia is] completely outside of my culture area...But another thing that I'm interested in is the way that people's ideas about their cultural past and their heritage figure in...the rise of nationalism, and how in rapidly globalizing postcolonial contexts issues of heritage come in often times in support of political violence. There is kind of a startling connection between archaeology and political violence, and over some years of looking at this internationally I decided that it might be possible to wag the dog...To get in before archaeology is pulled into a nationalist agenda in support of...some kind of...aggressive political agenda. To get people to think about the repercussions of how they use their heritage and how they construct their identity and their relationship to their cultural past, so that it actually might work against the kind of ethnic pride that can lead to genocide and other bad sorts of political ideas...Your ethnic pride can lead you to think that everybody else is inferior, or it can lead you to think about how historically connected you are to so many different kinds of people.

**Ethnic tensions have long troubled the Kyrgyz and Uzbek cultures, which have lived side-by-side for centuries in Central Asia. When the Uzbek government fired on protesters last May, for example, many protesters fled to Kyrgyzstan. There they were held in refugee camps guarded by armed Kyrgyz, many of whom saw the Uzbeks as physically and economically threatening. Pyburn's reading of the news at the time suggested that bringing Kyrgyz into closer contact with Uzbeks increased cultural awareness and controlled tensions in that situation:**

The idea of the community museums is something like that... My graduate student, Erin Kuns, will work with people in a

small Kyrgyz village to...take their own pictures of things that in their minds represent heritage. And she will walk around with them with a GPS and map the cultural resources that they know about. An Uzbek graduate student will do the same thing in Uzbekistan and then with those maps and those interviews and those photographs, [create] modular museums, just meaning that the display can be folded up to transport, because when we get a similar product from both villages we will trade. So that people hopefully will establish some recognition of common heritage that was disrupted by the way that Soviets carved things up—which was sort of arbitrary. But...some people have now begun to reify those [Soviet] values as if they are really historically real and ethnically real, and that's the kind of thinking that can result in unnecessary hostility.

## **Cultural preservation work may also stem artifact sales:**

If Kyrgyzstan succeeds in increasing its tourist trade, they have the potential to develop an artifact market that would be fairly detrimental to preservation...We just want people to have information to think about these issues on their own, before the outside advisors come in, so that people can make their own decision about...how to dispose of their cultural property, and how...the difference between state property and their property and all that stuff is a conversation that's up to them...

## **Looting of archaeological sites and inter-cultural resentment often go hand in hand:**

I think [some Kyrgyz] are alienated from their local archaeology and I think the idea that it has value to them, either as perhaps related to their own past, the past of their own cultural group, or just the past of the people who were once living in that place, is not either obvious to them or important to them...also people have not considered the possibility that artifacts have value either for tourist development or for entre-

preneurial sales of stuff that can be dug up out of the ground. Kazakhstan has oil, so it has a lot of foreigners, and it also has access to Chinese markets. Therefore archaeological sites in Kazakhstan are being looted seriously. The amount of looting that's going on in Kyrgyzstan is still rather small...But...[when] archaeologists...work in regions and try not to talk to people about what they are doing, we know absolutely that that increases looting, because...an obvious assumption for what an archaeologist is doing is...looting—they're digging it up to sell. Who would think that an archaeologist is digging it up for any other reason? They claim they're digging to put it in a museum and study it and write about it? That's insane, who would do such a thing. So ordinary, intelligent people...are likely to be infuriated by having archaeologists coming in to dig up stuff and take it away. Why should they allow this? They should dig it up themselves...if it's valuable...That's why modern archaeologists have realized that it's absolutely incumbent on us to do public archaeology, that ordinary people must be included and involved in the project that we're involved in...There will



**Professor Pyburn with a Kyrgyz student**

never be enough laws, ...armies, ...archaeologists to protect the archaeological record. We're gone after two months, and...the people in the village are alone with the kurgans [or "burial mounds"] in their neighborhood...If it's gonna be protected, it's completely up to them...These people are sometimes hungry and needy and there's a source of income in the archaeological mounds, and if they don't see any reason to preserve them, the mounds are gone...Which is one reason that...people need to have this information first...before they start bringing in busloads of visitors...American tourists don't know what's wrong with buying stuff either.

