

Being Introduced to Archaeology in Central Asia

HANA KUBELKOVÁ*

Thinking about what would be appropriate to submit as a contribution, I realized that I quite often think about the two excavation seasons that I spent at Monjukli Depe. It was the first time I excavated in this region and I learned a lot. Over time memory fades, but luckily I had a travel diary. The first season, 2013, I managed to write almost every day. The second season, 2014, I have recorded only a few days. Below are translated excerpts of our daily adventures from 2013, I hope you will find it as amusing as I did.

Monjukli Depe – Meana | 2013 | 13. 8. – 12. 9.

I tried to pick parts of the notes where I wrote about you, Susan, or the ones I found particularly amusing.

[...] *After lunch – it was noodles with carrot but sort of baked like plov (great!) – Susan explained to me what will need to be prepared every day and even today for the morning work at the site. I prepared a table into one notebook to be later filled with RNs. Today I managed to prepare at least 300. Then you need to prepare the tags that you put on finds and samples. There I needed to fill the Unit, RN, and Excavators. Then you nicely arrange them so that the numbers are in order and then you fasten the tags together. Oh, and every unit has its own schoolbag that contains all one needs for work. Unfortunately, I will not be going to the site tomorrow either. But after Susan explained to me today what we will be doing and how, more importantly even what with is she going*

to help me for at least the first week, I am no longer so scared. I might be even looking forward to it. (HK, 17.8.2013)

It turned out there were three things I wrote about every day – food, vocabulary, and processes. I wrote down all the processes and methods people explained to me, in case I forgot.

[...] *So today, since morning for the whole day, I was describing spindle whorls. I seem to know what do now. Susan went over what I've done in the afternoon and explained a couple of things to me, but hopefully it was ok. [...] I kept making the same mistakes, so I will have to redo all of it tomorrow. But that's fine.* (HK, 18.8.2013)

I have great difficulty with names anywhere. It was not easier in Meana.

[...] *Well, there is only one guy working with us, whose name I don't remember. No, now I remember it. So, working with us are: Kurbet Murat, Nulus and Shukrat. Susan helped me to remember Shukrat's name – it is like Sokrates.* (HK, 24.8.2013)

Some of the things considered normal were foreign to me. An example of one such event I noted.

[...] *Anyway, the painting on one of the T-buttresses can be traced even further down. I don't really feel like writing about the excavation today because I was writing the Day Notes.*

* Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno (Czech Republic)

To everything that was my idea, Susan added parentheses with just that information. I did not rewrite that into the final version because it was weird. (HK, 26.8.2013)

I frequently wrote down all I could observe about life in Meana, or that someone told me. I found that I wrote quite a lot about a wedding we were invited to. Including a hand-drawn map of the courtyard the event happened in.

[...] The wedding. A wedding here is spectacular, in the original sense of the word. You invite many guests (mostly related to either bride or groom) and you decorate the courtyard (lots of lights like our carnival) and you invite musicians and get a cameraman and a photographer. It is not over in one afternoon but it lasts for a couple of days – usually 2–3 days. We attended the first of those days. There were long tables that consisted of multiple plastic tables pushed together. These stood on one side of the courtyard, basically behind the house. Around were large caldrons where the food was cooked. The food (with meat) was handed around in large buckets with very large ladles. We politely refused this main course because of the meat. Then they brought to our table raw vegetables that were cut (tomatoes and cucumbers from what I was able to see), two types of salad (one with meat and the other one without it), cookies, sweets (Russian: konfetki), a cake – that tasted like a honey cake

but without any nuts – juice, tea, and vodka. We were warned that if we say yes to one shot there will be no end to them afterwards. None of us drank. Later we were invited to dance which took us to the other side of the courtyard, towards the street. The lights were flashing, and it was very loud in there. I took a video. When we were dancing, we received some decorated pieces of cloth. Then we saw the bride and the groom. [...] We took a picture with them. Right after that the bride was throwing her flower bouquet and after that we left. I was asking around a bit and found out that they were not married yet. The party took place at the bride's household. The second day they will celebrate at the groom's household. [...] oh, and the marriages are usually set up. (HK, 5.9.2013)

The following days mostly consisted of us packing and making sure everything is recorded. One day, I had some time on my hands and I wrote down the great poems we had on the glasses and on the thermos in the exact same way they were printed on the containers.

I had a great time going through the travel diary, photos, and listening to the songs that played every day on our little bus to the site.

Dear Susan, I wish you many more excavations that leave people feeling content and interested.



Fresh Flowers

*In fact, sometimes love likes glass cup.
It needs colorful appearance.
Looks like very pure.
Let one's mind disturbed.*

Artcity

*The best partner
Your business
i've learned a thing or two about love it's push
and shovegiving and giving in, giving up
give, give, give but nuthin's givensinnen' is
heavenjust for the hell of itcontradictions, constant
attraction distraction i've learned a thing or two about*