

The

Silk Road

OFFPRINT



Volume 9

2011

ISSN 2152-7237 (print)
ISSN 2153-2060 (online)

The **Silk Road**

Volume 9

2011

Contents

From the Editor's Desktop	3
The Brunei Shipwreck: A Witness to the International Trade in the China Sea around 1500, by Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens	5
Zoroastrian Funerary Beliefs and Practices Known from the Sino-Sogdian Tombs in China, by Judith A. Lerner	18
The Painted Vase of Merv in the Context of Central Asian Pre-Islamic Funerary Tradition, by Matteo Compareti	26
New Evidence on Cultural Relations in Northeastern Iran in the Parthian Period: Results of Archaeological Excavations at Dibaj Damghan, by Mahnaz Sharifi	42
The Chaoyang Northern Pagoda. A Photo Essay, by Daniel C. Waugh	53
The Azerbaijan Museum in Tabriz, by Gholamreza Yazdani, Mina Ranjbar, Abdalreza Hashtroudilar	71
Museums in Afghanistan - A Roadmap into the Future (with an appendix on Samangan/ Takht-e Rostam), by Alessandro Califano	88
The Frontier Fortification of the Liao Empire in Eastern Transbaikalia, by Andrei V. Lunkov, Artur V. Kharinskii, Nikolai N. Kradin, Evgenii V. Kovychev	104
Early Contacts between Scandinavia and the Orient, by Gunilla Larsson	122
Maps of the Xiongnu Cemetery at <i>Tamiryn Ulaan Khoshuu</i>, <i>Ogii nuur</i>, Arkhangai Aimag, Mongolia, by David E. Purcell	143

(continued)

"The Bridge between Eastern and Western Cultures"

Up from the Ice – a Look at Dress in the Iron Age Altai,

by Irene Good 146

Reviews

New Turns on the Silk Road [Golden, *Central Asia in World History*; Liu, *The Silk Road in World History*; Liu and Shaffer, *Connections across Eurasia*], rev. by Jennifer Webster 154

"...Full of Sound and Fury..." [Flërov, "Goroda" i "zamki" *Khazarskogo kaganata* / "Cities" and "Castles" of the Khazarian Kaganate], rev. by Daniel C. Waugh 156

L. F. Nedashkovskii. *Zolotoordynskie goroda nizhnego Povolzh'ia i ikh okruza* [Cities of the Golden Horde in the Lower Volga River Region and Their Periphery], rev. by Daniel C. Waugh 159

The Gray Eminence of Kashgar Speaks [N. F. Petrovskii. *Turkestanskii pis'ma* (Turkestan Letters)], rev. by Daniel C. Waugh 162

The Spillings Hoard in the Gotlands Museum, rev. by Daniel C. Waugh 165

Book notices (written/compiled by Daniel C. Waugh): 170

Lev Rafailovich Kontsevich. *Khronologiiia stran Vostochnoi i Tsentral'noi Azii* [Chronology of Far Eastern and Central Asian Countries].

Steven E. Sidebotham. *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route*.

Anālayo. *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal*.

Iu. I. Elikhina. *Kul'ty osnovnykh bodhisattv i ikh zemnykh voploshenii v istorii i iskusstve buddizma* [The cults of the main bodhisattvas and their terrestrial reincarnations in the history and art of Buddhism].

Christoph Baumer. *China's Holy Mountain. An Illustrated Journey into the Heart of Buddhism*.

The National Museum of China. [Ed. Lu Zhangshen].

Matteo Compareti. *Samarcanda Centro del Mondo. Proposte di*

Lettura del Ciclo Pittorico di Afrāsiyāb [Samarkand the Center of the World. A Proposed Reading of the Pictorial Cycle of Afrasiab].

Rus' i Vostok v IX – XVI vekakh. Novye arkheologicheskie issledovaniia / Rus and the Peoples of the East in the 9th-16th Centuries: New Archaeological Research.