**Professor Pyburn sees her role among colleagues similarly:**

Just before I left for Bishkek—I was chair of the ethics committee of the American Archaeological Association [AAA]—I began to get many emails from Bishkek...about the video made about bride kidnapping [a documentary which neglected to represent other marriage practices popular in contemporary Kyrgyzstan] in Bishkek and being shown internationally through PBS. Kyrgyz people wanted the ethics committee of the AAA to sanction this video because they were extremely offended by it...I had...to explain...that the...AAA ethics committee...we don't have any ability to sanction anything negatively or positively. We only try to provide information and provoke people to think about issues—hopefully in advance of being faced with a decision with potentially dire repercussions.

**Besides preempting nationalist uses of archaeology, Pyburn hopes her approach will bolster intercultural relations:**

It's...also to keep the lines of communication about the past between scholars...and other kinds of stakeholders outside the academy [open]...Anthropologists basically failed in the United States. Our...job is to create intersubjectivity with other people, to understand other people. And we were not able to create a context of understanding with specific communities that was adequate. It was so inadequate that it resulted in us having to be controlled by laws...Many developed nations are more forward looking than the United States in dealing with those kinds of problems. Canada, for example, leaves us in the dust...Recently decolonized places are much less likely to be like Canada and much more likely to follow in the foot-

**“Anthropologists basically failed in the United States.”**

steps of the colonizing power in terms of the way cultural property and ethnicity and indigenous rights are constructed. So, right now in Kyrgyzstan...the project of archaeology is not seen as having to do with anybody outside of the academy.

**This is partly because, although Central Asians generally have very strong connections to family and tradition, the Soviets often encouraged a negative attitude toward certain pre-industrial socio-economic practices:**

I believe that under the Russians the past was usually constructed as inferior and negative. And associating themselves with an “inferior,” “primitive” past is not something that peo-

ple want to do. They want to be seen as modern and forward-looking and technologically sophisticated and not stuck in the past. But that construction of heritage is no longer central in most developed nations. And, just because people did something in the past that they don't do anymore doesn't always mean that what they were doing in the past wasn't a good idea...Cutting people off from that...also cuts people off from the opportunity to take advantage of the kinds of things that their ancestors knew...For example, the most productive agricultural strategy in terms of land use per unit of production by far...is household farms...We know that both from ethnographic data, but also from archaeological data... Despite the fact that archaeologists have talked incessantly about the Maya collapse—the Maya civilization persisted for 3000 years, and it was significantly sustained over that 3000 year period by small family farms...That's a piece of information that people in the present day can learn from the past—usually their own past, because most parts of the world have a history of that kind of production strategy, that...it's a shame to cut them off from...convincing them that, you know, using the land to produce cattle for Burger King is efficient. It isn't, it never has been, and we have long-term data from archaeology to show that.

**To ensure that her ideas are not unduly influencing Kyrgyz and Uzbek decisions about cultural preservation, Pyburn has devised another exchange:**

In the third year we bring people from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, museum curators as well as some of the villagers, to meet with some Native American elders, probably Navajo...to make sure that they're exposed to ideas about preservation and heritage and identity and cultural property that are not just...academic and that are not just from...an advantaged person in a developed nation to disadvantaged people in a lesser developed nation.

**Why might Navajo elders be the ideal “confirmation” party?**

...An obvious reason would be to give Central Asians a chance to hear the other side of the story from...people who do not care for archaeology and who are very concerned about archaeologists interfering with their issues of identity and representation and cultural property...Also...I know...some Navajo elders in the past have been willing to provide this kind of consultation...Reliable data indicate the New World was populated across the Bering Strait from Eurasia...[and] I have met several Eurasian people who like that sense of connectedness to Native Americans...And...many Navajo people work with horses a lot and spend a lot of their time with horses...And many of my Kyrgyz friends also are extremely interested in horses...And some similarity of life experience and interests is something that I would look for as a foundation, so that in a fairly brief period of time communication between people with very different lives would be facilitated...I took a Kyrgyz colleague and friend—Kubat Tabaldiev—to Belize with me last year, and my Belizean colleagues and friends...also like horses, and...there were many times in the course of the project where...the subject would be horses. Dr Tabaldiev's English was hard for Belizeans to understand but everyone would be smiling a lot. There'd be a lot of smiling and a sense of camaraderie.

