

MY FRIEND YERBULAT SMAGULOV

WHEN THE LONG and gloomy Moscow winter ends and the first sunshine appears promising an early spring, I find myself dreaming of the same things in my dreams as in reality: The vast steppe, blazing with poppies; the hot wind with the smell of wormwood and sand; the *tepes* [hills] yellowing against the blue sky, *asars* [earthworks] and steep slopes of fortress walls. I call Bulat and hear his mocking and slightly squeaky voice on the phone: "Come over, of course." It's been that way for years.

I met Yerbulat in 2009. At that time, I had already been working in Kazakhstan for five years. As part of a joint expedition of Kyzylorda University and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, I participated in the excavations of the Dzhankent settlement. Circumstances emerged in which I realized that I could no longer work in Dzhankent. I had a strong desire to stay and work in Kazakhstan, as I certainly liked it here, especially the archaeological sites. Therefore, I gathered our most recent publications on archeology (so as not to come empty-handed) and went to Almaty to the foremost Kazakhstani archaeologist at that time – Karl Moldahmedovich Baipakov. We knew each other, and I hoped that Karl Moldahmedovich would

find a way to utilize my talents. Before leaving Moscow for Kazakhstan, I met my friend Sergei Yatsenko, who suggested I stop by and see his friend, Yerbulat Smagulov, in Turkestan before heading to Almaty. He assured me that Yerbulat would be pleased to receive me at his large archeological base and shared all the contact information with me. Naturally, I very much wanted to visit Turkestan primarily because of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. Having contacted Smagulov, I set forth.

Yerbulat met me at the train station, took me to the camp, accommodated me, and asked me about my plans over a very plentiful and tasty dinner (Fig. 1). He suggested that we not rush off to Almaty, but rather see not only the mausoleum, but also the archaeological sites around Turkestan, in particular, famous Otrar, whose name I had known since my school years; the Otrar that marked the threshold Genghis Khan's invasion of Central Asia. Of course, I could not resist. Yerbulat launched us on a frantic schedule and every day I was taken on tours. He showed me Otrar, Sauran (Fig. 2), Karatobe (Fig. 3), Sidak, the Arystan Bab Mausoleum and, of course, the Mausoleum of Khoja Akhmed Yasawi with its entire complex of buildings surrounding it. All this was accompanied by professional and fascinating stories.



Ил. 1. 2009 г., обед на базе. Обедают Э. Д. Зиливинская, Асхат и Е. А. Смагулов



Ил. 2. 2009 г., экскурсия на Сауран



Ил. 3. 2009 г., экскурсия на Каратобе

He convinced me that archaeological sites in Turkestan and its surroundings were full of such stories, and I had the freedom to work on any of them as a part of his expedition, if I wanted; and no Baipakov was needed for that. Eventually, I did not go to Almaty, especially since there was no time left after such an extensive tour. Yerbulat took all the books I had brought, explaining that he needed them more. Naturally, I gladly left them with him. And, in honor of my departure they slaughtered a lamb and cooked a delicious pilaf (Fig. 4).

The next year, I came to Turkestan, in May, I think, to be fully engaged in excavations. We lived at the camp not far from the train station. It's a wonderful old district of the city. The station itself is beautiful, built in the early 20th century in the Art Nouveau style. There were copper handles in the form of leopards adorning the doors. Today, they have put modern plastic doors and the handles disappeared somewhere. Bulat also told me that earlier in the station's construction, the building housed a huge oak cupboard also in the Art Nouveau style. This, however, I didn't notice, and now, there's some sort of stall there. A drama theater resides nearby. I kept suggesting we go there, but for some reason no one supported the idea. There was a bakery on the corner where

we bought fresh flatbread. The smell of fresh bread was so strong that my feet could not help but lead me there.

The house where the base office was located, while small, had an orchard and a vegetable garden. In the heat we slept right in the garden on beds with mosquito netting as the smell of mint penetrated the air. ... Everything was fine, but the early *azan* [*adhan*] was shouted fifteen minutes before we awoke, and our dog, whose name was Obama, would wail loudly. Bulat always had dogs at the base, but only Obama stood out. He was big, rather ugly, and not really black at all, but black and white. He had a sidekick from the street who preferred to live in our yard instead of his house. The vegetable garden was their favorite spot, where both dogs slept. They also ran off with shoes, with one standing guard and the other taking the shoes out of the gate. One day Bulat, on his way back from town, caught Obama in the street with my boot in his teeth.

