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## IN MEMORY OF YERBULAT SMAGULOV

**I**MET Yerbulat, whom we usually just called Bulat, during our student years. More precisely, the first to meet him was my friend, Gaisha Yesenalieva (Ibragimova), with whom we traveled together during our archeological expeditions with D. F. Vinnik. In our fourth year at university, she met with him at a student conference in Almaty, from which she returned home with numerous photos, many impressions, and enthusiastic stories about the participants, including Bulat. The next year, in 1974, I and Slava Gontar (who was working in paleoanthropology), came to the regional archeological student conference, which was held in Almaty. Since my report was devoted to the results of the latest research on the Burana settlement (with the blessing of D. F. Vinnik), I found myself in the medieval archaeology section led by K.M. Baipakov and L.B. Erzakovich who were assisted by senior students Bulat Smagulov, Alisher Akishev, Serik Azhigali, Madyar Eleuov, among others. It should be noted that they treated their duties responsibly and with noticeable pleasure, constantly taking care of us. We met with some of them that same year at the All-Union archaeological student conference at Moscow State University. After his graduation from the university, Bulat joined the Department of Archaeology of the Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography of the Kazakh SSR Academy of Sciences (currently Kazakhstan's Institute of Archeology of the Ministry of Education and Science). I enrolled as a full-time postgraduate student at the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Archeology of the USSR Academy of Sciences (the present Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint-Petersburg). In the late 1970s, he came for an internship at the same institution. Since, at the time, he could barely navigate Leningrad, I became his guide through the city. The Institute and the Hermitage on Dvortsovaya embankment, the House of Books on Nevsky Prospect, the public telephone office on Herzen Street, and back to the post-graduate student's dormitory on Maurice Torez — this is the route I took him on during the first days of his stay in the city along the Neva. I remember that he once said that someday biographers would call this time "following Bakyt," which made me and Khasan Akhunbabaev, his roommate, laugh a lot.

During the 1980s, we usually met at conferences on medieval urban culture that were regularly held in

different regional cities. I particularly remember my meeting with Bulat in the summer of 1989 in Namanagan (Uzbekistan), during the All-Union archaeological conference on urbanization, organized jointly by the Institute of Archeology of the USSR Academy of Sciences (Moscow) and the Institute of Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR (Samarkand). There were many participants representing academic institutes and universities from around the Soviet Union, as well as scientific institutions from Moscow and Leningrad. Among them were both distinguished scientists and young specialists. Kazakhstan was represented by K.M. Baipakov and Bulat himself, who arrived a little later than the other participants. I remember that after the traditional questions concerning family, colleagues, and mutual friends, we moved on to discuss our professional activities. I knew that he was working on the sites of southern Kazakhstan, but he started talking about the medieval settlement Sadyr-Kurgan, the Chon-Kapka and Kara-Buura burial grounds located in the Kyrgyz SSR side of the Talas Valley. Being a native of these places, I was happy to join in on the topic and learned that for the second year he had been taking part in the excavation of the Chon-Kapka burial ground, located 3 km north of the village of Kirovskoe (now Kyzyl-Adyr) and near the gorge of the same name. This area had been discovered in 1988 by the local historian M.F. Tur. As it turned out, for two field seasons (1988-89), they studied this site together (the field studies continued in 1990). Bulat laid particular emphasis on the materials from Chon-Kapka as belonging to the Kenkol culture, closely connected to the Syr-Darya cultures, in the context of clarifying the northeastern borders of the Kangju passing through the Talas valley. At the end of our friendly conversation, I asked how Kazakh archaeologists happened to take part in the excavations of the site in Kyrgyzstan, but he quickly calmed me saying that "we, Kyrgyz and Kazakhs, do not need to divide sites."

In the 2000s, we continued to meet at various conferences and sometimes sent each other greetings as well as books, but we communicated more online. Once he invited me to a conference in Taraz, but I could not go and instead recommended my colleague, Aidai Sulaimanova, who later made several field trips to the sites investigated by the Turkestan Archaeological Expedition. She was succeeded by our



young archaeologists, Zhypar Tokkazieva and Askhat Dzhumabaev, who perceived Bulat not only as the head of the expedition and their mentor, but also spoke of him as a man capable of understanding and providing support during the most difficult of situations. His special attitude towards the participants in his expedition became evident in 2016, when we held an International Conference dedicated to the 1000th anniversary of Yusuf Balasaguni in Bishkek. Having been invited to the conference, he immediately presented me a list of his colleagues from the Otrar Museum and Shymkent. I agreed with all the candidates, except for one, a very young staff member of the Otrar Museum, who failed to inform us concerning the topic of his speech. However, Bulat argued that young people should be supported, and that this young man would always remember Bishkek, the conference, and us. Naturally, I had to agree and sent an invitation to this colleague as well.

