

Hergiswil, 28 January 2015

EurAsia archaeological projects Brief report on 2014 and outlook for 2015

Dear EurAsia members

Below you will find reports and plans for EurAsia's seven ongoing projects. The detailed archaeological reports will be published on the society's website at the end of February at: www.exploration-eurasia.com

I. Kesken Kala, Kazakhstan

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

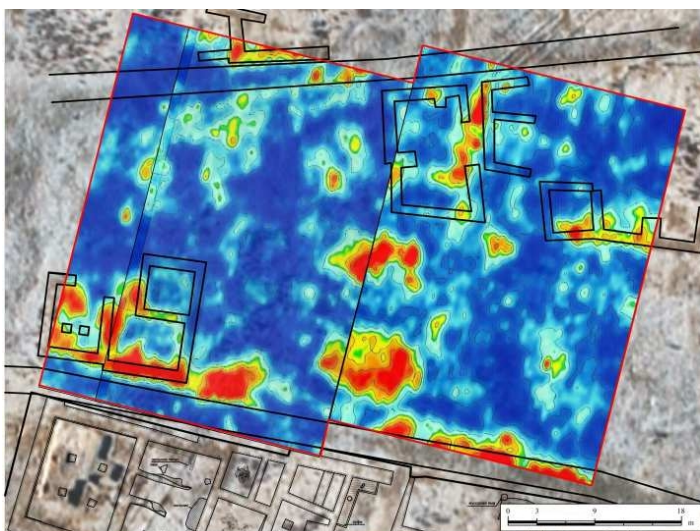
The excavation and prospecting of the temple palace complex continued in late autumn and winter 2014. This is the first discovery of a temple belonging to the Oghuz Turkish confederation. This campaign focused on geophysical prospecting in the citadel and three kurgans in the necropolis. At the height of Kesken Kala's prosperity, formerly known as Djuvara, the city was located in a former delta of the Syr Darya River, which later changed its course.



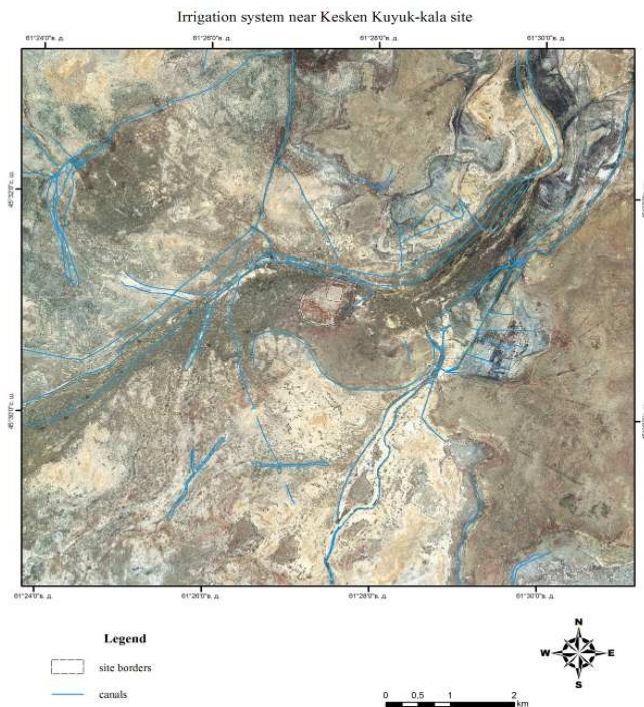
Excavation in Shahrستان, in the background
penetrating radar GSSISIR 3000.



Geophysical prospecting with a ground-
GSSISIR 3000 ground-penetrating radar.



Geoscan in the northern area of the citadel



The city of Juvara, visible in the centre of the image, was surrounded by a dense network of canals that channelled the water in this former marshland.

2015: The excavation will continue after evaluation of the prospecting.

II. Novopokrovka II, Kyrgyzstan

Excavation of a fortified settlement and a presumed Buddhist monastery

Work once again focused exclusively on the centre of the settlement, where pre-Karakhanid layers were reached. However, it became apparent that these older layers had been damaged by the Karakhanid layer (11th–13th centuries) above them and its numerous pits.



House complex II in the centre of the settlement



Karakhanid waste pits



Glazed lamp "čirag" from pit 9/2014

2015: Excavation continues in the centre. A monograph is planned for 2017.

