

# TRENDS IN CENTRAL EURASIAN<sup>1</sup> ARCHEOLOGY SINCE THE LATE 1980S

## 1. LATE 1980S–1991

The field of research that has been most impacted by the turbulent changes that have occurred on the international scene in Central Eurasia since the 1990s is probably archeology. This is because it was a time that archeologists from the so-called “free world” were again allowed into the region to conduct excavation projects, which of course make up the life-line of archeology. Up until that time, since almost all of the region was encompassed within the socialist sphere bounded by the Soviet Union, Mongolia, and China, archeological excavation there was done solely by scholars active in the Soviet Bloc countries. Moreover, due to the political conflict that arose between China and the Soviet Union, any direct exchange of information between the archeological communities of the two countries had become impossible, as only Western Bloc scholars enjoyed the information coming out of both countries, but no license to practice in the region. A triad of academic deprivation had been formed.

It was during the last half of the 1980s that signs began to appear indicating an end to such an impasse, when the Soviet Union implemented its perestroika reforms under the guidance of the Mikhail Gorbachev regime and China instituted its new programs emphasizing international

openness. These political trends enabled three projects: 1) the UNESCO Silk Road Survey (1989–91) ④, 2) the Gurvan Gol Project in search of Genghis Khan’s burial mound ⑤, and 3) the Frozen Tomb Excavation in the Altai Mts. of the Soviet Union (1991) ⑥, all funded entirely or in part by Japanese mass media companies at the peak of a bubble economy (1) Asahi News, 2) Yomiuri News, 3) NHK). 1) and 3) were conducted by international teams, 2) by a joint Japanese-Mongolian group. The Japanese participants were

Silk Road	Gurvan Gol	Frozen Tomb
Katō Kyūzō	Egami Namio	Yamamoto Tadanao
Sugimura Tō	Katō Shimpei	Kawamata Masanori
Hayashi Toshio	Shiraishi Noriyuki	Yukishima Kōichi

The Silk Road Survey was able to cover all the related sites in the five republics of Central Eurasia and the North Caucasus, while the Gurvan Gol Project was unsuccessful in finding the site of the tumulus, but did report on the distribution of various related sites, and the Frozen Tomb team did participate in actual excavation work, but could not find the frozen tomb and thus were unable to take advantage of Japan’s superior preservation know-how. Despite the limitations placed on the survey and excavation work itself, all the projects proved to be excellent opportunities for Western archeologists to meet and exchange information with their colleagues active in the region.

Prior to these international endeavors, it was a team led by Katō Kyūzō of Soka University that first became involved in Central Asian digs in conjunction with Edvard Vasil’evich Rtveldze and Bakhodir Turgunov of Nauchno-issledovatel’skii Institut Iskusstvoznaniya AN Uzbekistana to survey Buddhist-related sites centered around the city of Dal’verzin-tepa (tepe) ⑦ in Tokharistan [Soka University 1996]. Although his excavation methodology has come under criticism, Katō is the undisputed pioneer in the field. Also during the late 1980s in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region international scholarly exchange was getting underway, as teams representing Waseda University (Nagasawa Kazutoshi, Sakurai Kiyohiko, Ohashi Katsuaki, and Arakawa Masaharu) ⑧ and Bukkyo University (Inokuchi Taijun, Kojima Yasutaka, Wang Binghua, and Yu Zhiyong) ⑨ first began actively requesting local research institutions to allow them to participate in joint excavation projects (to be discussed in detail later on).

## 2. CENTRAL ASIA (MAINLY EASTERN AND WESTERN TURKESTAN) SINCE 1992

The countries of Central Eurasia in their post-national independence phases have attracted the attention of many Western archeologists, due to the fact that since the late 1970s they have been unable to work in Iran and Afghanistan. All of the work mentioned below has been conducted in conjunction with local research institutions, and much of it has involved a number of international institutions working together.