# Borhi Challenges Cold War Histories at Home and Abroad

Though he has left and returned to Bloomington several times, it is the continuity, not the change, which strikes Laszlo Borhi at IU. Since his first visit, after all, the entire government of his home country has changed. During his youth, Borhi, like many Hungarian students, accepted the party line taught in school: that the Soviet Union was at the forefront of the world peace movement, socialism was the highest form of human organization, and in the long run it would solve its problems and emerge victorious where capitalism could not. Then he began his year of army service, compulsory for all Hungarian men, and the first seeds of doubt were sown. The conditions of the army, the highly ideological nature of its culture, and the absurdity of being screamed at by a stranger for nothing, all combined to discredit the authorities in Borhi's eyes. While their actual military training was poor and they were seldom given live ammunition to practice with, (the authorities warily remembered how well-trained youths had been able to blow up Soviet tanks in the 1956 uprising), Borhi's regiment was subjected to the usual litany of humiliating "disciplinary" exercises, such as being forced to pick up leaves one by one. They were warned to tow the party line when they returned to the university, or else risk being fired or worse. Still, Borhi recalls, their conditions were better than those of the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary, whose officers were allowed to hit and even kick them. "We had some of the guys take part in a sharp-shooting competition in the Russian garrison and they said, 'Well the Soviets are far better at shooting than us, but their conditions—they live like pigs.'" And these troops, according to Borhi, were still better off than Red Army soldiers back home, who hotly pursued the privilege of being stationed in Eastern Europe. Soviet troops stationed near Borhi traded electric razors with his Hungarian comrades in exchange for wine and spirits.

As the political officers had feared, upon returning to the academic world, Borhi became only more disillusioned with the Soviet ideology. He was studying at what was the most liberal university in the country at the time, and was also exposed to the alternate political perspectives of foreign newspapers. Furthermore, Hungarian universities required their history students to do a comprehensive study of their subject, beginning with prehistoric times. Borhi decided that history could be a "very powerful way of testing the truthfulness of ideologies." The long view of history he received in university did not match up well with the Marxist-Leninist formulation of history he had been taught in school. By the time he graduated, Borhi was firmly anti-communist.

Borhi's new perspective elicited personal attacks from older historians not prepared to accept his interpretations of the Sovietization of Eastern Europe and the origins of the Cold War.

Among these new interpretations was the idea that Hungary ended up in the Soviet sphere of influence in large part because it was never very important to the West. "They relinquished this region in Central Europe very easily to the Germans and then subsequently to Soviet occupation," while the Soviets themselves "would have found it easier to surrender East Germany...to the west, [a move which Stalin and Beria considered in the early fifties], than Eastern Europe."

Borhi also flew in the face of new American scholarship that laid the blame for the Cold War equally on the Americans and the Soviets. In Borhi's research, the Soviet Union merits all the blame. It followed in Eastern Europe, he says, a traditional imperial expansionist trajectory, and for purely economic and military, rather than primarily ideological reasons, as scholars had previously assumed. One of Hungary's economic contributions was to quarter Soviet troops.

"Up to 1948 Hungary paid for all the expenses of the Soviet army—everything, even their financial allotment, food, transport—everything. Which basically doubled the size of reparations. And after 1948 they were required to pay a total sum of 20,000 forints...which at the time was about \$300, for the use of all military installations in Hungary...which is basically nothing. And then they were meant to pay 30-50% of their transportation and utilities. And on many occasions they refused to pay even that; they contested whether the receipts that the Hungarians gave them were legitimate." Meanwhile, Hungary had its own rearming to do. The Paris Peace Treaty required the countries of Eastern Europe to pay for this expense from their domestic budgets, "meaning that a nation of 9

million was supporting an army of about 240,000 troops, not including the armed forces of the Interior Ministry. Which is unbelievable in peacetime—it's very big."

