

VOLUNTEER CAMPS IN KAZAKHSTAN IN 2023

During the summer and autumn of 2023, the Laboratory of Geoarchaeology (Historical Faculty, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University) is organizing archaeological investigations covering all periods from Iron Age to Modern times all over Kazakhstan. The work program consists mainly in mapping, documenting and collecting paleodata for analyses. Open-air lectures in the history, archaeology and paleoenvironment of Central Asia are included. Sessions will take place between June and September 2023 and are 15 days in duration. Volunteers and students of archaeology are welcome to join us. The participation fee is EU350 (or 380USD) per week and academic credit is given by the Kazakh National University. Interested volunteers and students of archaeology should contact the LGA to ask for full details on the various survey and excavation opportunities on offer.

Renewed information is also available on the Laboratory of Geoarchaeology web site: <http://www.lgakz.org/VolunteerCamps/Volunteer.html>

Or you can check the updated announcement of our volunteer camps on the [Fieldwork webpage of the Archaeological Institute of America](#)

There will be 5 expeditions occurring between June and October 2023, the exact dates are not firmly fixed and will be decided according to the grouping of volunteers at fitting dates, they will occur in different regions of south Kazakhstan:

1- Lower Syr Darya valley, Kyzylorda region, upper Jana-Darya channel, medieval oases of Kyshkala and Kumkala (8-15 centuries AD, study of hydrological and archaeological remains), session planned for 19 June-03 July 2023.

2- Middle Syr Darya valley, Turkestan oasis, medieval town of Karachik (8-15 centuries AD, study of hydrological and archaeological remains), session planned for 07-21 July.

3- Chu-Ili mountains (Bronze Age to Modern times, petroglyphs documentation), session planned for 30 July-13 August 2023.

4- Southeastern Moyinkum desert, Zhambyl province (Holocene period, study of land and water use, session planned for 17-31 August 2023.

5- Lower Syr Darya delta (upper Kuvan Darya), Zhetyasar urban oasis (Geoarchaeological study), session planned for 08-22 September 2023.

Application Deadline: Not applicable

HOLOCENE LAND AND WATER USE IN ARID ZONES OF KAZAKHSTAN (SEMI-DESERTS, DESERT FOOTHILLS, DESERT DELTAS, SAND DESERTS)

Director:	Renato Sala
Site/Period:	Bronze and Iron Ages, Turkic, Medieval, Modern times
Volunteers:	5
Experience required:	No previous experience necessary
Excavation dates:	5 sessions at the proposed dates of: 19 June-03 July, 07-21 July, 30 July-13 August, 17-31 August, 08-22 September 2023
Application deadline:	ASAP
Minimum stay:	Two weeks
Cost:	EU350 / week
Fare:	Not included
Accommodation:	Provided
Food:	Provided (vegetarian and non-vegetarian)
Vaccination:	Anti-tetanus recommended
Passport/visa:	Valid passport; for visa contact organizer 4 weeks in advance.

The geoarchaeological approach used during our fieldwork documentation consists in the application of methods belonging to Quaternary geology and environmental archaeology to which volunteers will be introduced and trained. It consists in documenting natural landscape formation and its historical evolution (geology, geomorphology, hydrology, stratigraphy, soils and vegetation), in mapping cultural landscape through remote study and fieldwork survey (archive material, cartographic and aerial photography, site documentation, statistical and diagnostic analyses of surface findings and monuments) and in gathering through archive material and live interview with local population basic information about land and water use.

Archaeological trial trenches in strategic locations and geological trenches for palynological analyses will be implemented.

The weather is extremely dry. Volunteers should bring a sleeping bag, a mat, a sweater, some strong shoes and a flashlight.

Contact: Jean-Marc Deom, Laboratory of Geoarchaeology (Faculty of History, Archeology and Ethnology, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University), av.al-Farabi, 71, 4th Floor, room 4-8, 050040 Almaty, Kazakhstan		
Tel-GSM: +7 707 0485389	Fax:	Email: ispkz@yahoo.com

1- SEMI-DESERTS

Chu-Ili mountains

The Chu-Ili mountains are smooth rocky undulations of a maximum altitude 1500 m in a semi-desertic landscape located between the southwestern Balkhash Lake and the Tienshan range. Here springs and oases constituted a seasonal refuge, hunting ground, mining site and a corridor for cultures from Palaeolithic to ethnographic times, represented archaeologically by cemeteries, houses, steles and, most predominantly, petroglyphs. From the Bronze Age to the Turkic periods the area was a crossroads for tribal migrations reflected in the character and range of petroglyphs, which now represent the most important monuments of the area and are among the most important rock art sites of Central Asia and Siberia.

Fieldwork will be directed by specialists from the Laboratory of Geoarchaeology. During this survey, the camp will be nomadic. You will work in various sites located in the southeastern border of the Chu-Ili range surrounding the well-known sites of Kuljabasy and Tamgaly.