A team of Italian archeologists led by Antonio Invernizzi of the University of Turin began work as early as 1990 at Old Nisa ③ in Turkmenistan with a site distribution survey which led to the start of excavation in 1996 [Invernizzi and Lippolis 2008]. Carlo Lippolis took over the project's leadership in 2009. Russian archeologist Viktor Nikolaevich Pilipko had already published a comprehensive report on the site [Pilipko 2001] during the Soviet Union era. In 1992 Maurizio Tosi of the University of Bologna initiated an international project to survey the sites in the vicinity of Merv ④, which was taken over by Tim Williams of the Institute of Archeology, University College London and renamed the Ancient Merv Project [Williams 2007]. Local archeologist Viktor Ivanovich Sarianidi has continued his work since the Soviet era in the Merv region at Gonur Tepe ⑤, an ancient city which was inhabited between the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC [Sarianidi 2009]. After the Soka University project around Dal'verzin-tepa (tepe) in Tokharistan got underway, it was then taken over for a while by the Ancient Orient Museum (Tokyo) and the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum before being returned to the hands of Soka University and Koyama Mitsuru, who continues the work today. Katō Kyūzō went on to excavate Buddhist sites in Kyrgyz and Uzbekistan with funding received in appeals made to the general public. Russian teams formed during the Soviet era continued their work not only in southern Uzbekistan, but also in southern Tajikistan, which was once part of ancient Bactria. Boris Anatol'evich Litvinskii and Igor' Rubenovich Pichikyan have reported on the excavation work being done on the region's well-known Takhti-Sangin Site (Achaemenid through Greco-Bactrian era), publishing a volume dealing mainly with religious architecture [Litvinskii and Pichikyan 2000] and another concentrating on weaponry [Litvinskii 2001].

Henri-Paul Francfort, the director of France's Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) has since 1989 retired from Afghanistan to become active since 1989 throughout Central Asia as the head of the Mission archéologique française en Asie centrale (MAFAC) [Francfort

2001]. To begin with, in 1991, he participated in the survey being conducted at Sarazm ①, a large Bronze Age settlement in Tajikistan [Francfort 1994], then that same year joined CNRS staff member Corinne Debaine-Francfort and Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology director Abduressul Idriss to explore the archeological sites throughout Keriya (Uygur Autonomous Region). However, Francfort's crowning glory belongs to the excavation of the Berel' Tumulus Cemetery ② conducted in eastern Kazakhstan between 1997 and 2000, during which a frozen tomb from the Scythian period was discovered containing rare and important artifacts [Samashev et al. 2000; Gorbunov et al. 2000]. The work continues today under an all-Kazakhstan team led by Zainolla Samashev. Italian archeologists are also active in Kazakhstan. Distancing themselves from the A. Kh. Margulan Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Kazakhstan, they established a geoarcheology laboratory at the K. I. Satpayev Institute of Geological Sciences in 2004, centered around environmental archeologist Renato Sala and specializing in such areas as rock carvings and climate change [Sala and Deom 2005].

The archeological site in Kazakhstan probably best known around the world is Botai ③, the site of a large settlement located in the northern part of the country and dating between 3700 and 3100 BC, where a large amount of horse bones were discovered, giving rise to a debate over whether or not this region is the source of equine domestication. Viktor Fedorovich Zaibert, who has led the excavation work there for over 30 years now [Zaibert 2009], began welcoming in many interested Western zooarchaeologists in the late 1990s. Supporters of the Botai animal domestication hypothesis include Americans David W. Anthony [2000] and Sandra L. Olsen [2006], while opponents include Marsha Ann Levine [1999] of England and Elena Efimovna Kuz'mina [2007], a specialist in the origin of Indo-European languages. Recently, Alan K. Outram [2006] has joined in survey of Botai. There is also a related debate in progress over the role of horseback riding in equine domestication. (Another line of thinking argues the need for meat production at the catalyst.) Anthony [2007] argues that cavalry bands were already active as early as the 4th millennium BC, while Robert Drews [2004] suggests sometime between the 10th and 9th centuries BC. The debate has reached the pages of the Cambridge World Archeology Series, in which Ludmila Koryakova and Andrej Epimakhov side with Drews in one volume [2006], while Philip L. Kohl agrees with Anthony in another [2007].

The work related to sites of cities dating between the Sogd and Islamic periods in southern Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, which

was temporarily interrupted by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, is now gradually being resumed. Most noteworthy is the Pendzhikent site (M) in northern Tajikistan, which had been excavated by Boris Il'ich Marshak of the State Hermitage Museum [Marshak and Raspopova 2005] and the Otrar site (N) under the direction of Karl Moldakhmetovich Baipakov of the A. Kh. Margulan Institute of Archaeology, Kazakhstan [Akishev, Baipakov, and Erzakovich 1987]. Marshak passed away at Pendzhikent in 2006 leaving behind a manuscript on Sogdian art, which was posthumously published in 2009 [Marshak 2009].

In 2008, the Chinese government initiated a movement in conjunction with the five republics of Central Eurasia to the Silk Road as a world cultural heritage, and Japan responded by reminding the movement that the Silk Road should be thought of having extended as far as its ancient capital of Nara, then applied for membership through mainly the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (Tokyo). Then the National Research Institute of Cultural Properties (Nara) got involved in 2009 by dispatching Kunitake Sadakatsu to sites in southwestern Kazakhstan to conduct underground radar probes. Plans are also in the making for a test excavation of tumuli (*kurgans*) constructed by Saka (Scythian) tribes.

The Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (Kyoto) initiated a project spanning Xinjiang and Kazakhstan entitled Historical Interactions between the Multicultural Societies and the Natural Environment in a Semi-Arid Region in Central Eurasia (abbreviated the Ili Project) under the direction of Kubota Jumpei. In the archeological phase of this joint humanities-physical sciences project, Izumi Takura is conducting a distribution survey of the *kurgans* located throughout southeastern Kazakhstan. Also in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, a team under the leadership of Okauchi Mitsuzane began excavation of the Yarkhoto Necropolis of Turfan in 1994 and two years later discovered from a grave thought to date between the 1st century BC and 1st century AD such artifacts as gold implements of equestrian nomads similar to such peoples as the Xiongnu and Sarmatians [Okauchi 2000]. The work at Niya, which was begun in 1995, yielded a number of silk artifacts [Chinese-Japanese 1996, 1999, 2007], while the survey of Dandan Öylik got underway in 2002 [Xinjiang 2009]. In the northern part of the Xinjiang, while no scientific projects have begun, interesting and valuable artifacts from Saka to Pre-Turkic times are often being found by accident.

In Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime, teams of foreign scientists came in for the purpose of mainly preserving and reconstructing that country's cultural properties. A team from Japan's National Re-

search Institute for Cultural Properties (Tokyo) under the leadership of Maeda Kōsaku and Yamauchi Kazuya was put in charge of investigating the condition of the dynamited great Buddhas of Bamiyan ㊦, collecting fragments of wall paintings in an attempt to reconstruct them [Yamauchi 2010].

### 3. SIBERIA SINCE 1992

Even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Frozen Tomb Excavation in the newly formed Altai Republic continued with aid from the West. Then in 1993, several decades after Pazyryk's find, the survey team led by Natal'ya Viktorovna Polos'mak discovered on the Ukok Plateau at Tomb No. 1 of Cemetery No. 3 another frozen tomb containing among many other artifacts the mummy of a woman still intact [Polos'mak 2001]. This was followed in 1995 by the discovery of a male mummy by her husband, Vyacheslav Ivanovich Molodin. The 1993 excavation included Hatakeyama Tei from Japan, who later participated in the work on Scythian sites in Khakassia. From that time on participation by Japanese archeologists as individuals in the region grew more and more frequent, as exemplified by Masumoto Tetsu who was later to freelance in work on historical sites related to medieval times in Altai and Tuva [Masumoto 2003].

The archeological survey of Siberia has been under the oversight of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Siberian Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IAE) in the academic center of Akademgorodok, located to the south of Novosibirsk. The institute's director is Anatolii Panteleevich Derevyanko, an expert in the Paleolithic Period, who is assisted by V. I. Molodin of above-mentioned frozen tomb fame. Any foreign team of archeologists wishing the work in Siberia must conduct their operations in conjunction with the institute. While there are a number of universities and museums throughout Siberia involved in archeological projects, any attempt to cover them all would only result in distracting the reader from the real aim of this review.

While French and Italian archeologists expand their activities in the oasis belt of Central Asia, the steppe regions belong to the Germans, who have produced outstanding achievements there. The German effort is coordinated by the Eurasien Abteilung of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI). DAI has several other branches (Abteilungen) in Eurasia. In contrast to the branch in Teheran, which has been inactive since 1979, Eurasien Abteilung was set up in Berlin in 1995. At that time, the

Teheran Branch was subsumed under it, and the name of its prestigious journal *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* was changed to *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan*. Eurasien Abteilung has also taken over the prestigious Finnish publication *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua* and now publishes it as *Eurasia Antiqua*. Hermann Parzinger was made branch head and proceeded to initiate surveys throughout the former Soviet region, in particular the excavation of Kurgan No. 2 at the Arzhan site (2000–2004) <sup>Ⓟ</sup>, which is so well-known for the artifacts discovered in the 1971–74 excavation of Kurgan No. 1, proving, despite signs of plundering, the eastern origins of Scythian culture. The excavation of the main chamber of the large Kurgan No. 2, done in conjunction with Konstantin Vladimirovich Chugunov of the State Hermitage Museum, found it not to have been robbed and produced a veritable treasure trove of funereal accoutrement that caused a sensation both in academia and among the general public [Čugunov, Parzinger, and Nagler 2010]. Parzinger was promoted to DAI director in 2003, then made president of the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz foundation in 2008, leaving Svend Hansen as head of Eurasien Abteilung. Parzinger remained active in the region, however, moving on to northwest Mongolia, where in 2006 at the Olon Kurin gol tumulus cemetery <sup>Ⓞ</sup> he was involved in the discovery of a mummified skeleton and a rich supply of funereal goods from a semi-frozen tomb belonging to the Pazyryk culture [Heinken 2007]. Despite the site's 2,600 meter altitude, the tomb had begun melting, causing the mummy to enter a state of decomposition.