The Soviet Union also derived economic benefit from free use of Hungary's national resources: "Plus Stalin required...heavy industrialization to prepare for military conflict in 1953. And this in itself explains [the revolution of] '56. I mean the standard of living plummeted to levels way below the levels of WWII...Plus [the Soviets] had unlimited access to natural resources in the satellites...In '55 they negotiated a uranium agreement with Hungary where nominally the mine was owned by Hungary, but all of the conditions were set by the Soviets...and the payments were actually below production costs. And that was a grievance that the '56 revolution wanted to redress, although it was top secret. In Hungary nothing can remain secret....The people knew...that the Soviets were actually...getting it below the production cost...even though we didn't use uranium at the time at all because there was no Hun-



Professor Borhi with his recent book

garian nuclear power plant...The agreement said that all the products would go to the Soviet Union except for the needs of Hungary, which was zip, and...the Soviets said that they would cover 75% of the exploration costs...but the Soviets eventually, as far as I know, never paid for the exploration costs, while Hungary paid for all the infrastructure, roads, housing, and schools built around the mines....Just to give you one small idea of how money-grabbing they were: They were entitled to get compensation for all German assets in Hungary, and for some absurd reason they considered the jewelry taken by the Germans from deported Jews in the Carpatho-Ukraine as German assets to which they were entitled...The Germans made a very elaborate list of the jewelry they confiscated...and the Soviets got hold of this list and presented it to the Hungarian government. And [the Soviets] took it to jewelers in Budapest, and they had [the jewelry] appraised down to the last wedding ring...They came out with a figure of half-a-million dollars from that only.”

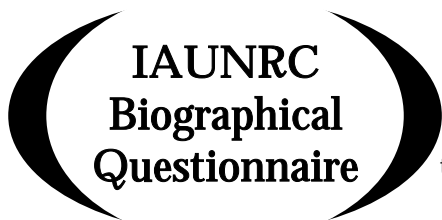
Finally, Borhi had some new things to say about American relations with Hungary vis-à-vis the Soviets. American security interests and the ideological goal of spreading democracy did commit Americans to the rollback of communism in Hungary. The Americans, however, “subverted their own strategy by encouraging the Hungarians to fight” the Soviets in Radio Free Europe broadcasts, while back in Washington they officially pursued negotiation with the Soviets. All the while, Borhi continues, Dulles was convinced that for a country like Hungary to fight the Soviets behind the Iron Curtain was suicidal, and had already made a categorical decision, because of the dangerous nuclear stalemate between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., against American intervention on Hungary’s behalf. After university, Borhi had the good fortune to receive a Soros Foundation scholarship to study in IU’s history department, an experience which he remembers fondly. In fact, Borhi says, he still uses his notes from those IU classes whenever he has to

lecture in Hungary on American history.

When he went back to Hungary, Borhi went to work for the Research Institute of the Academy of Sciences, a government-funded system based on a German design subsequently adopted by the Soviets to compete with the private capital driving American research institutions. The Academy served as a center for research, as opposed to the universities, which were teaching-oriented: “The idea was to keep the most innovative people out of touch with the students. In fact, the Institute of History was a safe haven for historians fired from universities but not forced into retirement, where they could do their research but they would not teach. And in fact some ELTE [University] departments are still wary of getting Academy people teaching at university.” Still, Borhi, like many researchers, also has a part-time appointment as a teacher. And at the University of Pecs, where he taught in the early 1990s, he became possibly the first person in the country to offer courses in 20<sup>th</sup> century American history and foreign policy.