Vladimir Iur'evich Koval'. *Keramika Vostoka na Rusi IX–XVII veka* [Oriental Ceramics in Rus' 9th-17th Centuries].

Finbarr B. Flood. *Objects of Translation. Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*.

Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi. *The History of Beyhaqi: The History of Sultan Mas'ud of Ghazna, 1030-1041*.

Xiongnu Archaeology. Multidisciplinary Perspectives of the First Steppe Empire in Inner Asia. Ed. Ursula Brosseder and Bryan K. Miller.

Mongolian-German Karakorum Expedition. Volume 1. Excavations in the Craftsmen Quarter at the Main Road. Ed. Jan Bemmann, Ulambayar Erdenebat, and Ernst Pohl.

Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology, 4 (2009), ed. Judith A. Lerner, Lilla Russell-Smith.

Literature and History of the Western Regions, 5 (2011). Ed. Zhu Yuqi.

Unpublished dissertations 186

Youn-mi Kim. "Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos: The Chaoyang North Pagoda (1043-1044)."

Lu Jing. "Liao Ceramics between 907 AD and 1125 AD in Northern China."

Catrin Kost. "Auf der Suche nach Identität. Bildpraxis im nordchinesischen Steppenraum vom 5. Jahrhundert vor Christus bis zur Zeitenwende" [In search of Identity. Pictorial Praxis in the Northern Chinese Steppe Region from the 5th century BCE to the beginning of the Common Era].

Cover photo: Uppland runestone U 654, Varpsund, Övergrans sn., Sweden, raised by the sons of "Gunnleifr, their father, who was killed in the east with Ingvar...He could steer a cargo-ship well." Photo copyright © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

The Silk Road is an annual publication of the Silkroad Foundation supplied in a limited print run to libraries. We cannot accept individual subscriptions. Each issue can be viewed and downloaded free of charge at: <<http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/toc/newsletter.html>>. The print version contains black and white illustrations; the online version uses color. Otherwise the content is identical. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or contributions. Information regarding contributions and how to format them may be found on the website at <<http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/newsletter/vol8/SilkRoadinstructionsforauthors.pdf>>. It is very important to follow these guidelines, especially in the matter of citations, when submitting articles for consideration.

The Silkroad Foundation
14510 Big Basin Way # 269
Saratoga, CA 95070

Editor: Daniel C. Waugh
dwaugh@u.washington.edu

All mailings concerning the journal (this includes books for review) should be sent to the editor at his postal address: Daniel Waugh, Department of History, Box 353560, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195 USA. It is advisable to send him an e-mail as well, informing him of any postings to that address.

© 2011 Silkroad Foundation

© 2011 by authors of individual articles and holders of copyright, as specified, to individual images.

The online version of *The Silk Road*, Vol. 9 is at: <http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/newsletter/vol9/srjournal_v9.pdf>.

“...Full of Sound and Fury...”

V. S. Flërov. “*Goroda*” i “*zamki*” *Khazarskogo kaganata. Arkheologicheskaja real’nost’* [“*Cities*” and “*Castles*” of the Khazarian Kaganate. The Archaeological Reality]. Moskva: Mosty kul’ tury; Jerusalem: Gersharim, 2011. 264 p. ISBN 978-5-93273-333-0.

Shakespeare’s words (*Macbeth*, Act V) are an apt characterization for this provocative book by one of the leading archaeologists working on the Khazars, even if the rest of *Macbeth*’s gloomy reaction to the news of his wife’s death and his own impending doom (“signifying nothing”) certainly does not apply here. The book expands on an article the author published in 2005, which, in the view of one critic, was “too pessimistic” in its conclusions. In what is largely a review of the existing scholarship, not an attempt to flesh out alternative interpretations, Valerii Sergeevich Flërov states his main point bluntly: “There were no cities in the Khazar kaganate” (p. 10). The reality of archaeological evidence to date simply does not support assertions that there were. He is unsparing in his criticism of any who would argue otherwise; at times the veneer of civility we might hope for in academic discourse wears rather thin.