The Archeology Department at Altai State University in Barnaul has been particularly active throughout the Russian part of Altai, possibly because the university rector, Yurii Fedorovich Kiryushin, is an archeologist [Kiryushin and Tishkin 1997, 2003, 2004]. The department's staff includes Pyotr Ivanovich Shul'ga, who has made important contributions to the study of horse equipments of the Scythian period [Shul'ga 2008] and Aleksei Alekseevich Tishkin, whose interests span the Scythian and medieval periods [Tishkin 2007]. Siberia is also home to Archeology Departments at Kemerovo and Tomsk state universities. The Scythian period tumuli of Altai and Tuva contain a large amount of tomb-chamber timbers, whose annual rings and carbon content have led to ongoing research into dating the sites. The work has centered around the Institute for the History of Material Culture (St. Petersburg) staff member Ganna Ivanovna Zaitseva and the staff member of the Hermitage, Leonid Sergeevich Marsadolov [Zaitseva and Van Geel 2004; Marsadolov et al. 2002]. While their results have not changed the existing relative chronology for southern Siberian history, they are showing a

tendency towards older absolute dates [Dirksen et al. 2007]. Noteworthy are the results garnered by Vladimir Dmitrievich Kubarev<sup>2</sup> [2009], his son Gleb Vladimirovich Kubarev [2009], and Dmitrii Glebovich Savinov [Klyashtornyi and Savinov 2005] in Altai surveying Tuque period sites and the work done by Hayashi Toshio [2005] and Sören Stark [2008] utilizing those results to construct overviews of Tuque archeology.

In Tuva, the excavation of Por-Bazhin ⑥, a palace site thought to belong to the Uyghur period, began in 2007 under the leadership of Tigran Konstantinovich Mkrtychev of the State Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow [Härke 2010]. Complete funding was provided by Sergei Kuzhugetovich Shoigu, state of emergency minister, a close Tuvianian advisor to Vladimir Putin, suggesting political motivations behind the project.

At the Filippovka Tumulus Cemetery ⑦ in the southern Ural region of western Siberia, the discovery of a large number of “golden deer” from a giant tumulus of the early Sarmatian period (4th century BC) was a very noteworthy achievement marking the last years of the Soviet Union [Aruz et al. 2000]; then in 2006, it was found that another giant tumulus in the same cemetery had been robbed, leading Leonid Teodorovich Yablonskii of the Moscow Institute of Archeology to investigate the site, resulting in the discovery of another large store of gold and silver artifacts [Yablonskii 2007]. Just south of the site in the border land of western Kazakhstan, many tumuli of the early Sarmatian period lie dormant waiting for excavation to begin.

In eastern Siberia as early as 1992, a Japanese-Russian joint project was organized among Aoyama Gakuin University (Tamura Kōichi), the University of Tokyo (Ōnuki Shizuo), and the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Peoples of the Far East (Ernst Vladimirovich Shavkunov) to survey a wide range of diverse sites spanning the Stone Ages, Parhae (Bohai) era, and the medieval and late premodern periods [Tamura et al. 2002]. Also, from the year 2000, Usuki Isao of Sapporo Gakuin University, who had participated in the previously mentioned Gurvan Gol Project (1990–92), has been surveying sites in the Russian Maritime District from the Parhae and Jin periods, and in northeastern Mongolia from the Liao period [Usuki et al. 2005], while Kikuchi Toshihiko is continuing his comprehensive study of northeast Asia and Hokkaido [Kikuchi 1995].



