

THE NEW STAR

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BACKGROUND PHOTOS BY DIANA TAKUTDINOVA

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MY IMAGE FROM TAJIKISTAN

The first face that I saw from Tajikistan was that of Manizha Dawlat who is still one of my favorite singers and whose songs I still listen to. Manizha Dawlat gave me an image of how Tajik girls look: long, black, beautiful hair, very nice eyebrows, and pleasant voices. Though with time I have gotten to know many other male and female singers from Tajikistan, my first image of Tajikistan has not changed. The reason that I started to listen to Manizha Dawlat and other singers is that Tajikistan and Afghanistan share the same literature and language and have similar cultures.

Later by following girls from Tajikistan speaking with a very beautiful voice, I began to practice speaking like them.

Cooperation between Afghan and Tajik singers really binds Afghans with Tajiks. The similarities between Tajik culture and my own that I have learned are countless, but I found the village lifestyle of Tajik people to be very similar to the village life of people in Afghanistan—for example, cooking bread at home, being busy with agriculture, holding certain values and traditions that are different from those of people in the cities.

My favorite Tajiki words that we do not have in Dari are naghz,

acha, rahmat, kalan, mailesh, and kelen.”

Atlas, Chakan, and Pamiri traditional clothes are amazing, and the harmony of all those colors is so attractive, which is why I like these traditional clothes so much. There is one other unique thing about the traditional clothes of Tajikistan, which is the taqis of each cloth. Each traditional clothing has its own taqi, which shows where the clothes belong to. When it comes to the food of Tajikistan, there is qurutob, which I have already got the recipe for, and one day I may try to make it. It's the best Tajik food I have ever tried.

There are many places that I want to visit in Tajikistan: one of them is Dushanbe, as I have heard many interesting things about it. I would like to see Khojand as well. Finally, Based on what I have heard from my Tajiki classmates and friends from Pamir of Tajikistan, I really would like to visit Pamir too and go to Murghab District to see the blend of Tajik and Kyrgyz cultures.

Hakima Askary
IBL

BACKGROUND PHOTOS BY DIANA TAKUTDINOVA

KINDNESS AND RESPECT OF THE PAMIRIS

I was born and raised in Tajikistan, more precisely, in Pamir (Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region). Pamir is a place with very high mountains that preserve the history of a specific group of Tajikistan's people, where the water is so clean that you can see your reflection in it and the air is so fresh and tart that the bitterness of young greenery is felt on the tongue. Pamir is famous for its rich traditions and its people. I would like to take you on a journey where you will immerse yourself in the culture of the Pamir people and the attitudes of men toward women.

Pamiri culture encourages people to assist one another in all aspects of life, both morally and financially. In the Pamiri lexicon, we have the word “kiryar.” This is a kind of event where relatives and neighbors gather. The essence of this event is to provide free assistance to a person who needs it. It would be more reasonable to say that this is volunteer work. For example, a person needs to build a new house. He will not be looking for workers. Instead, he will simply call for a kiryar. The men will build the house, and the women will cook the food. This custom is not just about building a house, it is about bringing people together: people joke, share their innermost thoughts, and sometimes share their art (singing, reading stories and poems, etc.). The most important thing is that parents must take children with them (both boys and girls) because they should see with their own eyes the respect of the Pamiri people to each other and pass these values from one to another generation.

One thing that surprises me about Pamiri culture is the attitude of men towards women. In our people, as in many others, a woman is traditionally considered the keeper of the hearth. She is responsible for the cleanliness and order of the family. This does not mean that women do all this alone. On Navruz morning, the men clean up the area outside of the house while women clean inside. As soon as the cleaning is finished, the oldest woman in the family stays in the house while the others go out. Consequently, each member of the family, including the men, takes turns coming to her for a blessing, which is called “bum thed” and thank her for keeping the heart and loving them. It follows that in Pamir, women are respected and valued like men.

The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is a beautiful place with wonderful people where humanity and respect are valued most of all. You will be able to feel the essence of the Pamir culture and tradition through its close-knit people.