He is careful to indicate that in its original meaning, “*gorod*” in Russian (which in English may be rendered “city” or “town”) referred merely to a settlement surrounded by some kind of wall irrespective of what the structures or planning were within or the occupation of the inhabitants. His understanding of the way the term is now used incorporates socio-economic factors and attention to the nature of the architecture, even if he shies away from a clear definition of his own. That is, the concept of city is connected with some understanding that the urban environment is different from that of an encampment or village. If to apply this term to certain Khazar settlement sites is inappropriate, so also are some of the other terms used for them by scholars and popularizers: “*zamok*” (castle) has connotations specific to the medieval West; “*proto-gorod*” is an obfuscation that is meaningless, and so on. Eventually Flërov finds acceptable a term used by Boris Nikolaevich

Zakhoder in his admirable study of the “Caspian compendium” of early Islamic sources on Eastern Europe — “sizeable inhabited place” (*krupnoe naselënnoe mesto*) — as a descriptive term for the *gorodishche* (“hillforts”; more generally “tells” or mounds) of Khazaria, many of which are distinguished by stone or brick defensive walls.

If the book were only about terminology, it would perhaps signify very little, but as Flërov correctly insists, descriptive terms carry meaning which may reflect particular interpretive stances and thus may have a substantial impact on the formulation of research questions and on an objective understanding of the results. What he is asking us to do here is re-consider what we “thought we knew” about Khazaria in order that we may arrive at a clearer understanding of its socio-economic and political realities. If readers of this journal may wonder why they should pay attention to this subject, they should remember that between the 7th and 10th centuries, the Khazar polity occupied areas of western Eurasia that were linked in important ways to the “Silk Road.” Whether the Khazars played as important a role in the Silk Road trade as many have argued is one of the questions Flërov addresses.

Some background here on the archaeology of Khazaria is necessary for an appreciation of the book. As a field of study, Khazar archaeology really began with Mikhail Ivanovich Artamonov’s excavations in the Don River basin in the 1930s, the most prominent of which came to focus on Sarkel, in a salvage operation to study it before it was inundated by the rising water of the Tsimliansk reservoir. Sarkel is of particular interest since the construction of its brick fort is documented and dated in Byzantine sources (the work was supervised by a Byzantine military engineer at the behest of the Khazar ruler in the 830s), and its destruction by the Rus’ in 965 is documented in the earliest Russian annals. Thus, we have written proof that it is a Khazar site and can correlate archaeological evidence with specific historical events.

More broadly in the Don basin, archaeological survey and excavation, notably by one of Artamonov’s most capable students, Ivan Ivanovich Liapushkin, revealed that Sarkel was only one of several sites from the Khazar period with masonry fortifications and specific artifacts

(especially certain kinds of pottery) which defined the “Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture,” named after two of the most prominent sites. Several of these sites were located on the forest-steppe boundary at points where there could have been significant north-south communication along the river routes. In the absence of other archaeological evidence which can be specifically defined as coming from inhabitants of the broader Khazar polity, the Saltovo-Maiatskaia cultural complex, even if it seems to have been specific to only one group within multi-ethnic Khazaria, remains the generally accepted indicator of “Khazarian” occupation.

Another of Artamonov’s students, Svetlana Aleksandrovna Pletnëva, added substantially to the evidence about the Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture, in part by carrying out extensive survey archaeology and excavation along various tributaries of the Don, and in part through her detailed analysis of the ceramic finds from Sarkel which she determined were characteristic of that culture. She summarized this work in an important monograph, *From Nomadic Camps to Cities: The Saltovo-Maiatskaia Culture (Ot kochevii k gorodam: Saltovo-Maiatskaia kul’tura)*, published in 1967 in the distinguished series *Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR*. When Artamonov died, he left the yet unpublished parts of the Sarkel excavation archive in her care; when she eventually organized the material, she produced what remains the best summary of what we know about that site in her 1996 book, *Sarkel and the “Silk” Road (Sarkel i “Shelkovyi” put’)*. Until her death in 2008 at age 82, she was the doyenne of Khazar archaeology and a figure to be reckoned with.

