

Hergiswil, 25 January 2016

**EurAsia archaeological projects
Brief report on 2015, outlook for
2016
and**

Scientific congress at the University of Bern, 4–6 February 2016

Dear EurAsia members

Below you will find reports on EurAsia's seven ongoing projects. The detailed archaeological reports will be published on the society's website in March at: www.exploration-eurasia.com

I. Kesken Kala, Kazakhstan

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

Excavations and geomagnetic prospecting of the temple palace complex continued in 2015. This is the first discovery of a temple belonging to the Oghuz Turkish confederation. New finds of ceramics and coins indicate four layers or three construction phases:

- I. Bottom layer from the Choresm period: 5th–7th century; no buildings have yet been identified.
- II. Lower construction period from the late Choresm period and the Türgesh dynasty: 7th-8th centuries.
- III. Middle period of the Samanids and Karakhanids, rule of the Oghuz Yabghus: 8th-11th centuries.
- IV. Upper period of the later Karakhanids: 11th to early 13th century; this layer is heavily damaged.



Aerial view of the Shahristan (city centre) and the citadel (at the back right of the excavation).



Work in the citadel



Bronze plate depicting a ram's head

In addition, two further fortified medieval settlements of the Oghuz were identified approximately 30 km south of Kesken Kuyuk Kalas. This gives us the option of extending the excavations to these two additional sites at the appropriate time.

2016: The excavations will continue, focusing on stratigraphy and palaeozoology, as will the extensive prospecting.

II. Novopokrovka II, Kyrgyzstan

Excavation of a fortified settlement and a presumed Buddhist monastery

Work again focused on the centre of the settlement, where pre-Karakhanid layers from the early 8th to late 9th centuries were explored. However, these older layers were affected by overlying Karakhanid layers (11th-13th centuries) and their pits.

Interesting individual finds included a bronze amulet, Chinese coins and coins from the Türgesh, as well as anthropomorphic figures that served as lid handles for ossuaries. The connection between these figures and the pre-Karakhanid layer has not yet been clarified.



Rooms 22 and 29 in the settlement centre



Bronze amulet

2016: Excavation continues in the centre. A monograph on the excavations since 2004 is planned for 2018.

III. Vardana, Uzbekistan

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



The northern corridor, which in the 9th century led to baths (presumably repurposed)



Shard with an engraved peacock holding something (presumably a string of pearls) in its beak.

The excavations provided valuable clues to the chronology of the settlement.

- I. Pre-Sogdian, probably Sassanid period: 4th-5th century
- II. Sogdian period: 5th-early 8th century (Arab conquest and destruction).
- III. Period of abandonment: 8th-9th centuries
- IV. Medieval period: 9th-13th centuries (palace areas converted into baths, presumed destruction by the Mongols around 1220).
- V. Late medieval period: mid-13th to 20th centuries. Used as a cemetery and for individual dwellings. Numerous high-quality ceramic finds were made.

2016: Excavations in the citadel continue, with a monograph on ceramics planned for 2018.

IV. Qarshovul, Uzbekistan

Excavation of a Sogdian city, 4th-8th century.

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

Excavation 7 continued in the eastern part of Shahrستان, where archaeologists uncovered the second, well-preserved base of a mighty round tower. As suspected last year, the two towers formed the city gate. Sogdian coins were found again.



Plan of Qarshovul



The eastern city gate



Left: 62 mm long bronze ear cleaner in the shape of a man holding a vessel in his left hand and a fan or another figure in his right. This rare find will be analysed further.

Right: Traces of a dome-shaped structure made of dense rammed earth. Similar structures from more southern areas such as Termez in northern Afghanistan or Tajikistan would suggest a Buddhist stupa, but these were built of mud bricks.

2016: Excavations continue in the necropolis and at the presumed temple platform.