The camp house also had a big canopy, covered with grapevines, with a table where we ate lunch and drank tea outside (Fig. 5). In addition, I met wonderful people and archaeologists who worked at Bulat's expedition. First, of course, was Aisulu Erzhigitova, Bulat's deputy, invariable assistant, and faithful colleague. Undoubtedly, a great deal of the expedition



Ил. 4. 2009 г., барашек в честь отъезда

rested on her shoulders. Yerbulat defined strategy and was responsible for the scientific component. Specific issues related to the finances and organization of the work were Aisulu's responsibility. Bulat set the agenda, and Aisulu successfully carried them out. She would often argue or even grumble, but she always accomplished her tasks splendidly. An excellent digger, she was also involved in the restoration of finds, and if necessary, she would sketch and paint illustrations. She was also wonderful at cooking and feeding us all at times if the cook was absent. I still remember her wonderful *manti!* However, when there was no cook, we all tried to pitch in and cooked a variety of dishes.

The expedition included Tatiana Krupa, a textile specialist, with whom we lived side by side for a month. At that time, she lived in Ukraine, but now has moved to Kazakhstan and successfully works in Pavlodar. Olga Nikolaevna Lushpenko, an experienced archeologist and fortification specialist, came from Tashkent. There was also a young archeologist, Askhat, from Kyrgyzstan and Alexei Kulish from Moscow. Alexei used to come on my expedition as a student and now is a researcher at the State Hermitage [Museum in St. Petersburg]. In general, Bulat knew how to make people excited about the work, and he always assembled a good team.

In those years, the field work was conducted on the site of Sidak. It was on this site that I learned to dig *pakhsa*. I had dug many sites with mudbrick architecture for a long time – both in the Volga region, and in Kazakhstan at Zhankent – but I had never worked with *pakhsa* and I fretted about it. Bulat taught me how to find and clear *pakhsa* walls with a tool called a *tesha* in Uzbekistan and *shot* in Kazakhstan. Before I left, Bulat spent two days sitting on a chair in the vegetable garden doing something. I was curious, but I didn't go near, as he was clearly hiding behind the growing mint. Then it turned out that he had bought a shot at the bazaar as a gift for me and was carving a commemorative inscription on the handle with a magnifying glass. I keep and carry this gift tool with me on all expeditions. Shortly afterward, I was sent to dig the necropolis of Zhalaly-ata near Karatobe. Smagulov left for ten days to Almaty, and I worked alone with the diggers, many of whom didn't speak Russian. It turned out, however, that working with them was a pleasure. Bulat intentionally picked out for me a highly professional team, so I only had to be told exactly what to do, and they knew how to do it themselves.

In general, the workers of the Turkestan expedition are a separate story. Most of them were from Chornak aul [village]. Some of them had been working at the excavations for decades. They worked hard and very professionally. True, Bulat strictly oversaw

them and could easily fire them for bad work and absenteeism. Therefore, excellent discipline prevailed along with very high productivity, although no one rushed. The workers obeyed me and respected me for some reason. There was a rather humorous incident in which they asked me if they could leave the site early to attend a funeral wake and they took me along. Since we did not always understand each other well, I did not know what I should do at the wake. So, I was staying in the section with the women, I didn't know anyone, and no one knew me. As it turned out, a car was waiting to take me home the whole time without my knowledge.

The next fall, I worked at the site of Sauran. This is my favorite site. Whenever I visit the Turkestan region, I try to see Sauran, but I never had the opportunity to dig on site. I was doing archaeological drawings of Sauran and once I let Bulat know that I could draw plans, from that time forward I have had less knife and trowel in my life and more tape measures, plumb bobs, pencils, and rulers. I wanted to dig, of course, but it just kept happening that there was someone to dig and no one to draw. I'm not much of a draftsman, but on Sauran I drew the best plan of my life, of which I am proud. This specific plan was part of a brick building, either a *khanqah* or a city caravanserai. Bulat and I spent much time discussing the building and arguing about its purpose. We stayed with Olga Nikolayevna at the base camp near Karatobe. The host built Smagulov a small adobe castle with towers for his base camp house. There was electricity, water, a gas canister for cooking; in general, all the conveniences and located not far from the excavation. We dreamed how this base camp would be expanded and improved. Bulat even showed me the foundation for a future house. Unfortunately, these dreams remained only dreams. The sponsor went bankrupt, and the base had to be mothballed, standing abandoned on the steppe.

