

they moved to cities, but bedouins did not. Bedouins were not self-sufficient, so they had to trade with cities or conquer them, but the situation for nomads was more complicated. Nomads at the tribal level and sedentary people at the village level were self-sufficient except during plagues and famines. However, unlike bedouins, nomads had a third option, the forest. Nomads could build forest-steppe empires, and sedentarize only in extreme situations. However, when the Arabs settled down, they could reach a “higher cultural level” (393).

This is a thought-provoking article which deserves wide discussion. I will confine myself to a few tentative remarks. I distrust notions of “higher” and “lower” cultural levels. Certainly, Thomas Allsen and others have shown that the Mongols, who created the largest and most successful Eurasian nomadic empire in history, created their own material imperial culture. The Rus’ lived in the forest, where their cities were located, so the distinction between forest and city that Zimonyi seems to

be espousing might require qualification. I would suggest that the difference between Inner Asian empires and the bedouin/Arab empire is that the founders of the former, including Chinggis, like the bedouin, did not found a religion, but Muhammed did. This contrast may have been more important than the geographic factors that Zimonyi adumbrates.

Clearly, the question Zimonyi raises in his final article further illustrates the premise of the anthology, that the history of Eurasian nomads sheds light on the history of the sedentary societies surrounding the steppe.

Medieval Nomads in Eastern Europe: Collected Studies is a first-rate collection of articles by a first-rate scholar. Everyone in Inner Asian studies should be familiar with István Zimonyi’s publications. One hopes that this anthology will make it more convenient for scholars in Inner Asian studies to access his research.

- Charles J. Halperin

Christoph Baumer and Mirko Novák, eds.
Urban Cultures of Central Asia from the Bronze Age to the Karakhanids: Learnings and Conclusions from New Archaeological Investigations and Discoveries. Proceedings of the First International Congress on Central Asian Archaeology Held at the University of Bern, 4-6 February 2016. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019 x + 464 pp.

This richly illustrated volume, published by Harrassowitz Verlag, represents the proceedings of an international conference held in Bern in 2016. The conference, jointly organized by the Society for the Exploration of EurAsia (Switzerland) and the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the University of Bern, brought together thirty-five archaeologists who work in different countries of Central Asia.

The twenty-six conference papers are organized according to modern political geography into four sections encompassing five countries that were formerly Soviet republics: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. The

boundaries of prehistoric and historic cultures and modern political borders rarely coincide, and the latter often prevent scholars from obtaining a broader perspective. However the editors’ intention in this case was to offer an opportunity to see a cross-section of much of the current research.

The origins and characteristics of urbanism, urban places, and the associated problem of the origins of the state in prehistoric times are issues that have attracted scholarly attention for well over a century. The development of archaeological research in Central Asia certainly provides a good basis for discussion of similar issues from a regional perspective. However, it is still difficult to define an individual archaeological site (not only Central Asian) as an urban or non-urban settlement because the size, form, and function of cities vary among different traditions, as well as within individual past urban traditions. Some scholars, including F.T. Hiebert and Ph.L.Kohl, have even questioned the application of the concept of urbanism in Central Asia. Hiebert (1992: 111) suggests that a special, regionally specific definition of urbanism should instead be used for Central Asia,

while Kohl (2007: 10-14) encourages rejection of neo-evolutionary approaches and the reconsideration of whether the terms “urban” or “city” can even apply to the Inner Eurasia and Central Asia of the early periods.¹ Others have adopted a new definition of cities based on their social impact. This “functional” approach is also present in some of papers of the present volume.

It is impossible to discuss in detail all (or even most of) the papers within the limitations of this review. Instead, I will highlight some of the papers that caught my attention, with a focus on those that deal with a constant in the history of Central Asia: the political and cultural interplay between nomadic and settled peoples.

In the section titled “Turkmenistan,” L. B. Kircho provides an overview of the results of many years of archaeological excavation at Altyn-Depe (“Altyn-Depe. The Formation of the Earliest Urban Centre in Central Asia,” pp. 9-28), a settlement that certainly merits the designation “city” even in the canonical sense. The author focuses on two stages in the formation of the first real urban center in the region, which took place during the Late Eneolithic and the Early Bronze Age. The next paper, by N. Dubova (“Gonur Depe – City of Kings and Gods, and the Capital of Margush Country (Modern Turkmenistan): its Discovery by Professor Victor Sarianidi and Recent Finds,” pp. 29-54), summarizes the major discoveries at Gonur and presents anthropological data obtained during the excavations of the Gonur cemetery. This information, together with the report on a large-scale magnetometer survey by C. Hübner, M. Novák and S. Winkelmann (“The Swiss IAW-EurAsia Project on Urban Development and Land Use in Gonur

