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EurAsia archaeological projects: brief report on 2007

Dear members, dear friends,

Over the next few weeks, the excavation reports for our four projects will arrive and will then be posted on the Society's website. Nevertheless, we would like to provide a brief update on the status of the excavations:

I. Novopokrovka II, Kyrgyzstan

Excavation of a fortified settlement and a presumed Buddhist monastery The excavations of the Karakhanid layer (10th-12th century) around the tower discovered two years ago have been successfully completed, so that work will now concentrate on the much older, most likely Sogdian layers (6th-9th century). Among the numerous ceramic finds, a vessel with the figure of a lute player stands out, which may be related to a Buddhist context. Three scientific articles have already been published on the ceramic and coin finds to date, with two more to follow in summer 2008.

II. Urgut, Uzbekistan

Excavation of a Christian monastery from the 7th/8th to 11th centuries

Further excavations of the monastery church revealed that the monastery was abandoned at the beginning of the 13th century and temporarily converted into a dwelling. This event coincides with the conquest of Samarkand by the Mongols in 1220. The excavations are complete except on the south side, where work will continue in 2008. The question of how to preserve the excavated church still needs to be resolved in the long term.

III. Merke, Kazakhstan

Excavation of a medieval city from the 6th to the 13th/14th century.

This, the society's largest project, began in early summer 2006 with extensive mapping of the site using special aerial photographs and precise measurements. The excavations yielded rich finds right from the start; various construction periods spanning a total of eight to nine centuries are to be expected in the ancient city of Merke: from the time of the Sogdians, Turks, Karlucs, Karakhanids and Mongols. The systematic excavation of the fortified citadel will continue in 2007.

IV. Tuva, Southern Siberia, Russia

Discovery and exploration of ancient Turkic graves, sanctuaries and stone images, 6th–8th centuries. The project began with the search for and registration of ancient Turkic graves along the Sayano-Shushenskoye reservoir in Tuva. The search team discovered several graves, including an early Scythian (pre-Christian) tomb complex, which centuries later also contained an ancient Turkic tomb. Then there was an even older burial from the Bronze Age and several anthropomorphic stone sculptures from the Bronze Age, i.e. the pre-Scythian period, and from the time of the ancient Turks. Heavy rainfall caused the level of the reservoir to rise unexpectedly quickly, which severely hampered the work towards the end of the campaign. Next year, in 2007, the research will continue at an earlier stage of the year.

V. Further information

Sanjar Shah, Tajikistan

A highly interesting excavation project in Tajikistan is being considered. It concerns the site of Sanjar Shah, south of Penjikent. The excavation site is a Sogdian citadel (6th–8th century) and a presumed Zoroastrian fire temple. Our partner would be the Archaeological Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Another request for support from the Society was rejected.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all members for their invaluable and much appreciated support. We hope that you will remain loyal members of the Society in 2008.

With best wishes for the festive season, we remain

Christoph Baumer
President

Therese Weber
Secretary