During Bulat's stay in Bishkek, I took a moment to raise an issue of direct relevance to the topic of our conference – the identification of the Burana settlement with the historic city of Balasagun – an opinion recognized by most of the scholarly community, yet disputed by some researchers from Kazakhstan. In

response to my emotional monologue, he simply said that this is a well-known point of view based on factual material, supported by many experts, but those who disagree with it also had a right to their own opinion. After that, I had no choice but to transfer the conversation to another, more comfortable topic for both of us. But we returned to the topic of the Talas sites once again in 2017 in Samarkand during a conference on the Silk Road. It turns out that he saw numerous materials posted by the young local historian K. Choroev on various websites about the castle Kulan-Koruk. This castle is located in the upper valley of the foothills of the Talas Ala-Too Mountains near of the Ak-Tobe Talas settlement (historical Tekabket) north of modern of Talas. According to Choroev, this fortification could be the very fortress built by Shanyu Zhi Zhi in 36 BC which fell under the onslaught of Chinese and Kangju detachments. I had visited, studied, and filmed the site numerous times, as well as questioned V.D. Goryacheva about it. She said that P.N. Kozhemyako also noted its isolated context and differences of Kulan-Koruk from other sites, so he preferred to provide a general and superficial, generic interpretation as a castle in the Tekabket area. I retold all this to Bulat. He thoughtfully summarized

that it would be necessary to go and examine the site somehow, to which I replied that I would write back and, when we had time, certainly go and look at this site. It is very unfortunate that these plans could not be fulfilled because of our busy schedules. The last time we met in Almaty was 2018, when I handed him our publication following a conference in Bishkek. We never met again, though occasionally exchanged emails, the last of which was in June 2019.

My concluding memories of Bulat are of how I highly appreciated him as a colleague and friend, but paid too little attention to him, which I regret very much. However, I take comfort in the fact that he

remains in my heart and memory as an intelligent, strong, and bright man in which fate brought me together for which I am grateful.

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## PRACTICAL FIELD SCIENTIST AND RESEARCH THEORIST

*“There are people who are like stars....  
The man is gone, but his heart, which burned  
during his life, continues to spread its  
life-giving warmth, its pure immortal light...”*

THESE WORDS by the great Russian writer Konstantin Paustovsky are so close to the image of my friend that I want to begin my tribute with them. I was brought together with Yerbulat Smagulov through my scientific investigative trip to the medieval Kazakh city of Sauran. I was tasked as a specialist to study and evaluate the *kariz*<sup>1</sup> of Sauran, as there was no hydrological data concerning them<sup>2</sup>.

The desolation of the once flourishing city of Sauran occurred because of the ordeal that fell to the Kazakhs during the Dzungar invasion (18th century). The evacuation of the population and the accompanying disrupted interregional economic ties led to the death of a number of Turkestani cities. Imme-

diately upon arrival in Almaty, Y. A. Smagulov, who was responsible for the archaeological investigation, briefed me about the area under study. From our first acquaintance, I realized I had met a bright, distinguished historian and a widely recognized authority in the field of agroecology. Our discussions and communication took a very interesting form. I remember well the respect with which those present treated Yerbulat Smagulov. He was not only a connoisseur of medieval history but also a very sensitive, affable, and quite unique scholar. We had hours-long talks not only about kariz, but also about the need for scholars and practitioners to understand each other and respect their opinions. He had a gift of listening attentively to his interlocutor, to think logically, discussing critically and philosophically on a given topic.

Through this research, first, I accumulated direct and indirect data concerning the groundwater in this area, especially on the upper side of Sauran, where the zone, which played a key role in feeding the kariz, is located. Second, some elements of the kariz hydrological system during this period were determined. Third, we conducted a brief visual analysis of the kariz systems in Sauran. Most significantly we clarified some issues and ways to rehabilitate the kariz in Sauran. Until our study, the Sauran kariz had not been

<sup>1</sup> **Ed. Note:** A kariz is a Persian term that describes an irrigation canal, often underground, that was first developed in the localities of Iran and Iraq dating as far back as the first millennium BC. In many Turkic sources, the word kanat is used.

<sup>2</sup> Guliev A. G., Kerimov A. M. (2017). Znachenie, ispol'zovanie i ohrana kyarizov v Azerbajjane (The Significance, Use and Safeguarding of Kariz in Azerbaijan), in: *Mezhdunarodnaya nauchnaya ronferentsiya, posvyaschennaya Godu ekologii, selo Solenoe Zaymische (Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference Dedicated to the Year of Ecology. Solyonoe Zaimische Village), Astrakhan, 18-19 May*. P. 252-255 (in Russian).