



Map of Eurasia, showing areas discussed in text. (1) Black Sea maritime world; (2) Kalmykia steppe; (3) Oka River Basin forest zone; (4) Kopet Dag foothill plain; (5) Central Asian desert oasis of Khorezm; (6) Central Eurasian steppe; (7) Tarim Basin desert oases; (8) Djungaria steppe; (9) Altai Mountains.

Map by Ardeth Abrams

# Eurasian Archaeology

by Fredrik T. Hiebert

This issue of *Expedition* highlights recent research in three distinctly different environments of Eurasia: the Black Sea coastal region, the treeless steppe region of Kalmykia north of the Black Sea in southern Russia, and the forest zone of Russia still further north. Increased access to research areas in the former Soviet block, new access to museum collections, and more open communications with foreign colleagues allow us a broad perspective on Eurasia and an opportunity to rethink our approach to these areas on an interregional scale.

The huge landmass of Eurasia challenges us to create a framework that encompasses the development of various cultures across these vast expanses. Wide bands of forest, steppe,

and desert run roughly east and west, punctuated by mountain ranges and large bodies of water; these different environments have each left their distinctive marks on Eurasian cultures. Interactions between these zones must be understood beyond the confines of customary geographical terms such as "Europe," the "Middle East," or "China."

We can see two major axes of human interaction and culture contact from Mongolia to the Black Sea. First, there is a primary east-west axis of interaction within similar ecological zones and settlement types across Eurasia. For example, several cases of mass migration from one part of the steppe to another took place with little shift in economic or cultural behav-

ior. But the east-west corridor provides more than simply room to expand—it has been a conduit of goods and ideas. These connections are not, however, either predictable or persistent through time, in contrast to the interaction along north-south corridors.

Eurasian interaction on a north-south axis has received much less attention from archaeologists and anthropologists than that along the east-west axis. This may be because the north-south axis crosses political boundaries and ecological zones. Though perhaps of low intensity, north-south movements in many areas took place in a regular and predictable fashion, as groups searched out seasonally available food and pasture resources. The nature of north-south interactions may be a critical element underlying cultural connections within Eurasia.

In the east, for example, in modern western China, the desert farming cultures of the Tarim basin, the steppe herders of Djungaria, and the mountain hunters and foragers of southern Siberia developed in relationship to each other during the Bronze and Iron ages (Map: cultures 7–9). This relationship between three ecologically distinct regions was a key factor in the emergence of each culture.

Further west, we are investigating another set of north-south aligned regions and the relationships between them (Map: cultures 4–6). The foothill cultures of southern Turkmenistan, on the northern margin of the greater Near East, developed during the 4th through 2nd millennia BC in relation to sparse deserts to their north. Foothill cities such as Anau spawned colonies in desert oases in Bactria, Margiana, and Khorezm, so these two regions need to be evaluated in terms of each other. Further to the north, in the steppes of the southern Urals, large-scale settlements occurred for the first time in the 3rd millennium BC. We do not completely understand this development on the steppe, but it is important to

include the broader context of the persistent Eurasian interaction between environmental zones as we attempt to understand the changes that are visible to us as archaeologists.

This special section of *Expedition* presents three case studies that in the same way are arrayed along a north-south axis (Map: cultures 1–3): the maritime world of the Black Sea (see Hiebert, this issue); the pastoral world of the Caspian steppe (see Shishlina, this issue); and the hunter-fishermen of the forest zone to the north (see Emel'yanov, this issue). These areas are not contiguous, but the populations in these settlements clearly were aware of the other regions, their resources, and their cultural traditions. These case studies offer a forum for understanding the mediating attributes that help different groups interact.

These papers also demonstrate the rewards of international collaboration. Working in Eurasia necessarily involves working with Russian and other former Soviet archaeologists. It is essential to build an infrastructure that permits this. The University of Pennsylvania Museum, as one of the largest archaeology museums in the United States, finds a comfortable informal partnership with the State Historical Museum in Moscow, the largest archaeology museum in Russia. This collaboration allows scholars and students to work on field projects and with museum collections from each institution. UPM has also participated in an American Association of Museums' exchange program with the Historical Museum of Kazakhstan in Almaty. As the home institution for the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) for the last twelve years, UPM has long been dedicated to facilitating international exchange and research. It is only within the context of such fruitful collaboration that we can move beyond the geographical boundaries of research areas such as Europe, the Middle East, and China, and take a "Eurasian" perspective. 