III. Vardana, Uzbekistan

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

The excavations had to be suspended for the year due to the sudden serious illness of the chief archaeologist. It was not possible to find a replacement with local knowledge.

2015: Excavations will resume, with prospecting to take place in March and the main excavations in autumn.

IV. Qarshovul, Uzbekistan

Excavation of a presumed Christian Nestorian city

In the central sector 3, the temple-like platform was uncovered; its function has not yet been precisely determined.

In the eastern part of Shahristan, the new excavation 7 was started, where archaeologists uncovered the well-preserved base of a mighty round tower. This tower most likely formed the city gate together with a second, as yet unexcavated round tower. Sogdian coins were found again in the area of the presumed city gate.



Sector 7 with the large round tower



Site plan of Qarshovul Tepe



Reverse side of a Sogdian bronze coin ruler Sochak, 7th/8th century



Front of the Sogdian bronze coin of the



Islamic silver coin from 1379.



The discovery of a silver coin from 1379 bearing the name of Amir Timur (Timur Lenkh, reigned 1370-1405) and his puppet khan Suyurghatmysh (reigned 1370-1388) was surprising, as the city of Qarshovul was abandoned in the 10th century at the latest. However, Amir Timur had suffered a heavy defeat against the Khan of Moghulistan near Qarshovul in 1365, so it is conceivable that someone visited the battlefield five years later and lost the coin there.

The necropolis (excavation 5) was also further excavated, revealing the skeleton of a man with an elongated deformed skull. He was a member of the mixed Hunnic-Iranian warrior elite of the Hephtalites (4th-5th century), who used to deform the skulls of their infants.



Skeleton of a Hephtalite horseman, 4th-5th century AD.

2015: Excavations continue in the necropolis, near the temple platform (?) and at the city gate.

V. Sanjar Shah, Tajikistan

Excavation of the fortified residence of a Sogdian ruler and an excellently preserved citadel

Excavations continued in the north-eastern sector in 2014. The earlier hypothesis of a Zoroastrian sanctuary of the Central Asian type was not confirmed. Instead, the sector consists of two large residential complexes, possibly with craft workshops. The cult figures discovered earlier probably belonged to the furnishings of private chapels or altars. The excavations revealed further residential units. Of particular interest were the discovery of charred, carved wooden beams and fragments of polychrome wall paintings. Similar finds have also been made in the neighbouring town of Panjikant since the 1950s. It is hoped that further discoveries of wall paintings and wood carvings will be made.