V. Sanjar Shah, Tajikistan

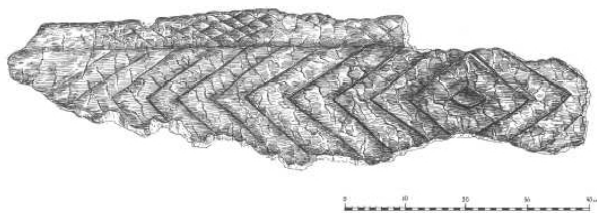
Excavation of the fortified residence of a Sogdian ruler with citadel

Excavations continued in 2015 in the north-eastern sector of Area 2. This definitively disproved the 2003 hypothesis of a Zoroastrian sanctuary. Instead, the sector consists of large residential complexes with associated craft workshops. The cult figures discovered earlier belonged to the furnishings of private chapels or altars. The carved wooden beams and fragments of polychrome wall paintings discovered decorated the ceremonial reception hall of a wealthy artist/craftsman.



Complex up to 4 m high in Area 4 in the south of Sanjar Shah

In the south-eastern part of the city wall, a new excavation site, Area 4, has been opened, where the architecture has been preserved to a height of up to 4 m. (See photo above).



Drawing of a scorched, carved wooden beam from the craftsmen's quarter in Area 2.



The multi-part paper manuscript fragment in Arabic script and language discovered at the beginning of Sanjar Shah's excavations has now been translated. It is a letter containing historical information from the 8th century. The paper is made from fibres from the bark of the

mulberry tree and was imported from China. It could be one of the oldest Arabic paper manuscripts in Central Asia. A scientific publication is in preparation.

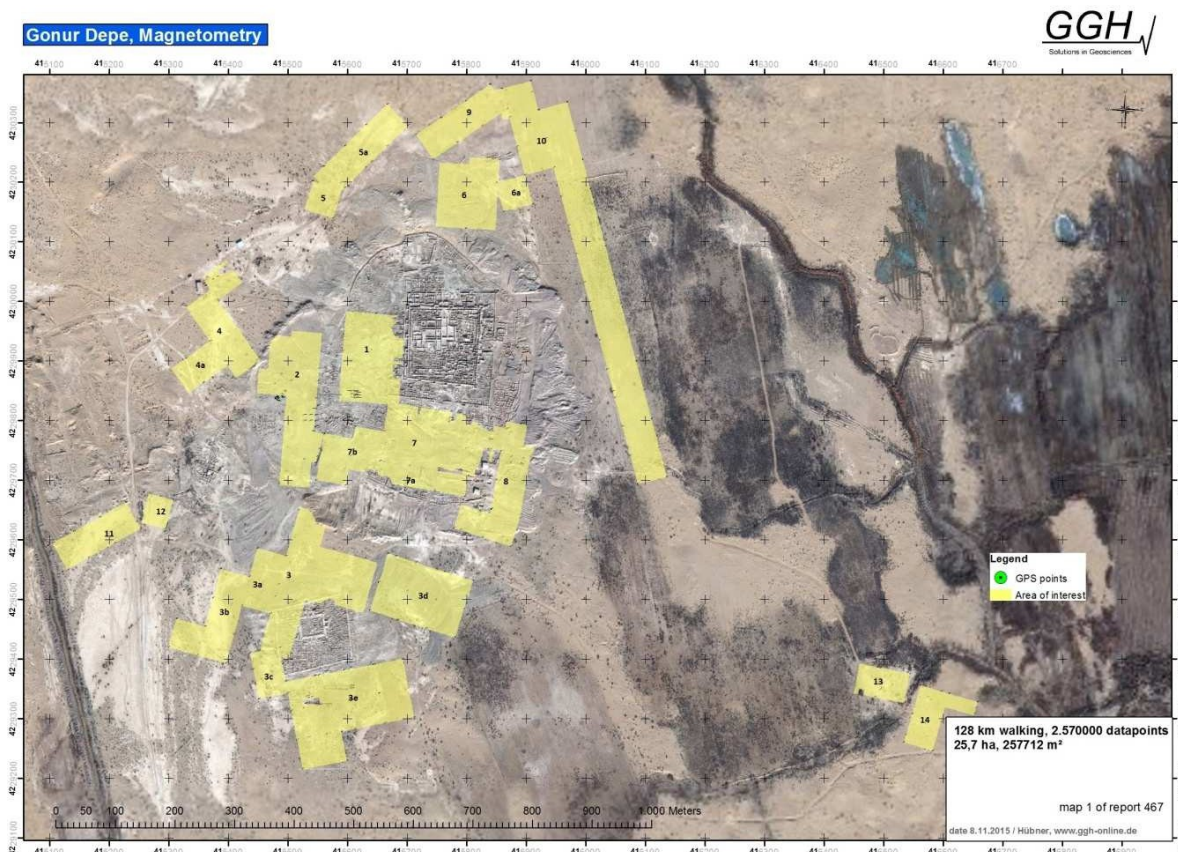
2016: Excavations continue in the south-eastern sector of Area 4, as well as further to the west, where administrative buildings may be located. The excavation begun in the north-eastern corner is continuing.

