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The First Documentary Evidence for Qara Qorum, from the Year 635/1237-8

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Qara Qorum was the centre of the Mongolian empire. The history of its foundation is clouded by contradictory evidence. All information has come either from later memorial inscriptions or from chronicles written at least decades after the events at different places. Some sources date the origin of the city back to the year 1220. The reason for this early dating lies probably more in the desire to trace the foundation of the imperial centre back to the divine Chinggis Khan.

The earliest dated primary documentary evidence for the existence of Qara Qorum has now been found. It is a [silver coin](#) with the mint name Qarah Qorum (QRH QRM) and struck in the year (6)35 H./1237-8 AD. It is, moreover, the first identified coin of this mint. The date is about two years after the supposed construction works of Ogedai. The Yuanshi reports under the year 1235 that, in spring, the emperor, Ogedai, fortified Qorum and built his famous Wan-An Palace. The mint was probably located in the palace compound. The workshop seems to have been under the control of the Muslim community at the court or in the market.

The coin was found during excavations by the Mongolian Academy of Science and Bonn University/Germany starting in 2000, now under the direction of Uambaja Erdenabat, Ulaan Baatar, and Ernst Pohl, Bonn. It came from a coppersmith's workshop located in the Chinese commercial district. An analysis of this coin will be published in "Beitrag zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie" (in print). The author would be grateful for any further information about coins with the mintname Qorum (QRM) or Qarah Qorum (QRH QRM).

Presently an exhibition in the "Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" in Bonn presents the cultural achievements of the Mongol empire: Dschingis Khan und seine Erben - Das Weltreich der Mongolen. A section on coins is included.

Exhibition: Dschingis Khan und seine Erben - Das Weltreich der Mongolen, 16. June to 25. September 2005, www.kah-bonn.de. Catalogue, 28 Euros.

Forthcoming: The First Documentary Evidence for Qara Qorum, from the year 635/1237-8, by U. Erdenebat - S. Heidemann - H. Kelzenberg - E. Pohl, in: Beiträge zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie (2005) (Forthcoming).

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