

EurAsia archaeological projects: brief report on 2011

Dear members and sponsors

At the start of the new year, we would like to give you a brief update on the status of last year's successful excavations. The detailed archaeological reports will be published on the society's website at the end of March at: www.exploration-eurasia.com

I. Qarshovul, Uzbekistan

Excavation of a presumed Christian Nestorian city, which is very rare in Central Asia The excavations at Qarshovul, located 50 km west of Tashkent, began with a bang. After a stratigraphic trial excavation in 2010 provided a possible indication of a buried Christian Nestorian settlement or church, the excavations carried out in 2011 fully confirmed this hypothesis, as two finds belong to a Christian settlement context.



The southern sector of the Qarshovul settlement.

II. Vardana, Uzbekistan

Excavation of a Sogdian and medieval city in the oasis of Bukhara

In 2011, excavations in the centre of the city of Vardana, founded in the 5th century CE, penetrated medieval layers from the 12th and early 13th centuries, which were rich in interesting ceramic finds. It became apparent that the ruler of Kwarzem, Shah Mohammed (reigned 1200-1220), had the city walls massively reinforced shortly before the onslaught of Genghis Khan in 1219. In 2012, work will continue in this sector with the aim of reaching the Sogdian layer from the 7th-8th centuries.



Overview of the excavation



Рис. 50. Кувшин столовый, яйцевидной формы. Украшен фигурной горловиной и вмятинами по тулову. Втор. пол. XII-нач. XIII вв.

Vessel from the 12th-13th century

III Sanjar Shah, Tajikistan

Excavation of a Sogdian city and a remarkably well-preserved citadel

Initially, heavy sandstorms hampered the work, whereupon the stabilisation of the tower of the Sogdian citadel was completed and all planned protective measures were taken. At the same time, the team began excavating a suspected fire temple in the north-eastern sector. This year, research in the north-eastern sector will continue and the aluminium roof over the tower, originally planned for 2011, will be erected.



The stabilised tower



Excavation of a suspected fire temple

An analysis commissioned by the Society of the coins found on the excavation site before the start of the excavation yielded very revealing results: the finds include pre-Islamic coins from Bukhara, which are based on Iranian Sasanian models; Sogdian coins from the first half of the 7th century, which adopt the format of Tang-era Chinese coins, and early Arab coins. The Arab coins indicate that the city was not immediately destroyed when it was captured by the Arabs in 722, but remained inhabited for several decades.

Coins found on Sanjar Shah before the start of excavations



Bukhara dirham, late 7th/early 8th century



Sogdian coins, first half of the 7th century



Early Arab fils from Samarkand from the time of Al-Mahdi, 760-61

IV. Novopokrovka II, Kyrgyzstan

Excavation of a fortified settlement and a presumed Buddhist monastery

Work concentrated on the fortified south-eastern suburb, where interesting finds from the 7th to 11th centuries were made, including coins from the Turkish confederation of the Türgesh (7th-8th centuries). In the second excavation sector in the centre of the settlement, the excavation area was expanded and early medieval layers were reached. Excavations in the centre of the settlement will continue in 2012.



Rooms in the south-eastern sector, the lowest layer dates from the 8th century.

V. Tuva, Southern Siberia, Russia

Discovery and exploration of Scythian and Hunnic-Sarmatian graves

The University of Novosibirsk conducted a geomagnetic survey of the target area, but this yielded few clues. External specialists suspect that a different survey method would be more promising in this particular sandy terrain. Depending on the findings, the survey will be repeated in 2012 using a different technique. At the same time, last year's investigation of Hunnic-Sarmatian stone cist graves was continued. An interim scientific report was published by the University of Bonn in 2011 and sent to members as a PDF file at the end of 2011. It will be posted on the EurAsia website in March.



A Hunnic-Sarmatian grave

VI. Kesken Kala, Kazakhstan

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

Excavations at the Fire Temple continued with great success in winter 2011. This is the first discovery of a temple belonging to the Oghuz Turkish Confederation. The report, which as always is very detailed and runs to around 160 to 200 pages, will follow at the end of March.

This year's Christmas card from the Archaeological Institute of Almaty, Kazakhstan, shows our excavation of Kesken Kala.



VII. Further

- The public annual event was held for the fourth time in Basel, for the third time in the Skulpturhalle, and was very successful with approximately 170 attendees. Prof. Dr. Werner Meyer, emeritus professor of medieval history and archaeology, Basel, spoke on the topic of "The medieval castle of Drapham Dzong in Bhutan."

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

We are very grateful for your continued valued membership. The membership fee remains CHF 500, and a payment slip is enclosed.

With best wishes for a happy and successful 2012 and kind regards

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27 January 2012

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