Nazarbakht Yoftova
JMC



THIS IS HOW I SEE MY TAJIK FRIENDS' CULTURE

The blend of two different cultures and peoples in one country makes for a very unique mix, which is what happened in Tajikistan. As I learned from my Tajik friends, there are two principal ethnic groups in Tajikistan: Tajiks and Pamiris. But it is not worth separating because even though they differ by their appearance, language and culture, they are one whole with their rich inner world and history. I have not been to Tajikistan and have not seen their culture in general, but I can make a generalization about what I learned about them. Group work, life in a dormitory, and just conversations with people from Tajikistan showed that they are very kind and sympathetic. A simple "hello" with a smile on the face of Tajik friend of mine was a reason to feel joyful for the whole day. I was told that Tajik people are very friendly, never refuse to help, and often offer help before it is asked for. One friend of mine who was in Tajikistan said that once you are in this country, you can go to any house and ask for help in what you will be accepted with kindness. Also, Tajikistan is famous for its traditional medicine, including the use of herbs and bathing in hot springs, which is why many tourists come to the country and leave satisfied.

I am glad to see Tajik people among us at AUCA, as it makes our campus diverse and unique.

Alisher Aripov
JMC

TOP 3 HISTORICAL PLACES WORTH VISITING IN TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan is a country with an extraordinary natural landscape. Wherever you go, you will always be accompanied by a mountain background, colorful wildlife, and exceptional streams. Tajikistan fascinates visitors with its rich culture and historical sites, such as Sarazm, Hisor Fortress, and Ajina Teppa.

Sarazm: Sarazm dates back to the 4th millennium BCE and is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. It was a place of physical and cultural meeting of sedentary farmers and nomads of the Eurasian steppe. The people who lived here were well versed in metallurgy and traded semi-precious stones, shells, wool, copper, and tin with communities as far away as the Arabian Sea. It was the first settlement in Central Asia to have such extensive trade relations and such a lively cultural exchange. About 5,000 years ago, the Princess of Sarazm lived in the Zeravshan Valley. She belonged to a wealthy class of society that lived in the valley at the beginning of the Bronze Age. The remains of this forgotten civilization were discovered almost completely intact during archaeological excavations in 1976, and the remains of the princess were discovered only in 1980.

Hisor Fortress: The Hisor Fortress is definitely worth a visit if you are interested in military history. The towers of Hisor guard the valley of Hisor in Tajikistan. Cyrus the Great, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and the Red Army all wanted to rule this important pass and the trade that passed through it. At least 21 times a fort was built here and then destroyed. The structures you see today date back to the 14th and 20th centuries, and the main gate—a formidable example of defensive architecture—stands in the

footsteps of its ancestors. For a better view of the reserve, you should climb up to the front wall of the fort and look down at the road that countless armies have come down. You can also sit in the shade of a mulberry tree for a while. Local legend has it that Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, fought a magician here, and the tree bowed to Ali's power.

Ajina Teppa: In the 7th and 8th centuries CE, Ajina Teppa was the site of an important Buddhist monastery, a poignant reminder of how Buddhism traveled the Silk Road from India. The name Ajina Teppa means "Devil's Hill" because although it was a sacred site, the first archaeologists who worked here discovered a large number of gargoyles and other demonic sculptures. It is believed that they were guardians designed to ward off evil spirits and opponents of Buddhism. Archaeologists have unearthed more than 1,500 artifacts here, most of which are now in the National Museum of Antiquities in Dushanbe and the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. The largest and most impressive finding is the wonderful sleeping Buddha, which is made of clay and is almost 13 meters long. You can admire this Buddha in Dushanbe at the National Museum of Antiquities. Ajina Teppa, along with Hisor Fortress, is on the tentative list for recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Khiradmand Sheraliev
ICP

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BACKGROUND PHOTOS BY DIANA TAKUTDINOVA

HOW WE CELEBRATE NAWRUZ

The word “Nawruz” when translated from Persian gives the meaning of “New Day.” It is the name of a colorful and joy-filled holiday that is fundamental to the heritage of Central Asian culture as well as to the cultures of other countries across the world. In Tajikistan, Nawruz is welcomed with four days of public festivities. These are the most sacred days of the year that present the connection of nature with all humanity. By cleaning their homes and streets, by cooking traditional and delicious food, and by visiting close relatives and friends, people feel kindness, freedom, peace, and rebirth of the Earth.

In my village, there is an interesting and generally believed assumption that before Nawruz everywhere should be clean. Therefore, girls help their mothers to wash everything and clean their homes, whereas men and their sons work on the yards and lavishly decorate the village streets. In addition to that, many people believe that in order to have abundance and affluence throughout the year, they should share holiday treats with children. There is a custom called boychechak that is performed by little girls and boys. They usually pick snowdrops and other spring flowers from mountains, bring them to the village, sing congratulatory poems and songs while asking older people to give them some cakes or chocolates.