#### 4. MONGOLIA SINCE 1992

Since democratization, Mongolia has become the scene of more and more internationally organized archeological projects, like during the previous socialist period, when almost all the work was done in conjunction with institutions from Russia and the Eastern European Bloc. Such hospitality is indeed a tribute to the nomadic spirit of the Mongolian people. At first, all the joint projects were organized by the Institute of History of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, but after the formation of the separate Institute of Archeology (Damdinsurengiin Tseveendorzh, director) in 2002, many projects are being also initiated there.<sup>3</sup>

Katō Shimpei, Shiraishi Noriyuki, and Miyake Toshihiko, former members of the Gurvan Gol Project (1990–92), are presently busy surveying and excavating sites related to Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire. During 1995–96, their work involving the preservation and reconstruction of Qaraqorum ①, site of the walled capital city of Ogodei and Kublai Khan, upon which UNESCO had embarked, was suddenly taken over by the University of Bonn; and in 2001 DAI joined the excavation work, uncovering a large collection of ceramic artifacts. Undaunted, Shiraishi headed for the Avraga site ② in Hentii aimag in 2001, where he uncovered the remains of a mausoleum related to the encampment of the Genghis Khan there [Katō and Shiraishi 2005].

Other Japanese archeologists active in the region include Takahama Shū and Hayashi Toshio, the central figures of the Steppe Archeology Society with Diimaadjav Erdenebaatar of the Institute of History, which is excavating the stag stones (deer stones) and *khereksurs* (stone mounds surrounded by round or square enclosures) of the Ulaan Uushig site ③ in Hövsgöl aimag. The team concluded from the condition of the horse bones unearthed at the site that the stag stones and *khereksurs* were installed during the same period, close to 3,000 years ago during the Mongolian Bronze Age [Takahama et al. 2006]. This is close to the conclusion reached by American archeologist Francis Allard from his work in the Hanui River valley ④ of Arhangai aimag [Allard and Erdenebaatar 2005].

The University of Arizona has since 1995 been excavating the Paleolithic sites of western Mongolia in conjunction with Siberia's Institute of Archeology and Ethnography (A. P. Derevyanko, director) [Derevyanko, Olsen, and Tseveendorj 2000], while Esther Jacobson-Tepfer of the University of Oregon has been working since 1994 with IEA's V. D. Kurbarev on a general survey of sites from various periods in Bayan-Ölgii aimag of the Mongolian Altai region [Jacobson-Tepfer 2010]. The

American-based Silkroad Foundation has been funding Bryan K. Miller of Rowan University since 2008 on his Mongol-American Khovd Archeology Project [Miller et al. 2009]; and William Honeychurch of Yale University and Joshua Wright of Stanford University are heading a team which began in 2000 excavating sites in areas expected to be submerged after the completion of a dam on the lower reaches of the Egiin Gol River (X) in Bulgan aimag [Wright, Honeychurch, and Amartuvshin 2009].

As early as 1993, France's CNRS set up the Mission archéologique française en Mongolie to survey Xiongnu period burial sites along the Egiin Gol [Crubézy et al. 1996]; but apparently due to dissatisfaction with the small size of the graves, beginning in 2000, the mission moved on to Gol Mod 1 (Y) in Arhangai aimag, the site of larger-scale, aristocratic-class Xiongnu tombs. As the result of a rather rough-mannered excavation using bulldozers, a wooden burial chamber and wooden coffin were found at 17 meters below the surface together with many funereal goods, including gold items [Desroches and André 2002]. West through the valley and over the hills from Gol Mod 1 lies another aristocratic Xiongnu gravesite, which became Gol Mod 2, where mainly American archeologists are digging. A paper was presented on the work done as of 2006 at the international conference held in Ulaanbaatar that year [Miller et al. 2006, 2009].

In 2006 Polos'mak, who is based in Altai, began excavating Noyon-uul (formerly Noin-ula) (Z), which was previously known through the work of P. K. Kozlov. She then proceeded during that same to unearth from an aristocratic-class tomb silver and gold items, a lacquer-covered cart, and a griffin-pattern felt carpet [Polos'mak and Bogdanov 2006].

There is another concentration of Xiongnu aristocratic-class tombs in Russian Buryatia, very near the Mongolian border. Although a portion of them had been excavated by Russian teams during the Soviet era, in 1996 Sergei Stepanovich Minyaev of the Institute for the History of Material Culture (St. Petersburg) resumed the work, the most noteworthy of which is Tsaram (a). While unearthing a chariot, gold items, and silver decoration plate, he discovered an interesting aspect of Xiongnu social structure characterized by smaller graves lining each side of the larger tomb [Minyaev 2009]. Since 1997 Korean archeologists from that country's National Museum have also been involved in excavating mainly Xiongnu period sites. In 2006 a team led by Yun Hyeungwon excavating aristocratic-class tombs at Duurlig Nars (b) in Hentii aimag not only found a chariot and gold artifacts, but also made quite a stir unearthing the bones of a human male, which an anthropologist identified as a Caucasoid [Kim et al. 2010]. The trend among the Koreans is an interest in

comparing Mongolian sites and artifacts with what is being unearthed on the Korean Peninsula. Chinese archeologists seldom venture outside their homeland, but did become involved in 2008 with the Inner Mongolian Museum and Institute of Cultural Relics and Archeology to begin a survey of the Hotont District © in southeastern Arhangai aimag [Inner Mongolia 2008].