¹ See Fredrik T. Hiebert, “The Oasis and City of Merv (Turkmenistan),” *Archeologie Islamique* 3 (1992): 111-27; and Philip L. Kohl, *The Making of Bronze Age Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

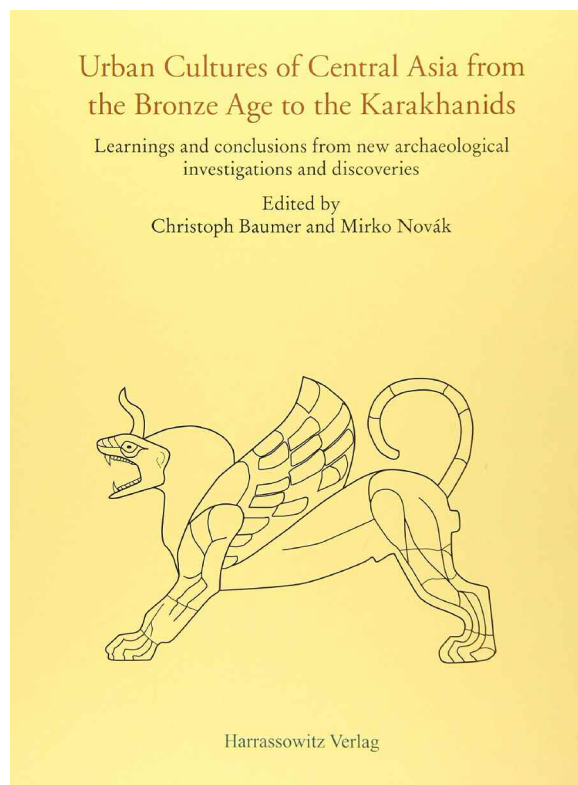
Depe (Turkmenistan): A Geo-Magnetic Survey,” pp. 55-62), will be crucial to any attempt to diagnose the socio-political structure of the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC) and to our understanding of the function of Gonur itself. The end of Bronze Age culture saw an intensification of contacts with the steppe cultures—a topic discussed by B. Cersasetti et al. (“Bronze and Iron Age Urbanisation in Turkmenistan: Preliminary Results from the Excavation of Togolok 1 on the Murghab Alluvial Fan,” pp. 63-72).

In the section titled “Uzbekistan,” J. Lhuillier (“The Settlement Pattern in Central Asia during the Early Iron Age,” pp. 115-28) sheds light on the possible

mobility of Iron Age village populations (Dzharkutan and Burgut Kurgan) and their interactions with steppe pastorals. In the same section, F. Kidds and S. Stark (“Urbanism in Antique Sogdiana? A View from the Bukhara Oasis,” pp. 163-84) discuss the antique period of Bukhara, “an oasis without cities,” and suggest the necessity of reconceptualizing traditional dichotomies (e.g., urban vs. rural, sedentary vs. nomadic, center vs. periphery) in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of pre-modern Central Asian society. The data collected during many years of re-

search from the Uzbek-Italian Expedition in an oasis south of Samarkand allows S. Mantellini to posit complex interactions between the city of Samarkand and its surroundings (“Urbanscape vs. Landscape, or Urbanscape as Landscape? A Case from Ancient Samarkand (Sogdiana),” pp. 185-202).

Delving further into the complexities of Central Asian urbanism, F. Maksudov’s et al. in-depth paper (“Nomadic Urbanism at Tashbulak: A New Highland Town of the Karakhanids,” pp. 283-306) considers unique features of the Karakhanid city of Tashbulak, which is situated high in the Malguzar Mountains of eastern Uzbekistan. Just like lowland



cities of the Karakhanid period, Tashbulak consists of a two-part citadel, *ribāt*, and necropolis. However, the lack of a residential quarter, according to the authors, suggests that Tashbulak served as a political and craft center and functioned as a site of religious identity for the nomadic population.

The third section, titled “Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan,” contains reports on various field projects. Some of them have very little to do with the theme of urban culture.

In the fourth and final section, G. L. Bonora presents and discusses some results of new and old research in the Inner Syr Darya Delta (“Inner Syr Darya Delta Archaeological Sites during the Second Half of the 1st Millennium BCE: An Analysis of the Settlement Pattern,” pp. 387-402). Based on the

demographic/sociological definition of urbanism, the author concludes that none of the large and complex settlements of the Chirik Rabat culture (Chirik Rabat, Babish Mulla, Balandy, and Sengir Tam) could be considered as an urban center—an opinion with which not all scholars will agree. K.M. Baipakov (“Kuiryktobe: The Site of Ancient Keder,” pp. 403-14) presents the site of Kuiryktobe, which is identified with the medieval town of Keder. The excavation on the citadel and on the *shahristan* of Kuiryktobe indicate that from the 7th century the settlement functioned as the regional urban center.

All told, the volume is a welcome contribution to Central Asian urbanism studies.

- Barbara Kaim

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