REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS IN BATURYN IN 2003-2004

Last summer the Canada-Ukraine archaeological expedition (2001-04) continued its excavations in Baturyn. This project is sponsored by CIUS’s Kowalsky Program for the Study of Eastern Ukraine, the Shevchenko Scientific Society of America, and the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto. In 2003-04, the Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Historical Research supported research on Baturyn with a donation. Dr. Zenon Kohut, director of CIUS, is the academic adviser of the Baturyn project.

About 70 students and scholars from the universities of Chernihiv, Nizhyn, Luhansk, and the Kyiv Mohyla Academy participated in the excavations. Dr. Volodymyr Kovalenko (University of Chernihiv) is the expedition leader, while Dr. Volodymyr Mezentsev (University of Toronto) participated as the CIUS Research Fellow responsible for the Baturyn project. Prof. Martin Dimnik (Pontifical Institute) has overseen the funding and helps to publicize the expedition’s findings.

Located in the Chernihiv region, Baturyn was the official capital of the Cossack Hetman state in Left-Bank Ukraine in 1669-1708 and 1750-64. The town reached its zenith during the reign of Hetman Ivan Mazepa (1687-1708). In 1708, after Mazepa rebelled against the growing Russian domination of the Hetmanate, Tsar Peter I destroyed Baturyn completely. Tsarist troops massacred its Cossack garrison as well as the civilian population of about 15,000. The town was rebuilt as a capital of the waning Hetmanate during the rule of the last hetman, Kyrylo Rozumovsky (1750-64). However, following the abolition of the Hetmanate by Catherine II in 1764, Baturyn gradually declined.

Only after Ukraine established its independence, excavations of Baturyn became possible, and began in 1995. By 2004, the archaeologists completed excavations of the remnants of the hetman’s central palace in the town’s citadel. It was commissioned by Hetman Demian Mnohohrishny (1669-72) and burned during the Russian attack on Baturyn. Researchers have established that this one story brick structure was 26 by 20 metres in size and had porches (ganok), a central corridor and several rooms or halls with brick flooring and tiled stoves. This palace was likely designed in the Ukrainian or Cossack Baroque style. Its closest extant analogies are the office of the Cossack regiment (1690s) in Chernihiv and the Mazepa Mansion in Kyiv.

Nearby, the team have discovered the foundation trench and the adjacent graveyard of the wooden Resurrection Church. It was endowed by Mazepa in the 1690s and ruined in 1708. Close to the church site, the old well was excavated in 2003. At its bottom, human bones, likely belonging to some casualty of the tragedy of 1708, were revealed.

The expedition excavated the basement walls and foundations of the Kochubei House. This sole surviving architectural monument of seventeenth-century Baturyn was built by Mnohohrishny as a state court house with a jail in the basement. General Judge Vasyl Kochubei, however, turned it into his private residence ca. 1700. The researchers have reconstructed the original plan of the structure and excavated the underground massive brick buttresses, which reinforce each corner of its foundations. This method of supporting the
foundations is a new feature of the hitherto little studied construction techniques of Ukrainian Baroque masonry edifices.

On the site of the fortress, the remnants of five timber dwellings and about 20 storehouses which were burned down apparently during the sack of the Hetman capital were discovered. One skeleton of a victim was found inside of the structure’s ruins.

Within the fortress’s defences, archaeologists unearthed a spacious grain-storage substructure with an area of over 100 sq. metres. They believe that it was the state granary supplying the garrison during the siege, and was looted after the fall of Baturyn. Historical sources also mention large stores of provisions and arms in the Baturyn fortress that were pillaged and burned down by the tsarist army in 1708.

The expedition excavated fragments of the brick foundations of Mazepa’s palace (1700) in the Baturyn suburb of Honcharivka. It was also plundered by Peter’s forces. A 1744 drawing of still-standing façade walls of this palace has been preserved at the National Museum in Stockholm. An analysis of this unique depiction together with archaeological data show that Mazepa’s magnificent palace was 20 by 15 metres in dimension, consisted of three floors with an attic, and a basement. It was the earliest known palace designed and embellished in the Western European Baroque style in Left-Bank Ukraine. The excavations of this structure’s remnants will continue.

The brick footing of one wing of the palace erected by Hetman Rozumovsky in 1799 has also been discovered. This luxurious palatial complex was designed by the famous Scottish architect Charles Cameron in the Classicism style. The two wing buildings were demolished in 1914 and 1930s. The extant main palatial edifice is currently being restored.

In the last two seasons, archaeologists found ten Polish and Russian coins and four neck crosses made of silver and copper as well as many fragments of glass ware and multicoloured glazed ceramic tiles (kakhli) of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries decorating the heating stoves in the palaces and wealthy dwellings. A chemical and spectrum analysis of 56 samples of the Baturyn tiles was conducted at the Institute of Geology of the National Academy of Sciences in Kyiv and the Faculty of Geology at the University of Toronto. The preliminary report on the tests completed in Canada has been published in Ukraine in 2004.

In 2003-04, at the grounds of the fortress and citadel, the expedition excavated 32 graves of inhabitants of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries (the Mazepa era). Thirteen of them—especially those bearing signs of a violent death and the unburied human remains—have been identified as victims of the slaughter of 1708. In total, between 1996 and 2004, archaeologists unearthed 59 graves dated to the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries in Baturyn. Most of them—31 skeletons, mainly of children, women, and elderly men—belonged to the victims of the Muscovite assault on this town.

Thus, the Canada-Ukraine expedition in Baturyn has yielded valuable archaeological materials for exploring the urban development of the capital of the Cossack Hetman state, particularly during its golden age under the rule of Ivan Mazepa. The excavations have also brought to light much new evidence of the total devastation of this distinguished Ukrainian town in 1708.

The expedition plans to continue its field research in Baturyn. For more information on this archaeological project, please contact Dr. Mezentsev (tel.: 416-766-1408; e-mail: v.mezentsev@utoronto.ca).

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