Finally, there is a Turkish survey team led by Hasan Bahar of Selçuk Üniversitesi and completely funded by Turkey's overseas economic development agency, Türk İşbirliği Kalkınma Ajansı (TIKA). During 2000–2003, it was digging at the mausoleum of Bilge Qaghan at Höshöö Tsaidam ④, the most important site related to the Tuque Qaghanaite, from the standpoint that Turkey's ethnic origins are to be found in Tuque [TIKA 2001; Bahar 2009]. The dig caused quite a sensation in the field with the discovery of a complete set of gold and silver funereal goods, although the team's excavation methodology has come under criticism in Turkey. The team is also involved in preserving and restoring stone statues and stone slabs with Orhon inscription originally erected on carved stone turtles, while fully admitting that there are problems in that area, as well.

## 5. SUMMARY: SUCCESSES AND PENDING ISSUES

Since the 1990s, the field of Central Eurasian archeology has made great strides in terms of both quantity and quality, mainly by virtue of the participation of exploration teams from outside of the former Soviet Bloc countries. Such progress has been made not only in conducting archeological surveys, but also in the exchange of information through international scholarly venues held throughout the world on such themes as horse domestication and the relationship between nomadic and settled lifestyles. Accompanying the increase in the number of excavations is a dramatic jump in research publications, especially in Russia, not only coming out of Moscow and St. Petersburg, but the country's provincial cities, as well.

The character of the foreign survey teams active in the region may be divided into two types. The first is characterized by a centralized organization dispatching teams out to various sites around the region. The German DAI and French CNRS are the best examples of this type. The second type has no overlying authority, but is formed at individual universities and museums and dispatched independently into the field. This is the pattern seen in countries like Japan and the United States. It is dif-

difficult to judge which type is superior, but in terms of research environment and funding, strong centralized organizations like DAI and CNRS probably enjoy the competitive edge.

Now let us look at exactly what specialized areas in the field were best studied in terms of archeological period (excluding the Stone Ages). To begin with, the periodisation from the Bronze into the early Iron Age was studied more soundly than ever before. Carbon-14 datings were employed even under the Soviet Union; however, in recent years accelerator mass spectrometry and dendrochronology (annual ring analysis) have been added, thus increasing the reliability of research results. This is the reason why although the general historical pattern of the archeological past has not changed much, the absolute dating of its periods and phases are tending to be older than conventionally thought.

Secondly, the source materials for studying the early and late Scythian periods have dramatically increased; and based on the artifacts are being found, it has become clearer and clearer that the origins of Scythian culture is to be found in the East, rather than the West, a hypothesis first posed in the 1970s. According to Carbon-14 datings, its flourishing in the East began in the 9th century BC, one factor being the humidification of the climate, bringing about an environment of lush vegetation [Zaitseva et al. 2005].

Turning to the Sarmatian period, especially its earliest stages, about which almost nothing was known for lack of evidence, large-scale tumuli have been discovered in western Kazakhstan and the southern Ural region. Regarding the Xiongnu, large-scale tombs (of insufficient altitude to be called tumuli) thought to be those of royal personages have been found throughout Mongolia in its central, northern, and eastern regions. However, we still have no royal tombs from the early period, which should be called the Xiongnu's "golden age."

Next, following the Xiongnu, unfortunately still no sites have been found that could clarify the Xianbei and Rouran periods in Mongolia, despite the fact that there seem to be some Xianbei sites in Chinese territory. However, sites and artifacts from the Pre-Tuque period, tentatively dated around the 5th century, are beginning to appear little by little in Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz, and Altai.

Concerning the Tuque and Uyghur periods, although scattered stone statues and stone enclosures are showing up in Altai, Kazakhstan, Xinjiang, and Mongolia, no one can come to any agreement about their significance, much less their date and origin. While the survey of qaghan-class Tuque mausolea and Uyghur palaces is going forward bit by bit, Uyghur urban sites, like the capital city of Harbalgas, remain vir-

tually untouched.<sup>4</sup>

There are Parhae (Bohai)-related sites standing astride northeastern China and the Russian Maritime Region; and recently a team of Japanese have taken the lead in surveying the latter. Although China and North and South Korea become excited whenever encountering the possibility of incorporating Parhae into their national history schemes, it is ironic that most of the actual research is being pioneered by Russian and Japanese scholars.

