1,800 years old tomb group found in central China

A tomb complex likely used by nomadic people to bury their dead was recently discovered in Yinxu archaeological site in Anyang City, Henan Province.

Over 90 tombs were excavated, among which 18 were believed to have been the final resting place of a nomadic group. From soil samples and some of the items unearthed, the tombs are believed to be around 1,800 years old, according to the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Anyang station.

Shen Wenxi, with the station, said evidence has been found that indicates that Dasikong Village, the area where the tombs are located, had been a human settlement since as early as the Shang Dynasty (1600 B.C.-1046 B.C.). The 18 nomadic tombs, which are relatively small and made from brick, were likely built after the Shang Dynasty.

The burial objects include two-handled bronze and iron pots, iron short swords and agate beads on strings — all typical items of nomadic people of the time. Experts believe that the 18 tombs could belong to the northern nomads who settled down in central China.

Among the remains was a well-preserved human skeleton, which was initially confirmed to be a male over 160 cm tall. Anthropologists will test the remains and hopefully shed light on the origins of these nomadic people, said Shen.

In the 1950s, a tomb containing similar burial items was discovered in Dasikong. This discovery, however, was the first time such a large nomadic tomb complex has been discovered in Anyang. Further exploration will continue.

Yinxu, or the Ruins of Yin, is one of China's oldest archaeological sites. Named after the last capital of Shang, the Ruins of Yin was where the earliest written Chinese characters were discovered, etched on bone and tortoise shell.

ESMA statement to ECON Hearing on CRA Regulation

ESMA's statement outlines the work it has undertaken in relation to the Credit Rating Agencies (CRA) Regulation and provides an update on the state

of play on a number of initiatives, these include:

- European Ratings Platform;
- Fees;
- Transparency on structured finance instruments;
- Reducing over-reliance on credit ratings;
- Competition issues;
- Sanctions; and
- the endorsement regime.

Article – World Press Freedom Day: fake news and how to spot it

World Press Freedom Day is marked every year on 3 May, but there is little reason to celebrate as journalists continue to be repressed and persecuted all over the world. The challenges facing the press are discussed by Parliament's human rights subcommittee on Thursday morning, with a special focus on the growing threat of disinformation. Check out our handy guide on how to spot fake news.

The internet has created new opportunities for the media, but it has also made it easier to deliberately spread fabricated news stories to fool readers. Parliament President Antonio Tajani called attention to the issue in a statement: "When we consider press freedom, we also have to look at the internet. It is a source of knowledge as much as it is a source of concern. Almost half of all Europeans get their news from social media. This has made spreading fake news far too easy. There are mounting concerns over disinformation and hate speech, used to promote radicalisation and fundamentalism, particularly among young people."

During the debate on 4 May, members of the human rights subcommittee are to discuss the World Press Freedom index compiled by Reporters without Borders as well the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) activities in the field of media freedom and how the EU is reacting to disinformation and fake news.

Press release – EU-NATO relations: debate with NATO Secretary General

Stoltenberg on Wednesday – Committee on Foreign Affairs – Subcommittee on Security and Defence

EU-NATO cooperation on common challenges such as security, defence, cyber-warfare or migration will be debated by Foreign Affairs and Defence MEPs with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Wednesday at 15.00.

Back in July 2016 the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker respectively, and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg signed a joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation. It enshrines deeper relations between the two organisations on cybersecurity, migration, strategic communication, resilience, situational awareness and response to hybrid threats.

The European Parliament backed closer relations between the EU and NATO in its recent resolutions on the European Defence Union and the implementation of Common foreign and security policy.

The meeting will be web-streamed. You can follow the debate via EP Live.

The debate will take place in Paul-Henri Spaak (3C050) room.

Press release – MEPs call for EU rules on private security companies – Committee on Foreign Affairs – Subcommittee on Security and Defence

Private security companies must respect minimum requirements on accountability, the screening of staff and reporting on misconduct, while staying away from tasks usually reserved for the military said committee MEPs on Tuesday.

Foreign Affairs Committee and Defence Sub-Committee MEPs advocate EU-wide rules on private security companies (PSCs). The use of private contractors must be limited to logistical support and the protection of installations and only EU-based PSCs should be contracted for protection tasks abroad, say MEPs.

MEPs suggest drawing up an open list of contractors complying with EU standards on transparency, criminal records, financial and economic capacity, licences, strict vetting of personnel, and adhering to an international code of conduct,. This could be followed by a single set of rules for EU institutions that use PSCs to protect EU staff, modelled on UN or NATO practices.

Quote

"More than 70% of EU citizens say that security and defence should be a European Union priority," said Parliament's rapporteur Hilde Vautmans (ALDE, BE), urging "the Commission and the Council to come forward with EU standards for private security companies in order to enhance transparency and democratic control".

Next steps

The resolution on private security was approved by 50 votes to 6, with 1 abstention. The full House is to vote on it at the June plenary session in Strasbourg.

Background information

The EU numbers some 40,000 private security companies (PSCs), employing more than 1.5 million people and supplying services that range from logistical support, through running prisons or providing protection, to combat support and supplying military technology (2013 figures). They are also used to guard EU delegations in third countries and provide security for the premises of EU missions and operations

PSCs, which are used by EU member states to compensate for shrinking armed forces or to avoid limitations on the use of troops, have been accused of human rights violations and even of causing casualties. This has revealed gaps in accountability and has negative implications for the EU's foreign policy aims.

Work on regulating private security companies is under way in many international fora, including the Montreaux Document Forum, which defines how international law applies to PSCs, and the International code of conduct for private security service providers, which sets industry standards. The EU does not have uniform rules on PSCs, while member states' practices on the use of PSCs vary widely. The lack of common penalties means there is little to prevent abuses, which can have a major impact on how PSCs operate in multilateral interventions and conflict regions.