VI. 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 and Gonur South (1900-1600? BC), located about 250 m further away, were the most important.

Gonur has been the subject of archaeological research since the 1970s, yet many questions remain unanswered. The new project, running from 2014 to 2016, aims to uncover further urban traces using non-invasive methods (aerial photography and geophysical prospecting such as geomagnetics, ground-penetrating radar and geoelectric resistance measurements). The project is a collaboration between the University of Bern, Institute of Archaeological Sciences IAW, together with the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow and the Turkmen Academy of Sciences in Turkmenistan.



The investigation areas located around Gonur North and Gonur South in 2014-15 are marked in yellow. The most important results:

- A total of 361 archaeologically relevant anomalies were recorded in 2014-15, including 215 graves and 68 ovens. The Russian team has begun to excavate the new burial ground.
- In sector 7 b, a circular altar was detected geophysically and subsequently excavated by the Russian team. (See photo on p. 7).

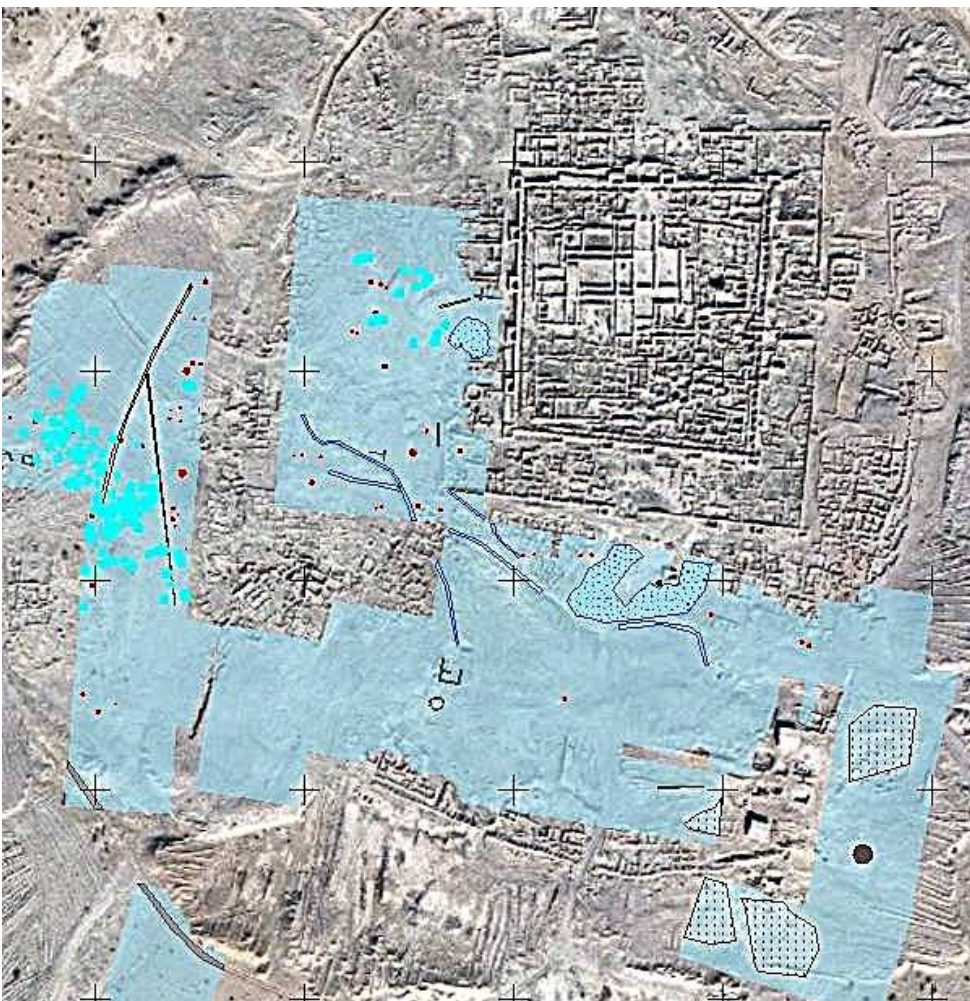
- Two previously unknown circular structures, fire altars or storage basins, were also identified in Sector 1, but these have not yet been excavated. In Area 2, a large system of ditches was identified, which probably served as a defensive moat instead of the hypothetically assumed third city wall.
- No buildings were identified between Gonur North and Gonur South that would indicate a stratigraphic relationship between the two centres.
- Further settlement and craft quarters have been identified north of Gonur North, as well as south of Gonur South.