While Flërov explicitly states his respect for Pletnëva’s many contributions to the field, to a considerable degree his philippics are directed against her, to the point that one suspects a certain personal animosity. All in all, his book ends up being a kind of *damnatio memoriae*. His concerns are much deeper than whether or not (as seems to have been the case) she used the term “city” loosely in her work and, if anything, seemed to invest it with greater significance as time went on. That is, she moved from a somewhat cautious application of the term to an insistence that it defined prominent Khazar settlements.

Her treatment of Sarkel is a case in point. In her 1967 book it was listed as one of the few Khazar “cities”; in her 1996 book curiously she used the term sparingly and in fact seemed little concerned about trying to convince the reader the site had all the characteristics one might associate with urbanization from any modern definition. Yet only a few years later, in a paper (which I have not seen) intended to promote discussion of urbanization in Khazaria, she seems to have come down firmly on the side of designating Sarkel and several other Khazar settlements by that term.

The more substantial questions here include the fact that her *From Nomadic Camps to Cities* frames the discussion of historical development in Khazaria in a scheme (in part derived from Marxist dogma about historical stages) that posits an inexorable “progress” from “pure nomadism” to “semi-nomadism” to “sedentarism.” Thus she argued that in the Khazar case one could see all three stages beautifully illustrated by the artifacts of the Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture. Cities had to be there at the end of the line; of course this then might mean discerning formal architectural features one might associate with cities, finding evidence of “planning,” and arguing that evidence about craft production — notably pottery kilns and smitheries — indicated the existence of specialized socio-economic features we would associate with an urban center. One important conclusion in her book on Sarkel was her identification of two structures adjoining the citadel within the fortress as caravan-sarais. Given the paucity of other archaeological evidence about long-distance trade (there is some), this hypothesis (and it is little more than that) was important in her argument the fortress was intended to serve as a customs post along key trade routes. Pletnëva was not alone in arguing that there was evidence of the Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture in Alan sites in the northern Caucasus; indeed, the movement of the Alans through the Don basin is one of the main explanations for that culture’s emergence. And she includes at least peripherally in her overview of cities in Khazaria, the Byzantine towns of the Crimea — even if they did not owe their origins to the Khazars, their architecture to some degree may have been influenced by their Khazar overlords.

Flërov seems to accept the premise that at least for now the Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture is “Khazar,” but he casts doubt on whether Pletněva has proven either its connection with the fortress culture of the Alans in Dagestan or its presence in the Byzantine towns of the Crimea (whose designation as “goroda” he does not question). The critical issue then is whether any of the *gorodishcha* such as Sarkel qualify to be called towns. To Flërov, beyond the forts themselves — mere refuges — there is nothing about the settlements to suggest they were any different from agricultural villages — same kind of architecture, same absence of urban planning, same minimal presence of crafts which might be found anywhere. Pletněva’s “caravan-sarais” were probably merely storage areas for the fort (an assertion for which Flërov has no evidence whatsoever). Quite simply, there is nothing in the archaeological record to date to support an argument about urbanization. Only to a limited degree here does Flërov introduce any new material from his or others’ excavations; his is primarily a reinterpretation of what Pletněva and others have already uncovered and described. While he has some specific excurses — for example on whether “herringbone” masonry (*opus spicatum*) is evidence for her assertions — his *modus operandi* often is merely selective quotation: from those he criticizes, passages that condemn them in their own words, and, from those he approves, their statements that one or another site is not a city.