Then, large-scale work began on the site of Kultobe in Turkestan. When I arrived in the fall of 2012, the cruciform building that was discovered had already been completely excavated, and work was ongoing in the adjoining areas. I managed to excavate one room, and then I had to measure and draw it along with all the other rooms. It's good that the main building underwent an instrumental survey.

Aisulu Iskanderova, an archaeologist from Karakalpakstan, worked in the expedition that year. She and I went to Kyzylorda together at the invitation of the Center for Archaeology at Kyzylorda University. They were celebrating some anniversary there and all the guests were taken on a tour of all the *ashrams* stopping at Balandy and Chirik-Rabat, where the expedition from Kyzylorda University was working at the time.



Ил. 5. 2012 г. Столько женщин в экспедиции, а капусту квасить приходится самому

The base camp for this dig was already in another very spacious house with a large garden near the mausoleum (Fig. 6). There were many women on the expedition – two Aisulus, (Aisulu Yerzhigitova and Aisulu Iskanderova), myself, Ryskul from the Shymkent museum, and a cook. Yerbulat was in the center of this flower garden. True, there was also a driver, Serzhan (Fig. 7, 8). In the evening the ladies and Serzhan gathered around the TV set and watched some endless Turkish serial that covered a historical topic, I think the *Magnificent Century*. For some reason they laughed a lot.

Another memorable episode was when the "stars" visited Turkestan. Smagulov received a phone call and was asked to come and give a tour on Sauran. They didn't explain anything to him, and he didn't want to go. Nevertheless, he went, and I, of course, was dragged along since I very much wanted to go to my favorite ancient settlement. It turned out that some sort of motor rally was taking place through Sauran, with the participation of Kazakhstan's most famous pop stars. Karl Moldakhmedovich Baipakov came with them. All of this was filmed on television, and I got caught up in it, too, as I went along with Baipakov and Smagulov. We all took pictures together afterwards. Bulat said that the cook would poison

him if he didn't bring her pictures of her idols.

Then somehow, I was unable to come to the expedition for several years, although Bulat invited me every year. I do not enjoy excavating in the city, and they were digging Kultobe at the time. However, we still met at various conferences in Almaty (Fig. 9), St. Petersburg, Saratov, and Astana, always enjoying each other, with much conversation over debated scientific problems and future plans. When Bulat needed a reviewer for a new book, he messaged me. As usual, it was an urgent, urgent need. I honestly read the entire text in literally one or two days, and I also did the editing. It was not a drudgery at all because it was very interesting, sometimes even fascinating. We talked quite a bit about science. Bulat was always eager to seek advice from me, and so I from him, especially when it came to Central Asian archaeology.

In fact, one day my rather foolish questions helped him understand what, he had actually found during the dig. The scenario was as follows: We were buying flatbread at the bazaar, and I noticed that they had a flower stamped in the center with the pattern differing from one baker to the next. I asked him how it was made, and Bulat began to explain that it was stamped with a tool with a wooden handle, much like a seal with a round base, into which iron pins were



Ил. 6. 2014 г. Конференция в Алматы



Ил. 7. 2015 г. Как же хорошо на раскопе у Булата!



Ил. 8. 2019 г. В Турбате. Ербулат Смагулов и Докей Талеев

inserted in tight rows to form a particular pattern. Suddenly, he said, "Finally, I understand everything!" It turns out that during excavations they had found a cluster of the exact same type of copper pins with traces of wood at one end, and as a result of our excursion for flatbread, Bulat suggested that what actually was found were the remains of such a baking tool, known today as a *dukkah*. He later published the story in a book and bought a *dukkah* at the bazaar for me.