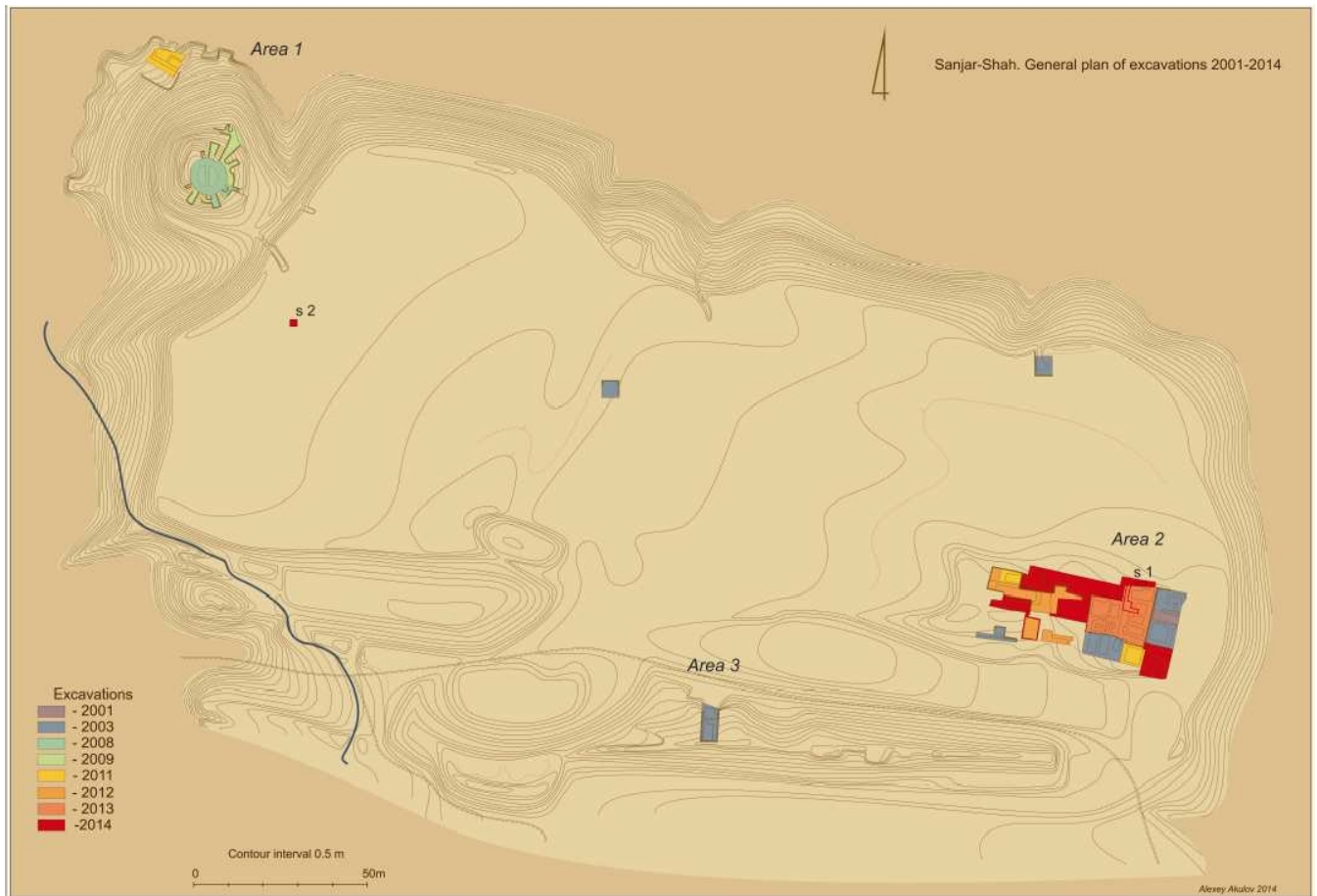


Aerial view of the western half of Sanjar Shah with the citadel

Aerial photographs of Sanjar Shah were taken for the first time using a drone. These revealed clear evidence of a large rectangular building to the east of the citadel, which, given its proximity to the citadel, could be an administrative or palace building.



Aerial photograph of the north-eastern sector



Site plan of Sanjar Shah with the excavation stages



Charred wooden beam with decorations

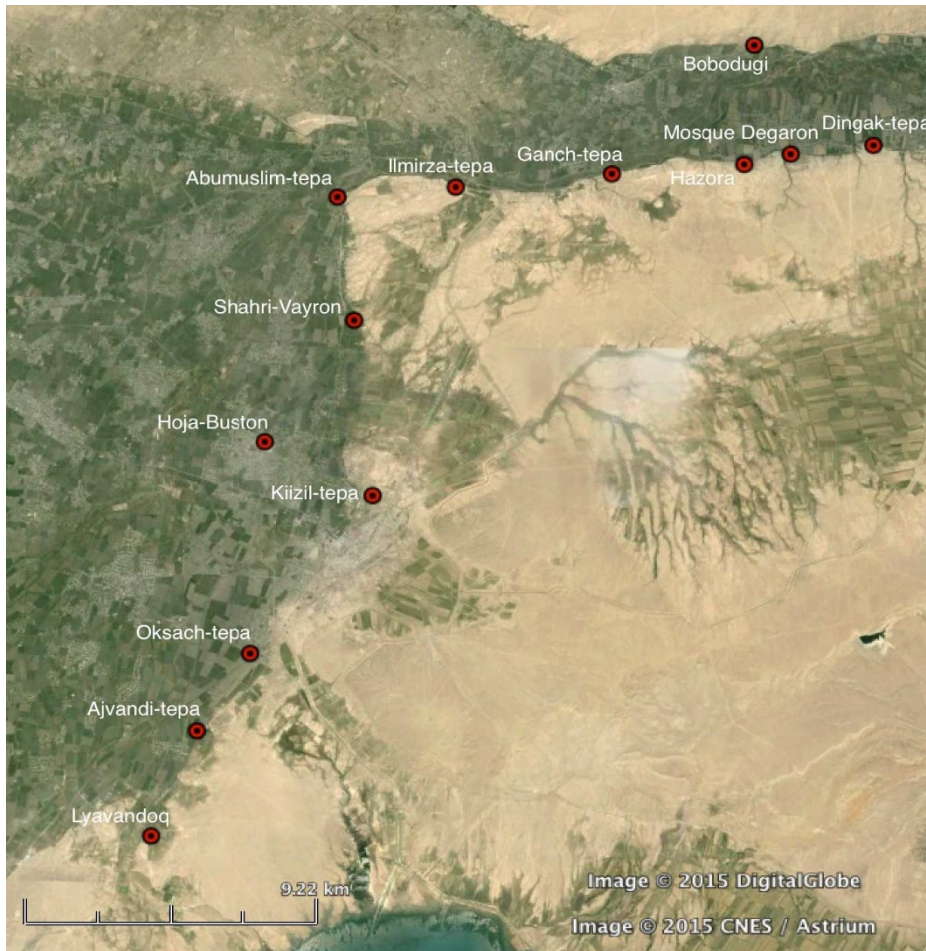
2015: Excavations in the north-eastern sector will continue and new ones will begin at the presumed administrative building east of the citadel. Geophysical prospecting may also be carried out in 2015.