If then these small settlements or hillforts can be so readily dismissed, what about the Khazar capital, Itil, which is described in some detail in several written sources as being large and impressive? Flërov has reservations about the written evidence, but by no means simply discards it. His main point (and one with which Pletněva at least in her earlier work would not have disagreed) is that to date the remains of Itil have not been securely identified. Thus there is no archaeological material whatsoever to test whether the picture of the written sources is accurate. In recent years, E. D. Zilivinskaia has been the main proponent of the view that the very large site of Samosdel’skaia in the Volga River delta is the location of Itil, but the excavations to date have not reached a “Khazar layer” and

may not be able to (even if there is one), given the high water table. Skepticism about Zilivinskaia’s conclusions is widespread.

It is perhaps ironic that Pletněva began her path-breaking 1967 monograph by indicating that even Artamonov had brought to bear little archaeological evidence for broader interpretations of Khazar history (she later said the opposite in her 1996 book). The crux of Flërov’s critique of existing work on the Khazars is exactly this. That is, interpretations now often widely accepted bear no relationship to archaeologically documented facts, even if in the intervening decades a lot more archaeological evidence has accumulated. The task then is to eschew pre-conceived interpretive schemes and avoid misleading terminology at the same time that much more and more careful archaeological work must be undertaken. Who could disagree? As to what that work might involve, he is both sensibly concrete and fanciful. On the fanciful end, while anyone might agree it is desirable that more work be done at an important site such as Sarkel, it seems a little unlikely that any time in the foreseeable future the silting of the reservoir in which it sits will proceed to the point that the dam will be removed and excavations be resumed once the layers of accumulated silt have been peeled away. He is more sensible in his call for further survey work, pointing out that we need to know much more about the areas around some of the “sizeable inhabited places.” Here he throws in another dig at Pletněva, mentioning that in one area she surveyed supposedly intensively, a local enthusiast has identified at least twenty additional sites she missed. Flërov is undoubtedly right that many excavations even today are not always carried out with precision — he cites as an example the treatment of ceramics evidence, where Artamonov’s laudatory documenting of the exact position of each sherd has not always been emulated. Moreover (and this is hardly a new phenomenon in archaeology worldwide), analysis of finds has lagged behind their discovery. Yes, he points out, not only were the finds properly recorded, but Pletněva published a pioneering analysis of the Sarkel ceramics. Should we be satisfied with her results? Predictably, Flërov’s answer is no — the work probably should be re-done.

Insofar as Flërov has developed his own larger interpretive scheme of Khazar history, its important points are these. The originally “nomadic” Khazars very quickly settled when they occupied the territories of the lower Volga, Don and north Caucasus. The main characteristic of the Khazar socio-economic order then was settled agriculture, and those “sizeable inhabited places” were agricultural settlements no different from small villages in any agricultural society. Trade there was, but it did not occupy a more important place for the Khazars than in many other such societies; in fact it may have been less important for them than amongst some of their neighbors (Byzantium, the Abbasid Caliphate). Quite simply, given the limited nature of its socio-economic development, the absence of cities in Khazaria can be explained by the fact there was no need for them. Flërov does introduce into his discussion at least one important comparative example – that of the early Bulgarian royal residence sites – but his point in doing so is simply to reinforce his interpretation about the “non-city” nature of even the Khazar capital Itil. A seasonal royal camp, perhaps, but little more.

Flërov has carefully positioned himself so that he does not feel compelled to prove any of

this – that is, by his lights he is merely doing a historiographical review. According to the current guru of Khazar studies, V. Ia. Petrukhin, whose imprimatur on the book is in his laudatory afterword, Flërov is not only the pre-eminent authority today on Khazar settlements but also the coordinator of a collective project to document them. That said, Flërov is casually dismissive of arguments about trade in Khazaria, happy to leave to numismatists and others examination of such issues. He has found no reason to cite (even if he as read it) any of the non-Russian literature on Khazaria, including the important recent work by Thomas Noonan and Roman Kovalev dealing with the Khazar economy, work which makes a very strong case for the importance of trade (at the same time that it admits the importance of other aspects of economic activity). Clearly to insist that we look only at the hard evidence of archaeological digs within Khazaria itself will perforce limit our understanding of its history. That said, if Flërov’s book stimulates more and better archaeology in Khazaria, it will have served a valuable purpose.

