

Aerial Archaeology in China: Possibilities, Perspectives and Results

This is a provisional report of the research project entitled "Introduction to Aerial Archaeology in the Peoples Republic of China" at the Department of Pre- and Proto-History of the Ruhr University, Bochum in Germany. The project was started in 1995 with the aim of integrating aerial archaeology as an innovative method in the archaeology and the protection of monuments in China. It is financially sponsored by the "Stiftung Volkswagenwerk" and is based on close cooperation with the Chinese culture authorities and institutions on various different levels.

A research center for remote sensing and aerial archaeology was founded 1997 in China at the National Museum for Chinese History (NMCH) in Beijing. This center has now rooms and equipment for the interpretation of aerial photography, cartography, archives for aerial photography and maps. The fundamental tasks of this center are: 1) to develop and research aerial archaeological methods and technologies; 2) to carry out over-regional projects in cooperation with archaeological institutes and institutions concerned with the preservation of historic buildings and monuments; 3) to support and look after the application of aerial-archaeological methods in certain regions: For example, the placing of work data such as maps an aerial photos, technical support, the training of professionals, etc. into the proper hands.

Parallel to these efforts to institutionalize aerial archaeology, from 1996 to 1997 many ground site projects were done in cer-

tain Chinese provinces to test and to prove exemplary aerial archaeology in actual practice. It was planned by means of this to collect methodical experience in different regions of China with differing climate, soil, vegetative and topographical aspects and not least the archaeological circumstances relating to these sites. This project was planned, prepared and carried out by the Department of Pre- and Proto-History at the Ruhr University, Bochum, in cooperation with the Chinese Ministry for Cultural Assets, the National Museum for Chinese History and relevant provinces.

The first result of these projects showed that the methods of aerial archaeology which have already been proved successful in Europe in carrying out aerial archaeology (with special focus on the discovery of underground archaeological sites), function just as well in China. The results, however provisional, are good for archaeological research and the maintenance of subterranean archaeological sites and especially to help persuade the archaeologists and the authorities for the preservation of monuments in China to use these new and effective methods.

Three selected projects are introduced under their relevant archaeological, methodical and technical aspects. They took place respectively in Linzi, Shandong Province (East China), in Gongyi, Henan Province (Central China) and in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia (North China).

Fig. The City of Zuzhou near Lindong, Inner Mongolia