VI. The long walls of the oasis of Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Aerial photographic survey of the medieval long walls of Bukhara

In urban regions of Central Asia, ramparts appear as veritable "oasis walls". Undoubtedly the most extensive of these territorial fortification systems east of Iran is the "oasis wall" of Bukhara in present-day Uzbekistan. It once had a circumference of approximately 400 km and was complemented by dozens of fortresses and watchtowers. Despite over a century of research, key questions remain largely unanswered: when exactly was it originally built, what functions was it intended to fulfil, and how did this defence system develop over the course of its existence?

The fieldwork begun in 2011 was supplemented in 2014 by a drone-assisted survey.



A total of 13 archaeological sites were surveyed and their GIS data documented.



Shari Vayon

2015: As the analysis of all GIS data and 3D modelling has not yet been completed, the next steps on the part of EurAsia have not yet been defined.

VII. Gonur, Turkmenistan

Non-invasive exploration of previously unexcavated areas around Gonur

Gonur Tepe was the largest city in the so-called *Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex*, which flourished between 2400/2300 and 1500 BC between south-western Turkmenistan and northern Afghanistan. The oasis of Gonur, located about 70 km north of Merv, consisted of at least 20 settlements, of which Gonur North (2400/2300-1900? BC) with at least 20,000 inhabitants, and Gonur South (1900-1600? BC), located about 250 m further away, were the most significant; southeast of Gonur, a necropolis with sensational finds was uncovered in 2009.