Kuljabasy mountains Bronze Age petroglyph in valley 13

2- DESERT FOOTHILLS

Turkestan oasis

The Turkestan region represents an area of 110x80 km located between the Karatau range and the Syr-Darya river. It includes 12 main river basins distributed on average every 7-10 km along the 80 km width of the oasis, alternating wet corridors with habitats for plants, animals and humans and intervalley deserts in a steppe continental climate. It represents a cultural landscape typically Central Asian similar to those found in the Nuratau, Ferghana, Zeravshan ranges in Uzbekistan. Although densely populated by sedentary and semi-settled farmers from ancient times, water deficit has long been expressed in all periods. Here developed sophisticated irrigation systems including karez (groundwater uplifting system).

In the Turkestan oasis we will study the medieval town of Karachik (8-15th c. AD) located along the richest river of the oasis (Bayaldyr) and investigate the water supply and archaeological context of the site. The camp will be located in a farmer house.



Aerial view to north of the village Kumailykas in the Bestogai valley

3- DESERT DELTAS

Deltas are very sensitive to natural and anthropogenic pressures so that their morphology and hydrological regime is in constant change from flooding to desiccation. According to water availability (climatic, hydrological and anthropogenic conditions) and socio-economic trends, large portions of these deltas have switched during historical times from phases of dense population to abandonment and from periods of semi-settled to semi-nomadic agro-pastoralism. For evaluating the respective role of these factors, our research uses a threefold approach based on paleoenvironmental, archaeological and ethnographical analyses applied to the Syr-Darya delta where phases of occupation and abandonment are historically documented.

a- Upper Jana-Darya basin, Kyshkala and Kumkala

From the start of the Holocene, river deltas in deserts have always constituted privileged ecological niches for animals and men. Riverine forest and meadows represent vital winter residence for both wild ungulates and domesticated livestock and spring and summer floods offer to human communities the possibility to practice irrigated agriculture. During summer, the deltas are partially depopulated from their occupants moving to cooler places.

In Kazakhstan, the earliest fortification structures arose in the Jana-Darya (Chirik-Rabat culture 7th-3rd BC). This channel was later desiccated and reactivated during the 8th century concordant with a Turkic Oghuz and to later Khwarazmian, Kipchak, Karakalpak, Kazakh occupations (10-17th AD). Here we will study the hydrological settings and the archaeological context of the upper Jana-Darya between the oasis of Jend (Jankala, Kumkala) in the southwest and Barchinkent (Kyshkala) in the northeast. The camp will be located in a farmer house.



Excavations of mausoleum 1 (Golden Horde period) in Kyshkala

b- Eskidaryalyk basin- Jetyasar oasis

The Jetyasar oasis is supposed to have been colonized by a population differing from the former Chirik-rabat culture. Here, along the Eskidaryalyk channel, arose a proper urbanized area based on residential castle-farms on platform surrounded by fortified walls and with extended necropolises of kurgans and mausoleums in their peripheries.

According to the latest studies, the oasis would have been built by a mix of late Sarmatians and proto-Hunnic tribes and would have constituted a hub of Alans, Huns, Avars, Pechenegs towards their migration to the west. Here we will study the hydrological settings and the archaeological context of the Eskidaryalyk all along its course. The camp will be nomadic and situated in tents.



Aerial view to north of the castle Kuraily-asar along the Eskidaryalyk

4- SAND DESERTS

The Moyinkum desert

At the contrary of many sand deserts of South Kazakhstan, the southeastern Moyinkum desert is rich in water sites which have always attracted ancient herders as a seasonal rangeland. At the end of the 19th century, numerous stockbreeders of the lower Chu valley used the Moyinkum as summer residence.

The greenest area of the southeastern Moyinkum is represented by a band of lakes stretching between the Chu and Talas riverbeds. A preliminary survey implemented in 2021 along this wet band has revealed significant archaeological findings. This summer 2023, the fieldwork will be devoted to a more detailed exploration of this area. The camp will be nomadic and situated in tents.



Aerial view to SW of Dolankuduk, a farming site in the southeastern Moyinkum desert

Useful reading

R.Sala, Historical survey of irrigation practices in west Central Asia (link: <http://www.lgakz.org/Texts/LiveTexts/CAsiaIrrigTextEn.doc>)

Deom J.-M., 2022. The arid regions of Daryalyk Takyr and Telikol: ethno-geoarchaeological study of a strategic transhumance rangeland on the right bank of the Syr Darya delta, Kazakhstan. In: *Studia Quaternaria*, vol. 39, no. 2: 95-111. https://journals.pan.pl/Content/125118/PDF/3_Deom.pdf

B. Andrianov (S. Mantellini, Ed.) 2016. *Ancient Irrigation Systems of the Aral Sea Area. The History, Origin, and Development of Irrigated Agriculture*. Oxbow books.

Tolstov S.P. 1962. *Po drevnim deltam Oksa i Yaksarta* [Following the ancient deltas of the Oxus and Yaxartes]. Moscow: izd.Vostochn.Literat.

S. Robinson et al. 2017. Pastoralists as Optimal Foragers? Reoccupation and Site Selection in the Deserts of Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. *Human Ecology* 45: 5-21