



Dr. Christoph Baumer

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EurAsia archaeological projects: brief report on 2008

Dear members and sponsors,

As the old year draws to a close, we would like to give you a brief update on the status of the successful excavations carried out during the past year. Detailed archaeological reports will be posted on the Society's website in March.

I. Novopokrovka II, Kyrgyzstan

Excavation of a fortified settlement and a presumed Buddhist monastery

The excavation of the Karakhanid suburb in the south-east of the ancient settlement has been completed; a great deal of Sogdian architecture from the 8th century CE was discovered in the lowest layer. It appears that the city was only sporadically inhabited for a few years or decades at a time in the 9th and 10th centuries.

The Sogdian inscription discovered on a large vessel proves that the place was called "Pakap" around 1300 years ago. This find and the discovery of the 8th-century architectural layer caused a great stir among the public and in the press and led to speculation that the capital Bishkek was not founded in the 19th century, but that it can look back on 1,500 years of history. The excavation work will be moved to the centre of the settlement in 2009.

II. Tuva, Southern Siberia, Russia

Discovery and exploration of ancient Turkic graves, sanctuaries and stone images, 6th-8th century. In 2008, a large, extensive Hunnic-Sarmatian necropolis dating from the 3rd/2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE was discovered. The opening of a grave revealed numerous metal objects such as bronze belt buckles and decorative clasps in the typical late animal style. Systematic exploration of the necropolis will begin in 2009, with the greatest challenge being the conservation of the expected finds of organic material, which decomposes rapidly on contact with oxygen.

III. Urgut, Uzbekistan

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

Due to the sudden serious illness of chief archaeologist Dr. A. Savchenko immediately before the start of the excavations, the planned exploration of the south side of the site had to be postponed until 2009. Once this has been completed, a decision will be made on whether to continue the project. The question of the long-term conservation of the excavated church ruins remains unresolved; if necessary, the entire excavation will be completely covered again. The first publication of the research results will appear in the Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology and in Antiken Welt in 2009.

IV. Merke, Kazakhstan

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

A 120 cm high stone figure from the time of the Turkish empires (6th-8th century CE) was discovered on the south-eastern outskirts of the city and taken to the museum in Almaty. It probably marked a burial or ceremonial site where sacrifices were made in honour and memory of the deceased. A richly illustrated, trilingual interim report (Russian, English, Kazakh) will be published in 2009.

V. NEW: Kesken Kala, Kazakhstan

Excavation of a Khorezmian (5th-7th century) and Oghuz (10th-12th century CE) city This new project began with aerial photography, recording the topography and surveying the ruins. Surprisingly, very early metal objects were found, which are currently being examined at an institute specialising in paleometallurgy in Seoul, South Korea. These finds suggest that the site was inhabited long before the Khorezmian era. Excavations in the centre of the site will continue in 2009.

VI. NEW: Sanjar Shah, Tajikistan

Excavation of a heavily fortified Sogdian city from the 6th-8th century CE.

This new project began with a topographical survey of the city and the complete excavation of an outer tower of the citadel. The latter proved very successful, as it revealed that the tower, equipped with embrasures for archers, had been built to the highest construction standards of the time. The highlight of the excavation was the discovery of two paper fragments inscribed with Arabic script, probably dating from the 8th-9th centuries. Work on the citadel will continue in 2009.

VII. Further

- **Kala Kahkaha:** In Tajikistan, at the suggestion of the President of the Academy of Sciences, Prof. Dr. Ilolov, another project was evaluated on the Amu Darya (Oxus) River, located on the Tajik-Afghan border. Th. Weber and Ch. Baumer personally explored the medieval castle of Kala Kahkaha and the presumably much older fire temple. Although the site looked very promising, the project had to be abandoned because the highest tower of the fortress serves as an observation post for the army and archaeological work would have been possible only to a limited extent.
- The examination of a cooperation with the German Archaeological Institute, Berlin, for a new project in southern Russia was postponed until 2009.
- Two further requests for support from the Society were rejected.
- The Society's annual public event was held for the first time in Basel, at the Museum of Cultures.

Finally, we would like to thank all our members for their invaluable and much appreciated support.

We would be very grateful if you would continue your valued membership. Despite the difficult economic situation, it is the Society's goal to continue all projects in a professional manner.

With best wishes for a happy and successful 2009 and kind regards

Christoph Baumer
President

Therese Weber
Actuary