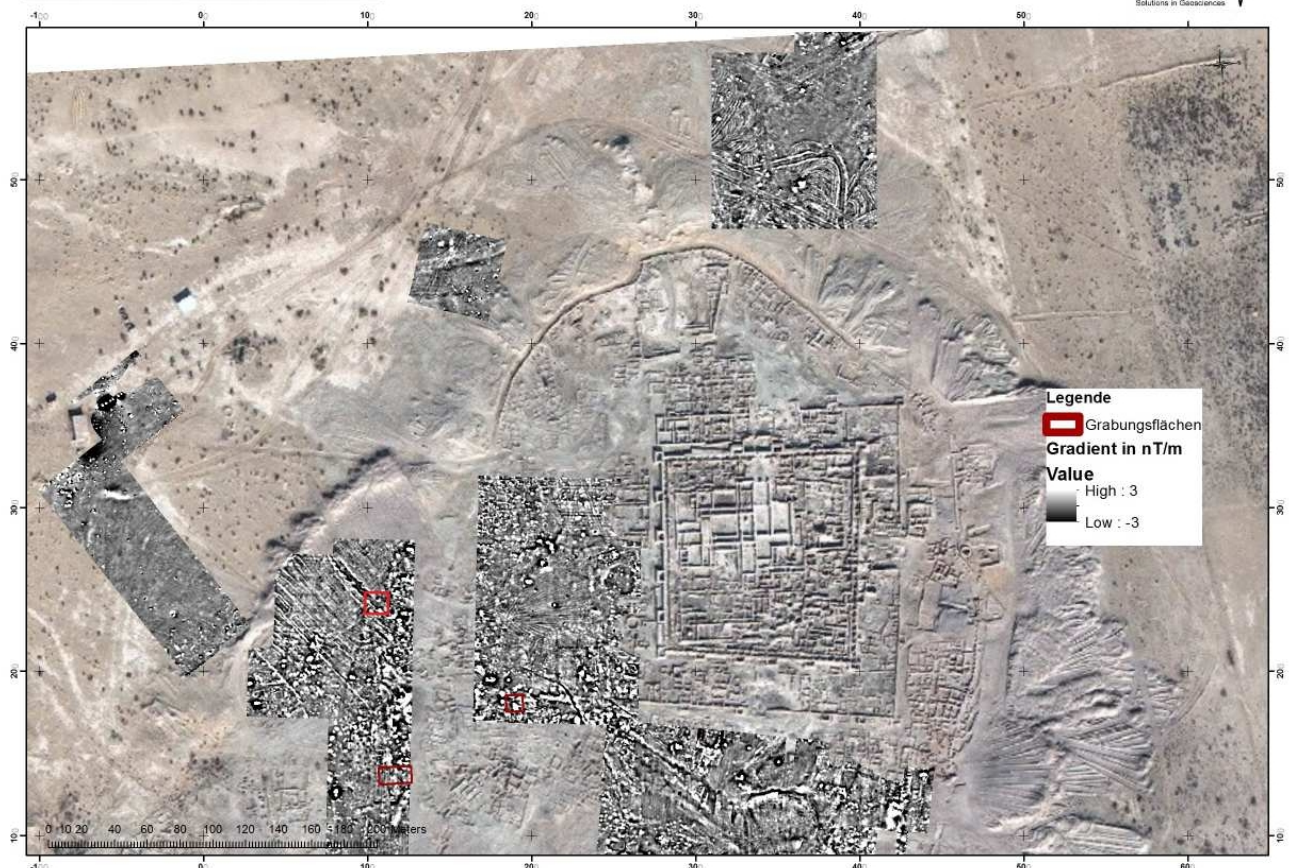
Gonur has been the subject of archaeological research since the 1970s, but many questions remain unanswered, especially in the area between Gonur North and South. It is also believed that the necropolis extends to the south. The new project, running from 2014 to 2016, aims to use non-invasive methods (aerial photography and geophysical prospecting such as geomagnetics, ground-penetrating radar and geoelectric resistance measurements) to uncover further urban traces. The project is a collaboration between EurAsia and the University of Bern, Institute of Archaeological Sciences IAW.



The investigation areas located around and between Gonur North and Gonur South are marked in green.

The most important findings:

- Sixty-five dipole anomalies, i.e. high-temperature areas, were identified, presumably ceramic kilns.
- In sector 1, two previously unknown circular structures were recorded, possibly fire altars or storage basins.
- A total of 161 new graves were identified, including nine more complex graves with dipole anomalies. This means that a total of 226 archaeologically relevant anomalies were recorded (65 kilns and 161 graves).
- Buildings were found in sectors 1, 2, 6 and 7, which have not yet been excavated.
- A large system of graves was identified in area 2.
- No buildings were identified between Gonur North and Gonur South that would indicate a stratigraphic relationship between the two centres.
- The hypothesis of a fourth city wall of Gonur North in Area 2 was not confirmed.



Magnetogram north, west and south of Gonur North



Magnetogram north of Gonur South.

2015: Geophysical prospecting will continue as planned in spring 2015.

VIII. Further

Membership fees have been restructured:

- Student £50
- Friend CHF 100
- Member CHF 500
- Patron CHF 1,000

The public annual event was held for the seventh time in Basel in 2014, for the sixth time in the Skulpturhalle, and was very successful. Dr Silvia Winkelmann spoke about the *Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex* and, in particular, about the results of the geomagnetic prospecting of Gonur financed by EurAsia.

Scientific Congress

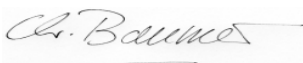
From **4 to 6 February 2016**, the Society for the Study of EurAsia will hold an international congress on the following topic in cooperation with the University of Bern, Department of Near Eastern Archaeology:

Urban cultures of Central Asia from the Bronze Age to the Karakhanids Latest archaeological discoveries

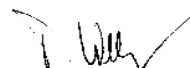
The venue is the University of Bern. All members of EurAsia are cordially invited to attend the conference. The programme with information on the speakers and presentation topics will follow later. The presentations will be published in a collection in 2017.

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

wishes for a continued good and successful 2015 and kind regards



Christoph Baumer
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