Identified on a magnetogram in sector 7 b
excavated circular altar with a diameter of 6 m.



Bronze seal found in spring 2015 and



Magnetogram of the area west, southwest and south of Gonur North. Graves, canals and water basins are highlighted.

2016: Geophysical prospecting continues as planned.

VII. Tuva, southern Russia

The rescue excavations of Scythian and Hunnic-Sarmatian graves (6th century BC – 4th century AD) in Tuva, southern Siberia, which were successfully carried out from 2006 to 2011, were temporarily suspended in 2012–2014. A scientific paper was published by the University of Bonn, and in 2014, an exhibition on the cultures of Tuva was held at the All-Russian Museum in Moscow, which included numerous archaeological finds from the EurAsia project.

In spring 2015, a new reconnaissance survey was carried out on the site on the shore of the Sayano-Shushenskoye reservoir, which threatens to cover the necropolises, followed by excavations that brought to light the new Ala-Tey cemetery and interesting finds.



Bronze belt buckle with two yaks from grave 11 in Ala-Tey (see below).



Unplundered grave from the Xiongnu period. Grave 11 in the newly discovered cemetery of Ala-Tey. On the skeleton lie a bronze belt buckle (see photo above), a Chinese bronze mirror and, above the head, a ceramic vessel.

2016: Excavations are continuing.

**VIII. Further
Scientific congress**



**International Archaeological Conference
Central Asia
4th- 6th Feb. 2016 - Bern/Switzerland**

The Society for the Study of Eurasia is holding an international conference from **4 to 6 February 2016** in collaboration with the University of Bern, Department of Near Eastern Archaeology:

Urban cultures of Central Asia from the Bronze Age to the Karakhanids.
Learnings and conclusions from new archaeological investigations and discoveries

Urban cultures of Central Asia from the Bronze Age to the Karakhanids
Findings and conclusions from new archaeological investigations and discoveries

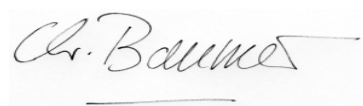
The venue is the University of Bern, and the conference language is English. All members of EurAsia are cordially invited to attend the conference. The programme is enclosed. The presentations will be published in a monograph in 2018.

Flyer

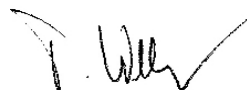
The Society's new flyer has been produced for the conference.

Finally, we would like to thank all members for their valuable and much appreciated support. We would be delighted if you would renew your valued membership; a payment slip is enclosed.

With best wishes for a continued good and successful 2016 and kind regards



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