Here at IU, Borhi teaches the history of Hungary, WWI and WWII. In the spring, he will organize the annual György Ranki Hungarian Chair Conference, this year to focus on the 50<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Presentation topics will include the roles of Eisenhower, Krushchev and Imre Nagy, the impact of 1956 behind the Iron Curtain, and the impact of 1956 in literature. Presenters include such luminaries as Istvan Deak, who will speak on the revolutionary tradition in Hungarian history, and Bela Kiraly, one of the only surviving leaders of the 1956 revolution, who will speak on the lessons of 1956.

Borhi tells IAUNRC that history is his main hobby as well as his profession, but that he is also fond of theater. What kind of movies does a Cold War scholar enjoy? Some of his favorite are various films by Hungary’s András Jeles and Peter Bacsó and England’s Ken Russell, and, sure enough, Stanley Kubrick’s *Clockwork Orange*.



## 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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State ZIP Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail, e-mail, or  
fax your response to:

iaunrc@indiana.edu  
812.855.8667 (fax)

IAUNRC  
Indiana University  
Goodbody Hall 324  
Bloomington, IN 47405

Universities attended other than IU and Degrees Received/Expected

Current or past line of work/employer

Honors/Awards/Distinctions/Publications

# IU Graduate Student Reports on Field Research

---

In 2004, I received an IIE Fulbright grant to conduct research in Almaty, Kazakhstan. My work encompassed the construction of national histories. The focus was not Kazakh history itself but how intellectuals were manipulating history to serve national ends. The “official” histories of a nation are always political, and national “memories” have been used in other contexts to justify the dismemberment of states and the uprooting of peoples.

In Kazakhstan, the construction of histories and pasts is an attempt to transform an imperial construct into an enduring nation. Soviet cartographers created the Kazakh nation when they etched its boundaries into the landscape of Central Asia in 1924. Prior to this, the word “Kazakhstan” had little meaning, and the various nomadic peoples and ethnic groups that continually collapsed and reformed in the Dasht-i Qipchaq, the medieval geographic space now occupied by Kazakhstan, did not belong to a coherent national tradition.

Kazakh intellectuals are now rewriting history in order to make this imperial creation seem “ancient.” Their efforts constitute a kind of historical patchwork. Kazakh intellectuals are taking the remnants of the disparate ethnic traditions of the Central Asian past and recasting them as the ruins of a primordial “Kazakh” nation. The emphasis is on creating ancient histories that will shape the meaning of the words “Kazakh” and “Kazakh nation” in the post-Soviet era.

My initial assumption was that my research would be limited to academic works, but various forms of art, poetry, and even advertising are shaping national memories and history. The “Nomad” cigarette company recently integrated Turkic runes

into its marketing and accompanied this with the publication of *Номадтар кітабы* (Books of the Nomads), an elaborate, lavishly illustrated analysis of the “ancient tribes of the Kazakh nation.” The city itself is a kind of living museum of the ethnic myths Kazakhs are using to reimagine their past: monuments of Scythian kings, Turkic knights, and ancient rock drawings now stand alongside the ruins of Soviet era coliseums and statues.

This creation of national “memories” is not an academic exercise or a superficial issue. Kazakhstan’s borders are neither fixed nor stable, and its geography could shift or be torn apart by opposing historical visions. For example, Kazakh intellectuals work in a context where the historical “memories” of ethnic Russians inspire visions of a dismembered Kazakh state and the restoration of “ancestral” Russian lands.

While I spent most of my time in Almaty examining the contemporary construction of the ancient past, I also broadened my research to encompass an earlier generation of authors, with particular emphasis on Olzhas Suleimenov and his text *Аз у Я* (Asia/I and I). Written in 1974, the work constructed Asian identities and histories more complex than the formless continent on display in the museums of the empire. It unsettled the Soviet imagination of the “East.” *Аз у Я* was indicative of many works that emerged as poets in disparate Soviet contexts dismantled colonial histories and pieced together new national identities from “a debris of historical and future possibilities.” It shaped the collision of cultures in an invented Kazakh “nation” and national territory, and it fashioned alternate memories from a jumble of ethnic ruins and myths.

*Submitted by Christopher Baker*



Indiana University  
Goodbody Hall 324  
Bloomington, IN 47405