

EurAsia archaeological projects: brief report on 2010

Dear members and sponsors,

At the start of the new year, we would like to give you a brief update on last year's very successful excavations, which took place despite some difficult and dangerous conditions. The detailed archaeological reports will be published on the Society's website in March.

I. Novopokrovka II, Kyrgyzstan

Excavation of a fortified settlement and a presumed Buddhist monastery Despite the serious political unrest in Kyrgyzstan, including in the capital Bishkek, work was able to continue in 2010 thanks to the courageous and well-considered approach of our local team led by Philipp Rott. For technical reasons, the excavation focused on the south-eastern suburb, where interesting finds from the 11th century were made. Work in the centre of the settlement will continue in 2011.



11th-century ceramic vessels embedded in the walls (left, centre).

II. Tuva, Southern Siberia, Russia

Discovery and exploration of Scythian and Hunnic-Sarmatian graves.

In 2010, excavation continued on the Hunnic-Sarmatian necropolis from the 3rd/2nd century BCE – 3rd century CE, which was discovered in 2008. Further iconographically highly interesting bronze belt and decorative buckles were discovered, as well as three intact graves. This was the first time that such unique objects had been found in a scientifically controlled excavation, rather than in uncontrolled random or looting excavations as had been the case previously. This means that, for the first time, the chronological stratigraphic classification of these objects has been confirmed. In addition, a Scythian grave from the 6th century BC was discovered.



Hunnic-Sarmatian bronze buckles and round clothing decorations



A Hunno-Sarmatian grave

III. Urgut, Uzbekistan

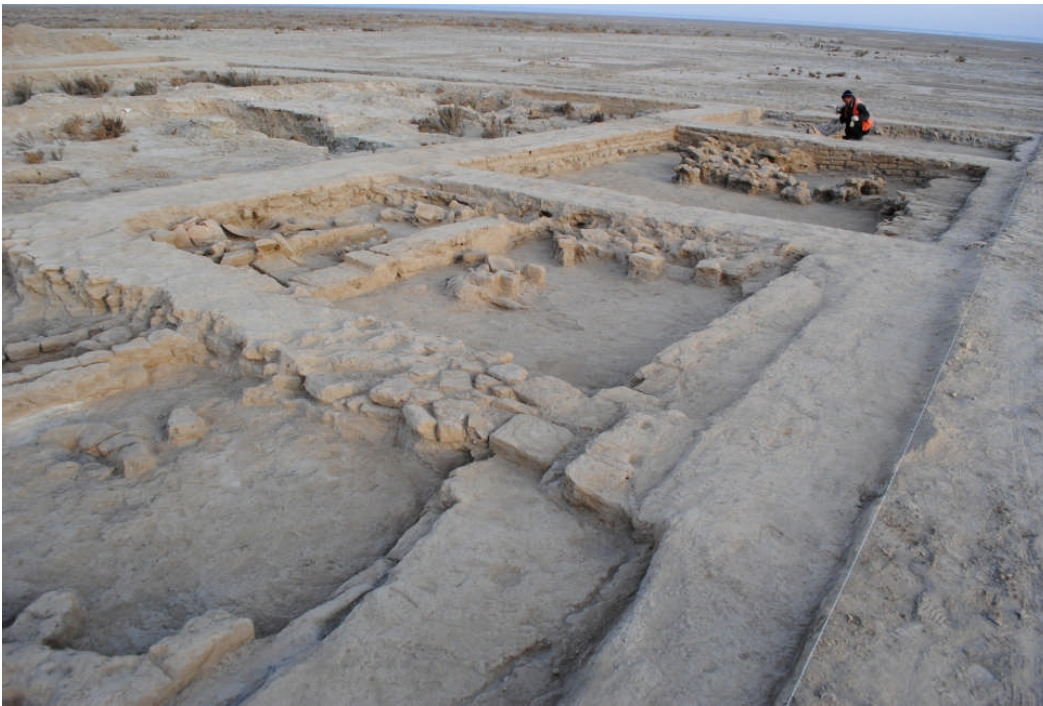
Excavation of a Christian monastery dating from the 7th/8th to 12th centuries

The extremely successful excavation has been completed, although the question of conservation remains open. An initial publication of the research results in German appeared in issue 3 of *ANTIKEN WELT* (May 2010). C. Baumer gave a lecture on the discoveries in Urgut at Harvard University, USA, in March 2010, and again in Salzburg and Vienna in December. A scientific publication on the ancient Syrian epigrams will appear in English in 2011 in *the Journal of Semitic Studies*, University of Manchester.

IV. Kesken Kala, Kazakhstan

Excavation of a Khorezmian (5th-7th century) and Oghuz (9th-12th century CE) city

The excavations in 2010 brought a decisive breakthrough. The excavation of a large complex, which had previously been interpreted as a palace, turned out to be a fire temple from the 9th century CE. This find can be described as sensational, as it is the very first discovery of a temple belonging to the Oghuz, a very important Turkish federation of the Central Asian Middle Ages, which also included the Seljuks, who later conquered the Byzantine Empire. The Kazakh archaeologists led by Prof. Baipakov are convinced that this excavation will lead to many new discoveries and insights. In the coming weeks, *EurAsia* will extend its contract with the leading Archaeological Institute in Almaty, Kazakhstan, for five years, with an option for a further three years.



The Fire Temple, the first known sanctuary of the Oghuz.



Our team in Kazakhstan, led by Dr Dmitry Voyakin, Margulan Archaeological Institute, Almaty.

V. Sanjar Shah, Tajikistan

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

In 2010, all work focused on stabilising the tower of the Sogdian citadel, which is considered the best-preserved military structure of the entire Sogdian culture. Despite adverse weather conditions, the work was successfully completed. The importance of this project for science can be seen from the fact that the research department of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, unsuccessfully attempted to acquire the excavation licence for Sanjar Shah! Thanks to the quick reaction of our archaeologists, Dr Kurbanov and Dr Savchenko, this unfriendly attack was successfully repelled and this unique project remains in the care of *EurAsia*.



Work on the tower of Sanjar Shah



VI. Vardana, Uzbekistan

In 2010, excavation of the upper, i.e. younger, layers of the fortified city of Vardana, founded in the 5th century CE, continued. This excavation will be particularly time-consuming, but also revealing, as the site was inhabited for over 1400 years, until the 19th century. An initial trial excavation was carried out at the citadel, where burials from the 17th to 19th centuries were uncovered. At the same time, the early medieval east gate was exposed.



The uppermost layer of Vardana



The east gate from the 7th/8th century AD.

VII. Shuturket, Uzbekistan

At Shuturket ("city of camels"), located 50 km west of Tashkent, a stratigraphic trial excavation was undertaken at the site of a Christian object to determine whether there were traces of a Christian Nestorian settlement or church here. This hypothesis was prompted by an Old Syrian inscription in Urgut.

VIII. Further

- The public annual event was successfully held for the third time in Basel, for the second time in the Skulpturhalle. Prof. Dr Alexander Koch, Director of the Historical Museum of the Palatinate in Speyer, spoke on the topic of "Amazons – mysterious warrior women."
- Three further requests for support from the Society were rejected due to the Society's time and financial resources being fully utilised.

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

We would be very grateful if you would continue your valued membership.

Despite the difficult economic and political situation prevailing in Central Asia, it remains the Society's goal to continue all projects in a professional manner. The membership fee remains CHF 500.

With best wishes for a happy and successful 2011 and kind regards

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