– Daniel C. Waugh

L. F. Nedashkovskii. *Zolotoordynskie goroda nizhnego Povolzh'ia i ikh okruga* [Cities of the Golden Horde in the Lower Volga River Region and Their Periphery]. Moskva: Izdatel'skaia firma “Vostochnoi literatury” RAN, 2010. 351 pp. + illustrations. ISBN 978-5-02-036352-6.

Leonard Fedorovich Nedashkovskii, on the faculty of the Department of Archaeology and Ethnography of the State University of Kazan, has published extensively on the archaeology of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jöchi). A particular focus of his work has been the excavations in and around Uvekskoe, one of the four largest cities of the Horde in the lower Volga region, the territory which is the subject of the book under review. As a detailed compendium of information on the excavations, concerning which much of the material has yet to be published, the book will be an invaluable guide for future research. As a pioneering effort to study not so much the

four main cities themselves but their immediate hinterlands, the book is methodologically important even if, for this reader, the results of the analysis are not likely to change the basic picture of the Horde’s history which can be derived from a reading of published materials based on the extensive archaeological work of recent decades. Of course it is another matter whether that work has yet reached the awareness of those who write more general histories of the Mongols in the West, where the literature has too often been skewed by a selective use of often biased written sources. The archaeological material is an essential complement to the written evidence; taken together they support the conclusion emphasized here by Nedashkovskii that the common perception of a “nomadic economy” is very misleading. Agriculture, urban industries, and local trade were all very important for a polity that played a key role in fostering international trade in Western Asia.

After a compact review of the interpretive and archaeological literature on the Golden Horde (Ch. 1), the author devotes the next 120 pages to a cataloguing of archaeological sites and their finds. While Uvekskoe (in Golden Horde times, Ukek) is treated equally with the other sites in his comparative analysis, he refers to his previously published work for details. Thus, the next 120 pages here focus on three cities and their peripheries: Tsarevskoe, Selitrennoe, and Sharenyi Bugor. Since the evidence from them has been well published, the cities themselves receive only summary treatment (one should consult here in particular the work by G. A. Fëdorov-Davydov). Each section opens with a detailed map of sites (the primary city may be located just off the map), which include settlements of various sizes, "locations" (where there have been small concentrations of finds), burials of various sizes and construction, and coin finds. For each of these categories, there is a summary description, including a list of artifacts. Nedashkovskii groups the burials in systematic categories, the first organizing principle being the orientation of the body; the subcategories relating to grave structure. Since some of the cemeteries were used over long periods of time, the burials may date as far back as the Bronze Age and extend beyond the end of the Mongol Empire. There are summary statistics (where available) for osteological material: different animal species; for human remains, determination of europoid or mongoloid origin. Percentages of burials which follow Islamic practice are specified. Information on the coin finds includes at least the youngest date, and at various points in the later discussion, he mentions specific issues and their provenance. Since the book contains an extensive bibliography both of published reports and specifically listed unpublished excavation records, it would be possible to locate more detailed information for any given site.

Readers with general interests probably would want to begin with Chapter 5 which offers a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the economy of the Golden Horde, albeit one too often reduced to lists of products and crafts. One of the virtues of this chapter is to pull together (and often quote from) a wide range of information on the economy in well-known written sources, which

then provides a framework in which supporting archaeological evidence can be placed. Of particular interest is his extensive citation of Kipchak vocabulary contained in the early 14th-century *Codex Cumanicus*. The archaeological material, illustrated in the first instance by line drawings of objects and tabulations of osteological remains from the author's work at Uvekskoe, is somewhat unevenly correlated with the written material and if anything seems underutilized. There is little in it which really alters our understanding of the economy derived from the written sources alone. Many objects of trade (for example, a great many of the specialized fabrics imported from East and West) have left no trace in the archaeological record, although for other objects, such as ceramics, only the archaeological material can flesh out a detailed picture.