While it cannot be said that sufficient progress is being made in the study of the Liao (Qidan) period, the research on the Mongol period through mainly surveys of urban sites is going forward splendidly [Erdenebat and Pohl 2005]. Meanwhile, the work on medieval period sites throughout Central Asia, which was temporarily suspended after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, is being gradually revived.

Given the above situation characterized by research on some periods progressing, while the study of others falls behind, definite limits have been imposed on efforts to improve our understanding of the overall archeological picture of Central Eurasia, which is of course our ultimate task. In Japan a volume ambitiously entitled *The Archaeology of Central Eurasia* edited by Fujikawa Shigehiko was published in 1999, but today the work is not only in serious need of extensive revision, but is also missing chapters dealing with the oasis sector of the region. In Russia, about half of the 20-volume series *Arkheologiya SSSR*, which began publication during the Soviet era, deals with Central Eurasia, and publication is continuing under the simplified title *Arkheologiya*.

Turning finally to various issues facing the field today, the reader should not be surprised to find out that archeologists are being confronted with the same problems as everyone else connected with the region: namely, nationalism, environmentalism, religious strife, and regional security. Let us take the Russian sector of the Altai Republic as an example. Like the British Museum, which is being pressed by such countries as Greece and Egypt to return the cultural properties taken out of those countries by explorers and the like, in Russia, the female mummy which was discovered in 1991 during the Frozen Tomb Excavation in the Altai Mts. of the Soviet Union and became known to almost every citizen of the Altai Republic as “the Princess of Ukok” is gradually approaching national sainthood,<sup>5</sup> in a movement led by a group of shamans which rose to public attention after the fall of socialism.<sup>6</sup> The group is insisting that the great earthquake that shook the republic in 2003 was the result of the “Princess” being taken out of Altai by Natal’ya V. Polos’mak and that the mummy should be returned from the Russian Academy of Sci-

ences IAE Museum in Novosibirsk, where it is on display, back to its original tumulus burial chamber. There are also those who are threatening to allow no more excavation projects in Altai unless the mummy is returned.

In response, IAE deputy director V. I. Molodin stated that the mummy would be returned on the condition that a new museum be built for it in the Altai Republic, insisting that reburial in the tumulus would be out of the question and adding that the fate of the mummy should be discussed on a national level, since it is ultimately a cultural property of Russia [Molodin 2010].<sup>7</sup> In addition, a moratorium on the excavation of frozen tombs is being called for, out of fear about melting due to global warming.

Barriers to excavation do not stop there. In 2009, when the author was participating in an excavation in the Altai Republic [G. V. Kubarev et al. 2009], an environmental protection group from the nearby town came to the site and demanded that the excavation work be immediately stopped on the grounds of its detrimental environmental effects. In response, the leaders of the dig went to the local assembly to persuade the authorities to allow the project to continue. They explained that upon completion of the excavation work, the stone mound would be returned to its original condition<sup>8</sup> and that all debris and human waste would be buried in a single location. They also argued that the project aimed at contributing to a better understanding of the historical background of the ancestors of the Altai people. These assurances persuaded the local authorities to allow the project to continue.<sup>9</sup> It should also be mentioned here that the damage caused to archeological sites by thieves is another very serious issue.

These problems are by no means limited just to the Altai Republic, but pandemic in Central Eurasia, or anywhere else archeological field surveys are conducted.<sup>10</sup> After all, despite a preoccupation with antiquity, the field of archeology and its practitioners have to conduct their research activities as actors in the real world.