With its symbolic and customary dish sumanak, Nawruz brings friends, close relatives, and neighbors together. This dish is cooked from wheat germ over 24 hours. Women usually prepare this food as they sing different songs, dance together, make wishes, and talk with each other. If they had some conflict with each other before, they forgive each other and make amends. The process gives people enjoyment and delight. Once the dish is prepared, it is shared among them all and put on the holiday table. Moreover, young men and boys play various traditional games and organize competitions. Wrestling and horse-racing are the most popular among them and allow men to showcase their talents and strength. Nawruz is a special holiday of thanksgiving and appreciation; it renews one’s spirits with optimism and a world of new hopes.

Tahmina Ustoeva
ICP

THE ANCIENT CITY AND TALENTED DESCENDANTS

The story takes us back to one of the oldest cities in the world called Sarazm, which is now situated in Panjakent. Sarazm is a proto-urban site that brings attention to the creation of communities in Central Asia from the fourth millennium BCE to the late third millennium BCE. The meaning of this historical name is “where the land begins.” In addition, Sarazm was the first city in the Central Asian region to develop agriculture, trade, culture and art. It is now included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites, and on September 12th, 2020, Tajikistan celebrated the 5,500th anniversary of Sarazm

It can be argued that the Panjakent region is the core source of the Persian literature, since the man who is widely considered to be the founder of classical Persian literature was born here. Abuabduullo Rudaki is one of the greatest Tajik-Persian poets, born in Panjrud (now Rudaki) in 858 BCE. Because of Rudaki’s contribution to the social sciences and humanities, Panjakent is full of poets and writers. With this in mind, another talent and genius who was born in 1898 in Panjakent is Chinor Imomov. He

made a great contribution to the history of Soviet Tajikistan. He was one of those politicians who, without fear of repressions for their lives, fought for the separation of Tajik people. The formation and strengthening of Soviet power in Tajikistan and the formation of the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic are the most worthy deeds of Chinor Imomov. On top of that, Panjakent is full of brave and courageous women, as the first Tajik female pilot who fought in World War II was born in Panjakent. Her name was Oigul Mukhamedzhanova, and she had 93 combat flights and several missions. At the end of the WWII for her worthy deeds, Oigul Mukhamedzhanova was awarded the Order of Lenin (Sputnik, 2015). Therefore, this beautiful and glorious city deserves to be called the land of talents, and I am proud to be a descendant of these heroic and brilliant personalities.

Vohidzoda Ozari Munirpur
ICP

WELL-KNOWN PLACES IN MY HOMETOWN

I was born in Istaravshan, a city in northern Tajikistan.. It was formerly called Ura-Tyube, also spelled Ūroteppa. One of the most well-known and ancient cities of the republic, Istaravshan was established 2,500 years ago. It is famous for its history and its extraordinary old buildings. Istaravshan has been a bone of contention starting from the period of Alexander the Great and until the Russian Empire. It is known for its handicrafts, and this practice still exists today. Istaravshan also had another name in addition to Ura-Tyube: Kiropol, after the Persian emperor Cyrus, or Kurush.

Here are the most well-known places in my hometown:

Kok-Gumbaz Mosque

In the shahri kuhna, which means “old town,” is located Kok-Gumbaz Mosque, which was built in the 17th century by Abdullatif, son of the famous philosopher and astronomer Ulugbek. In our city there exists an interesting folk legend about the Kok-Gumbaz building: that there was a misunderstanding between Ulugbek and his son, and that is why Abdulatif left his family and employed a peasant for his plot of land.

Mugteppa

Around the second half of the 17th century BCE Mugteppa was built in the territory of Istaravshan. Mugteppa was always a residence for local rich people, mostly local aristocrats who created a building that is still considered as an impressive architectural specimen. Mugteppa is located in the center of Istaravshan, and because it is on a high hill the views there are superb.

Khazrat-i-Shokh Mausoleum

Khazrati-Shokh was built by the brother of Kusam ibn Abbas, who was the cousin of Prophet Muhammad, which is why it is popular among many visitors of Istaravshan. Tourists can explore the historic building of Khazrat-i-Shokh and bathe in spring water that is considered medicinal.