His chronological framework for diachronic comparisons of the various regions is an amalgam of dates based on changes in coinage and on periods of political history. Among the more interesting points in his discussion are: his indication that the wars between Ulus Jöchi and Ilkhanid Iran in the late 14th century did little to interrupt north-south trade; his emphasis on the importance of the monetary reform of Khan Tokhta at the beginning of the 14th century, which unified the monetary system of the Horde and clearly must have contributed to the subsequent decades of prosperity; his reminder in passing that the significant finds of copper coinage point to a monetarized economy (this in contrast to the situation in earlier centuries, where Islamic silver coinage was valued for its weight in precious metal); his evidence for at least a short-term revival of the economy in the reign of Tokhtamysh in the 1380s, following two decades of civil war.

The methodologically innovative part of the book is really confined to what he labels a conclusion, even if in fact it more resembles the introduction to a different book, whose writing may be a long way in the future. Here, relying heavily on maps and various statistical bar and pie graphs, he attempts to say something about the relationship between the few large cities and their peripheries. The elegantly drawn maps highlight "catchment areas" encircling settlements; one can compare the distribution and density of them for different periods. Lacking here is a

clear indication of how certain sites end up being centers of economic zones and others do not, although size of settlement and some perhaps arbitrary definition of how far pre-modern man might range in his local economic activity seem to figure in the calculation. The visual impression of the maps is vivid enough – Uvekskoe in the Saratov region up the Volga is the center of a dense cluster, whereas in the sprawling Volga delta with its countless channels, the centers with significant peripheries were few and separated. The data summarized in the pie charts reinforce this picture, showing a corresponding density (or paucity) of peripheral settlements of any size around the major towns. The bar graphs showing chronological distribution of artifacts largely merely confirm what we know in a more general way about the rise and fall of the Golden Horde, though clearly there is some differentiation from city to city and region to region. The author argues that the different quantities of artifacts are evidence of different degrees of economic importance of particular regions.

Perhaps of greater interest is evidence that may tell us something about social status and ethnic composition of the population, although there really are no surprises here. There seems to have been a high concentration of Golden Horde “aristocracy” in and around Tsarevskoe (arguably the “new Sarai” or Sarai Berke, though this identification and disputes over the location of “Sarai” are not mentioned by the author). The majority of crafts were probably practiced only in the larger towns; smaller locations on the periphery may well be associated with nomadic population that was less sedentarized (the evidence of burials supports this). Craft products of the towns did make it into their peripheries, suggesting that local trade was important. In return, the rural population supplied raw materials. Uvekskoe, the farthest north of

the cities studied here, was the one with the highest concentration of Slavs (“Russians”) and Mordvinians, who may well have been primarily farmers in the area. The considerable emphasis in the book on agricultural activity is important; it would seem that the farmers for the most part in the lower Volga region were the indigenous steppe peoples, who increasingly had converted to Islam by the last half of the 14th century.

The book concludes with a substantial appendix by A. S. Aleshinskaia and E. A. Spiridonova laying out the results of spore and pollen analysis undertaken at several excavations in the Saratov region in 2001 and 2002. In each case, samples were taken from several levels, allowing for comparison of possible changes over time in the vegetation and climate of the site. While these data are as yet slim, there seems to be a correlation with a significant rise the levels of the Caspian Sea which resulted in a damper climate in the adjoining steppe region. At very least here, this material opens the possibility that in the future we may develop a database for the analysis of micro-climates and their change over time.

Where the emphasis on peripheries and catchment areas around major settlements may lead in future research is an open question. Such an approach is, of course, increasingly popular in archaeology today, whether the subject be early nomad sites in Inner Asia or Greek settlements on the Black Sea littoral. It may be, of course, that the lasting value of Nedashkovskii’s book will be in his data summaries and references. Ideally, of course, all that material would be digitized in a GIS-based system, and linked to digital full-text versions of both the published and unpublished excavation reports. Such projects are underway for other parts of the Silk Road, as reported several years ago in this journal.

– Daniel C. Waugh