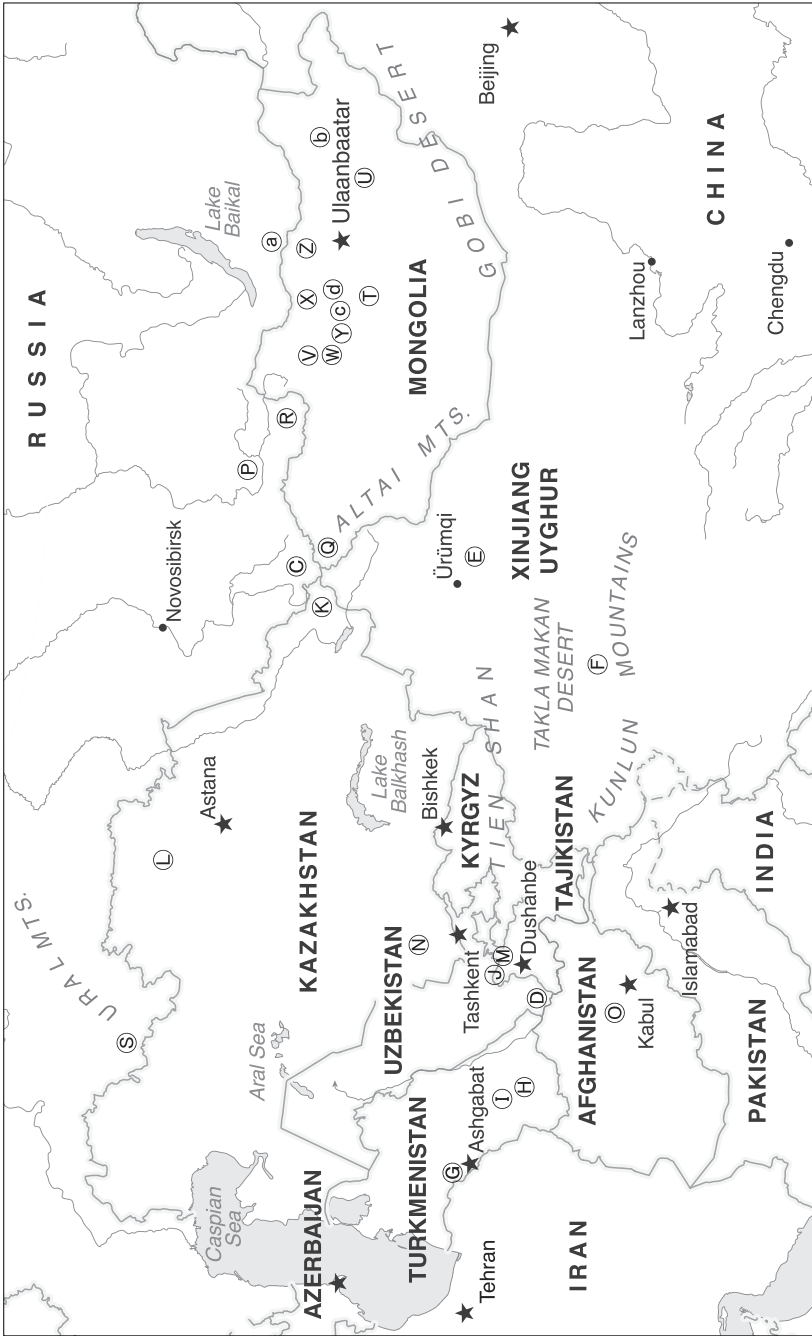
—Originally written in Japanese

## NOTES

- 1 The region of Central Eurasia is essentially a territory stretching from the Carpathian Basin, northern Pontic Region, and Northern Caucasus in the west to Tibet, the Hexi Corridor, Ordos and the Yinshan Moun-

tains of northern China, and Manchuria to the east. Due to the author's field of expertise, the present review will concentrate on the steppe sector of the region more than the oasis sector.

- 2 Passing away in 2011.
- 3 Let it be noted here that a dispute currently exists among Mongolian archeologists over the independence of the new institute, and let researchers from foreign countries be warned not to get involved.
- 4 DAI has begun surveys in Harbargas.
- 5 From an archeologist's point of view, the frozen tomb excavated at Pazyryk produced artifacts that clearly indicate a bona fide royal tomb, while those discovered in the Ukok tomb indicate an inhabitant not belonging to the highest echelon of society and thus not deserving the title of "princess."
- 6 The people of the republic referred to ethnically as "Altai" were not Islamized like the country's Kazakh people, nor were they converted to Buddhism like the Tuva people.
- 7 This is the same reasoning given by the British Museum to Greece and Egypt in refusing their demands for what the institution defines as "world heritage cultural properties."
- 8 During the Soviet era, excavation sites were left open and in disrepair.
- 9 The extreme recession of the waters of the Aral Sea, which is cited as the worst environment problem in Central Asia, has ironically exposed the remains of a 14th century medieval city on the lake bottom, indicating that the lake's waters had at that time also receded due to human and/or natural causes.
- 10 Another example is that of American anthropologist Victor Mair, whose DNA analysis of a mummy found in a grave at Xiaohe Cemetery on the eastern edge of Tarim Basin, Xinjiang dated between 2000 and 1500 BC has become caught in the middle of a dispute between a Uyghur group that insists the find is of Uyghur ancestral origin and the Chinese government, which remains in denial [Pringle 2010].



Map of the Sites Related to this Report



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