

Brief information about the project

Name of the project	AP26197945 “Ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological research of northern and southern Kyzylkum in the ethno-ecological system”
Relevance	Kyzylkum is an ancient center of civilization located between the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers, a territory through which international connections, caravan routes, and trade corridors linking the states of Central Asia with Western countries passed since historical times via the Kazakh lands. This project aims to conduct an interdisciplinary study of the characteristics and commonalities of the traditional use and management of the Kyzylkum environment by Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmenians over the centuries, as well as to examine Kazakh monuments in Kyzylkum within the frameworks of ethnology, ethnoarchaeology, and monument studies. The project is the first of its kind and is expected to produce scientific results of shared significance for the research communities of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The project’s human resources include specialists in ethnography, archaeology, ecology, and geobiology, as well as foreign scholars participating in international expeditions and local experts in monument studies.
Purpose	The study of historical-ethnographic, ethnoarchaeological, and ethnoecological aspects of the Kyzylkum region’s settlement by Kazakhs inhabiting the Northern and Southern Kyzylkum since ancient times, including the features of traditional and supplementary economic practices, the formation of the system of Kazakh monuments, as well as the preservation and transmission of the traditional way of life from historical periods to the present.
Objectives	– Analysis of written sources related to the tribes inhabiting the Kyzylkum, including the Early Turkic period, the Middle Ages, and the second half of the 17th to the early 20th centuries; investigation of the processes of ethnocultural interaction between the Kyzylkum Kazakhs and Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmenians formed since historical times; identification of commonalities and distinctions between nomadic and sedentary cultures, as well as features of neighboring settlement of traditional Kazakh auls. – Study of the preservation of sites and traces of ancient settlements and populated areas from the 18th to the first half of the 19th centuries; research on caravan routes passing through the Kyzylkum, their intersections with the Syr Darya and Amu Darya, directions, and infrastructure (stations, wells, sardobas); identification and documentation of monuments not covered by previous archaeological, ethnographic, and geological expeditions; development of typologies of Kazakh necropolises and recording of epigraphic monuments. – Ethnographic, ethno-folklore, and ethno-linguistic research: scientific interpretation of the heritage of Kyzylkum Kazakhs preserved in museums of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan; study of the peculiarities of preserving tangible cultural heritage; investigation of intangible cultural heritage, including customs and rituals, family traditions, folk ethnomedicine, veterinary practices, and calendrical knowledge.

	– Study of the trade activities of Kyzylkum Kazakhs in the second half of the 17th to early 20th centuries, caravan trade, cargo transportation, the role of caravan leaders (karavanbashi), the development of trade routes, and market ethnography. – Examination of the traditional use of underground water resources (groundwater, wells, artesian wells); analysis of the geocultural space of Kazakh auls' settlement, the placement of winter encampments in sand ridges and lowlands, traditional winter dwellings (cellars, underground storage, korzhyn tam); study of seasonal migration patterns (winter–spring–summer), historical-geographical and ethno-geo-ecological aspects of land and water resource use; investigation of local knowledge related to the utilization of desert areas under the merging of the dried Aral Sea bed and the Kyzylkum desert. – Study of camel herding practices, as well as the adaptation of horse, cattle, and small livestock breeding to the natural and climatic conditions of the Kyzylkum; use of the dried Aral Sea bed and Kyzylkum desert areas as camel pastures. – Investigation of the use of plant resources (turanga, saxaul, zhygyl, yuzgin, kokbuta) for fuel, construction of livestock structures, domestic needs, and folk medicine; use of the plant cover as pasture for livestock.
Expected and achieved results	Expected Results: The project plans to publish at least two articles and/or reviews in peer-reviewed scientific journals included in the first and/or second quartile of the Web of Science, indexed in the Social Science Citation Index, and/or having a CiteScore percentile of 50 or higher in the Scopus database. The results of the study of monuments in the settlement areas of the Northern and Southern Kyzylkum Kazakhs will contribute to the development of international scientific collaboration between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The project will also serve as a comprehensive study demonstrating the cultural-historical unity of the Kazakh population in the transboundary eco-space of the Kyzylkum, particularly in the context of preserving ethnographic monuments. Achieved Results: During the study, a complex dataset was systematized, and a digital database was created. Written, cartographic, photographic, and video materials obtained from the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan (rare manuscripts), the National Central Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as from the state archives of Almaty, were collected and scientifically processed. A comprehensive analysis of the historical-toponymic and ethnographic data of the Kyzylkum Kazakhs was conducted; early written sources, expedition materials, and photographic data for the Northern and Southern Kyzylkum were systematized. Geographic names, ancient settlements, and caravan routes were analyzed according to modern scientific standards. Field studies identified the features of the traditional settlement system, economic activities, and ethnographic characteristics of the region. Ethnoarchaeological surveys, registration, and documentation of sites were carried out at the Syr Darya crossings (Kyzylkayyn, Kargaly, Tartogay) and in necropolises (Mortyk, Kabyl Ata); photographic recording and aerial

	surveys were performed. Ethnographic and folklore materials were collected from local residents, allowing the identification of traditional practices of natural resource use. The research results have been incorporated into the scientific discourse and published in the proceedings of the international scientific-practical conference “VI Esik Readings.”.
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Usage	The results of the project “Ethnographic and Ethnoarchaeological Studies of the Northern and Southern Kyzylkum in the Ethno-Eco System” can be utilized in the teaching of archaeology and ethnology courses at higher education institutions, as well as in the organization of field practices. Furthermore, the data obtained are recommended for use in the implementation of state and regional programs aimed at the preservation, documentation, digitization, and incorporation of the historical and cultural heritage of the Kyzylkum region into the scientific discourse.

Priority compared to real-world alternatives	There are no analogues
List of publications with links to them	At the international scientific-practical conference “VI Esik Readings” on “International Research in Archaeology: Experience, Results, and Priority Directions”, a paper by Y.S. Kurmaniyazov titled “Historical and Cultural Heritage in the Kyzylkum Desert along the Lower Syr Darya in Cartographic Materials of the Russian Empire (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)” was published in the conference proceedings, October 2025 (Kazakhstan).
Patents	-