

The first proto-urban settlement of early Scythian period in the Baraba steppe of Siberia

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In collaboration with Russian and German archaeologists, a first proto-urban settlement of the early Scythian period was discovered near Chichah in the Baraba steppe, about 50 km south of Barabinsk in Siberia. The site had been already found in the late seventies by fieldwalking. Trial excavations revealed pottery and metal finds from the beginning of the early Iron Age (late 8th to 6th century BC). In summer 1999 a magnetic prospection over the whole site and its surroundings was undertaken. Cesium-magnetometry was used in the so-called duo-sensor configuration, to survey the whole area (8 ha) with 0.25x0.5 m spacial resolution. The results processed as a grey shading plot revealed the map of a protourban settlement. The settlement consisted of a citadel and a lower town divided by ditches into 3 districts containing about 100 large pit-dwellings (so-called poluzemlyanki). This shows for the first time that the people of the steppes did not only live in tents as pure nomads during the early Scythian period, but also used well organized protourban centres, which should have existed in other parts of the Eurasian steppe belt as well.