

ARWA Central Asian online lecture series 2024

The Anthropocene in arid Central Asia: interdisciplinary perspectives on the Qyzylqum and its contiguous landscapes

The Anthropocene recognizes the intrinsic impacts of human activities on the Earth and its atmosphere. It raises critical questions about how humans have interacted with other human, non-human and post-human communities across the earth's landscapes and ecosystems over deep time. How humans occupy diverse landscapes lies at the heart of much archaeological / anthropological and historical research in Central Asia, even if the anthropocene is a less common framing mechanism for this work. The question of the anthropocene in arid regions such as the Qyzylqum, is especially important given the dominance of these landscapes in Central Asia. Yet deserts are typically sparsely occupied, often perceived at the margins of more densely occupied – and better studied – oases, for example. Moreover, as challenging spaces to occupy, arid regions are often not included in discussions of the Anthropocene, further enhancing their peripheralisation, and the demarcation of contiguous, fluid landscapes. Change, adaptability, crisis, resilience, mobility, water management, climate change and desertification, are all fertile areas of discussion in the anthropocene, together with methodological questions, such as the role of ‘slow’ archaeology/anthropology, for example, or the incorporation of sources not typically accessed by field archaeologists, including ethnographic sources and archives.

In this lecture series, emerging and established scholars of Central Asia engage with ideas about the anthropocene in the arid landscapes and ecosystems of the Qyzylqum and its contiguous regions. Interdisciplinary perspectives on the Anthropocene from the Central Asian past have much to offer our understanding of contemporary landscapes that have been intrinsically impacted by anthropogenic activities for millennia.

Online meetings comprise a 40 (approx) minute lecture, plus 20 (approx) mins for questions. Lectures take place on Thursdays at 4pm CET.

See below for the schedule and Zoom links to the lectures



Lecture schedule

Organiser: Fiona Kidd fjk3@nyu.edu

September 5, 4pm CET

Jeanine Dağyeli (University of Vienna & Austrian Academy of Sciences) - Colonial intervention through neobiotics: Improvement schemes and their legacies

<https://nyu.zoom.us/j/96194073514> Meeting ID: 961 9407 3514

September 26, 4pm CET

Fiona Kidd (New York University Abu Dhabi) - Archaeology and the Anthropocene in Arid Central Asia: some thoughts from the Qyzylqum

<https://nyu.zoom.us/j/94188940536> Meeting ID: 941 8894 0536

October 3, 4pm CET

Zach Silvia (Brown University) - The Anthropogenic Qyzylqum: rural unsustainability in the hinterlands of the Bukhara Oasis at the turn of our era

<https://nyu.zoom.us/j/97272811534> Meeting ID: 972 7281 1534

October 10, 4pm CET

Jennifer Keating (University College, Dublin) - Paradoxes of 'stability': Ecosystem engineering and imperial power in the Karakum and Murgab delta

<https://nyu.zoom.us/j/91907481576> Meeting ID: 919 0748 1576

November 21, 4pm CET

Katie Campbell (Cambridge, UK) - Water Management in the City and Oasis of Otrar, Kazakhstan

<https://nyu.zoom.us/j/92156820683> Meeting ID: 921 5682 0683

November 28, 4pm CET

Paul Wordsworth (UCL) - Desert wells and water strategies in the Karakum over the longue durée: from pastoralism to provisioning

<https://nyu.zoom.us/j/94250174179> Meeting ID: 942 5017 4179