In 2015, I went with an expedition of the Russian Geographical Society to Kazakhstan. In fact, I was asked to organize an inspection of archaeological sites. We visited the sites in western Kazakhstan and the Kyzylorda region. Further eastward lay Turkistan and Astana. I asked Yerbulat to show our guests around Turkistan. He helped accommodate everyone at the hotel and took me to his base camp (Figs. 10, 11) and we talked there late into the night. Bulat gave a brilliant tour of the mausoleum and Kultobe. I personally showed the expedition Sauran, as someone who already knew it well enough. The expedition then moved on, and I stayed behind for a few days. With pleasure I worked at the excavation, excavated a crypt, which was constructed right into the fortress wall (Fig. 12). It was very nice to see the familiar faces

of the workers from the excavations at Chornak who still remembered me and cheerfully greeted me. It made me really want to return.

However, I wasn't able to return until three years later. Bulat always wanted me to come for one-and-a-half to two months, but I couldn't find that much time. Then, in late autumn, I decided to go for a couple of weeks, even more since Bulat wrote that he was digging a bathhouse and needed advice. By the time I arrived, there had been several days of frost and Yerbulat was already planning to conserve the excavation. However, my appearance postponed the plan. I finished cleaning the rooms and, of course, drew a schematic plan. It's such a pity we didn't have time to publish this bathhouse.

By 2019, I returned on a normal field expedition for more than a month in early summer. Everything was just as I like it: The steppe was all around me, the aroma of wormwood, and larks were singing. Also, the circle was complete. The dig was again near Karatobe, almost in the same place I had dug in 2010. Bulat had an interesting hypothesis. He believed that there was a large mosque (*namazgokh*) in this place. In the soil, a distinct quadrangle could be seen (Fig. 13). We dug an excavation trench at the corner where the walls should intersect. We could see a small mound and a



Ил. 9. 2019 г. Прогулка по Москве-реке

corner tower. We started digging and uncovered several rooms of what appeared to be a residential homestead. I enjoyed the excavation very much, but Bulat was disappointed. However, in the trench, which was laid across the supposed wall, masonry was visible in the profile. I wanted to expose the residence and the wall, but fate decided otherwise. However, I still hope that the pandemic, which has closed all the borders, will end, and I will return to Turkestan attempting to finish this excavation and confirm Bulat's hypothesis. It sounds fantastical, but I'm hopeful.

That dig season was also remembered for interesting weekend trips. Bulat liked to organize such events. And, in this case, he was driving his own car, which he fondly loved and called Bagira. We went to Syr Darya and even swam, though the water was cold. Another very interesting excursion was to Turbat, a place with amazing cruciform mausoleums (Fig. 14). I don't know anywhere else like it. And finally, we all went to Shymkent (Bulat, me and archaeologist Dokkey Talejev) for the wedding of Aisulu Yerzhigitova's daughter, or rather not the official wedding, but a "handover of the bride to the groom." The event was modest, for 300 people. Everyone was there including relatives, archaeologists, and workers from the excavation. Well, in general, a regular Kazakh wedding.

In the spring of 2019, I also took Bulat to Moscow. In Moscow a meeting of the Russian-Kazakh working group was held as well as a small conference. At my suggestion, Smagulov came on behalf of Kazakhstani archaeologists, and then stayed for a few days. The weather was beautiful, lilacs were in bloom, and their scent floated over the city. We walked in the city center, in Zaryadye Park (Fig. 15), on Red Square, in

Alexander Gardens, and we took a boat ride on the Moscow River (Fig. 16). We went to Tsaritsyno Palace, where it was wonderful in the beautiful weather (Fig. 17). And, of course, we went to Vorobyovy Gory to the university. Bulat told me how, as a student, he lived for several months in a dormitory in the main building of Moscow State University. He, as a successful student, had transferred from the University of Almaty to Moscow State University. However, the number of additional courses to be taken at the Department of Archaeology seemed completely unrealistic, so Bulat did not take any, and simply lived in the dormitory at his pleasure. Then he returned to Almaty.

I remember many things. So, it has turned out, that I wrote more about the everyday episodes, rather than about the science. But Yerbulat Akizhanovich Smagulov's contribution in the field of Kazakhstani archeology is so great that it is not an easy task to write about it. His numerous excavated sites, articles, and books speak for him. I wanted to remember Bulat as a person.

When the long and gloomy Moscow winter ends and the first sunshine appears promising an early spring, I want, as always, to call Bulat, and suddenly I remember that he is gone, and never again will he tell me in his mocking and slightly creaky voice: "Come over, of course..."

Emma Zilivinskaya,
D.Sc., Leading Researcher at the
Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the
Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow.



Ил. 10. 2019 г. Москва, Царицыно