If you ever have a chance to visit beautiful Tajikistan, do not forget to explore the Persian atmosphere in Istaravshan.

Bakhtovar Umarov

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TAJIKISTAN – MY CHERISHED HOMELAND

One day while we were watering flowers in the yard my grandmother said, “Tajikistan, my cherished homeland,” then started reflecting on her childhood, recalling how she was strong enough to work in the fields, how she fell in love with my grandfather, and how she raised her children. Her advice and encouragement were my favorites. I used to ask a lot of questions, and even though she had partially lost her awareness, she tried to answer them with great pleasure. The same day, as my grandmother and I sat under a tree, I asked her why she was so proud of her homeland. This was her answer:

“There were difficult times. People were unable to find food. I remember having only one dress when I was employed. They loaned me money so that I could purchase a few more dresses and warm clothes. In Dushanbe, ethnic cleansing began, and representatives from various regions were pursued. Our lives were always at risk, but thanks to God we survived. October 9th, 1991 was the happiest day in the life of the Tajik nation. We were not broken by hunger. We maintained the same level of friendliness as our forefathers. Your grandfather and I both worked in a large factory. We faced a lot of challenges in our life, but we never became disappointed. We were always together and helped each other. After the hardest period, we felt independence and knew what it meant to be an independent nation. Men shielded women from damage. I recall working in the field when I was 19 and receiving compliments from boys. We went

for a stroll in our large gardens and for a hike in the mountains. Our lives changed day by day. We did not lose our identity, which we are proud of. Everyone fought against the enemies and hoped for a brighter future. Tajikistan is where I have spent my entire life and where I feel most comfortable and independent. You, daughter, should be aware of your ancestors’ backgrounds, as well as how they managed to stay together. We couldn’t call each other because we didn’t have phones. We met in person, which helped us avoid misunderstandings. My advice to you is to contact your parents and family, but do not forget to visit them.”

Our conversation came to the end at this point, and we returned home. My grandmother, who is 93 years old, is still alive. I feel the friendliness of our country in my grandmother’s words and imagine the environment of their time. Sometimes I think to myself about how, considering their difficult circumstances, our forefathers were well-educated citizens. My grandmother recalls songs from the books they read in elementary school. I knew who I was and what I should be proud of thanks to my grandmother’s words. I am proud of my country and my people.

Shahnoza Navruzmamadova

LAS

INTERESTING PLACES IN MY HOME COUNTRY



PHOTO BELONGS TO MANIZHAKHON MIRPOCHOEVA

This special issue is a great opportunity for me to tell you about my hometown and the history of several interesting places in Tajikistan. First of all, Tajikistan has beautiful nature and clean air. Tourists come here to enjoy beautiful scenery and historical sites. Ninety-three percent of our country is mountainous, offering unforgettable views. Moreover, our people are very hospitable, and when people from other countries come to our house, we do not let them go until they taste our national dish, osh. Speaking of historical places, in the Khatlon region, there is a unique place famous for its reddish rocks: Childukhtaron, which means 40 girls. In addition to its beauty, this place has a very interesting and unusual story. Legend has it that in the 13th century the Tajiks lived there and did not allow the conquest of their lands, but the Mongol army attacked them and wanted to conquer this fortress. The Mongol army was very strong, but the locals fought with dignity for 40 days. Almost all the men died, and only 40 soldiers remained who had the duty to protect their wives and children. The men hid the women and children in the mountains and fought, but unfortunately the Mongol army was much larger and all 40 men died in the battle. The women understood that they would be victims of violence and that the Mongols would take them prisoner. They armed themselves and went into battle themselves. The battle with the Mongols was very unequally matched, and the women were forced to return to the mountains. At the last moment, they turned to the Almighty, asking Him to turn them into stones in order to save them from shame and violence. Their pleas were heard. The girls turned into 40 rocks that protected their land, and the enemies could not break through. The rocks keep their secret to this day. Even after several centuries, all 40 rocks retain their integrity. I believe that everyone who wants to visit Tajikistan should see these rocks with their own eyes, especially after reading their story.

Currently, the topic of protecting women's rights is very widely discussed among young people. This legend proves how brave and courageous women were in the past: they were not afraid to fight with men, entered battle, and saved their lands.

Mirpochoeva Manizha
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