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REPORT

on archaeological excavations
at the Qarshovul Tepa site
in the Chinaz district of the Tashkent region
in 2025

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In June 2025, with the financial assistance of the Society for the Exploration of EurAsia (Swiss), the International Caravan Saray of Culture (Tashkent) continued archaeological excavations at the Qarshovul Tepa settlement.



Fig. 1. Qarshovul Tepa. Satellite image with excavation sites marked

The archaeological site is located southwest of Tashkent, near the village of Dustlik in the Chinaz district of the Tashkent province, on the right floodplain terrace of the Chirchik River, at coordinates 40°58'24.03"N, 68°54'31.64"E (Fig. 1).

In 2025, work was concentrated on four sites:

1. R-2 (temple) – excavations were carried out to the south and east of the central hall.
2. R-3 (platform) – opening of rooms 4 and 5.
3. R-8 – excavations continued in the southeastern part of the excavation site.
4. R-10 – continuation of excavations in the northern and southern directions.

Excavations at R-2.

During the 2025 season, the main work was carried out to the south and east of the central room of the temple, which was opened in 2024 (Fig. 2). Preliminary work was carried out to clear areas for further work on the south and east sides, covering an area of 60 m² on the south side and 50 m² on the east side.

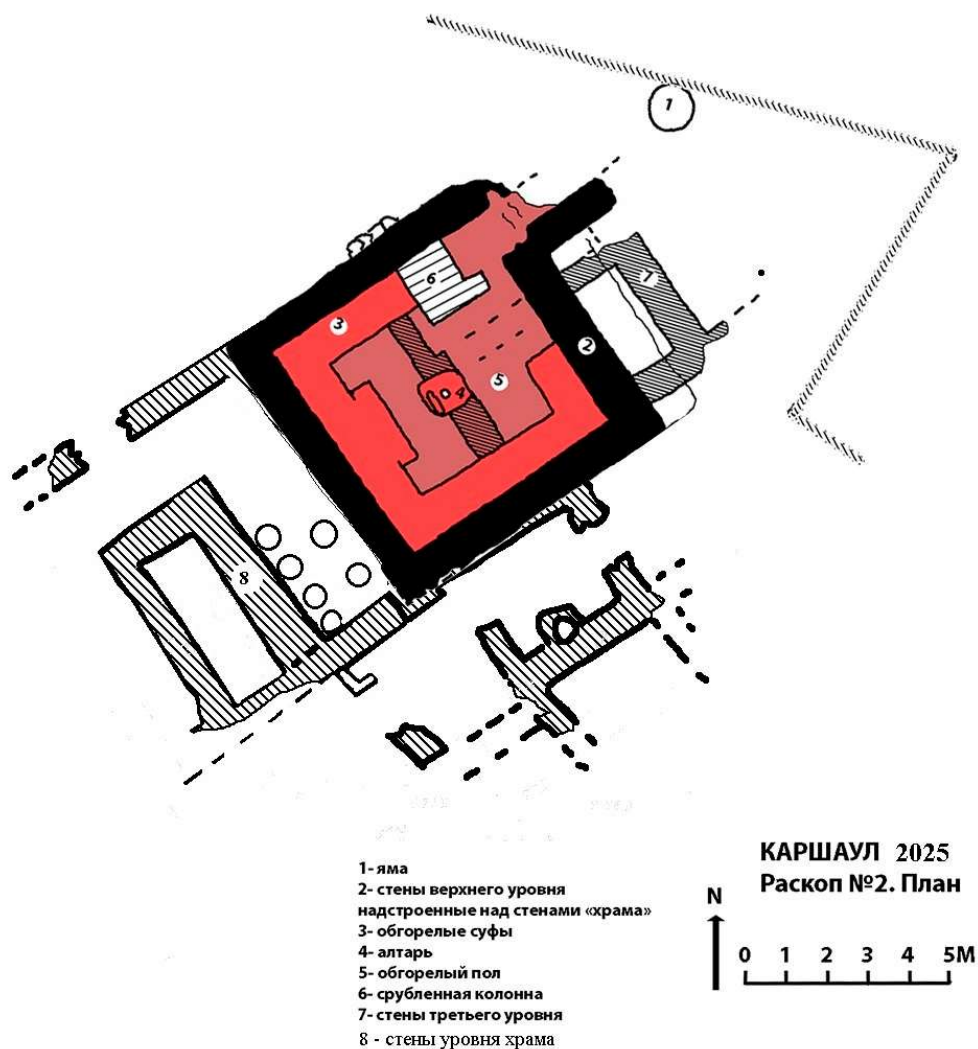


Fig. 2. Excavation site R-2. Plan

Room No. 2. After clearing the southern section and removing the turf and inflated layers, it became clear that to the southwest of Room No. 1 (the central or ceremonial hall) there is Room No. 2, which consists of two, or rather three, corridor-like sections¹, surrounding another narrow room No. 3 on three sides. Since the latter has no passageways, it is possible that it served as a storeroom.

¹ The layout is to be clarified in 2026.

One of the rectangular sections of room No. 2 adjoins hall No. 1 and shares a common wall with it (room 2 A). The second section is a continuation of the first in a south-westerly direction (room 2 B). The north-eastern wall of room No. 2 is 7.20-7.25 m long before turning south-west, while the south-western wall is 5.25 m long and also turns south-west. The width of this section is 1.95-2.05 m. The northwestern wall of the second section of room No. 2 has been traced for 6.95 m in a southwesterly direction and extends beyond the excavation site. It has a semi-ruined passageway approximately 90 cm wide.

The third section (room 2 C) forms the southwestern part of room No. 2.



Fig. 3. R-2. View from the west side of room No. 2 A



Fig. 4. R-2. View from the west side of room No. 2 A

The height of the walls in this section tends to decrease, as erosion was more intense here due to the relief. As a result, the remains of the walls on the southern side of the excavation are significantly lower than on the northern side.

The floor in room No. 2 is plastered over its entire area and well compacted (Figs. 3, 4). It is fixed at a level of -3.87 m in the eastern part of the room and -3.93 m in the western part. The room was filled with pieces of collapsed walls and the ceiling of this room, in which there are large quantities of charcoal from the burnt ceilings. Traces of a severe fire are clearly visible on the walls of the room.

A significant part of the fill consisted of ceramic fragments, mainly rims and walls from huge storage jars (*khums*) that had been installed in the room. During the work in the southern part of room No. 2 A, the remains of six bottom parts of *khums* that were installed on the floor were recorded in situ (Figs. 2-4). Initially, there were more *khums*, but as a result of the fire and the collapse of the roof, as well as some subsequent activity, not all of them remained in their places (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. R-2. Khum rims found in room No. 2

In addition to *khums*, fragments of other ceramic items were found in room No. 2. These include, for example, part of a jug with a high spout, a polished surface, a relief handle, and a corrugated neck (Fig. 6). Its preserved height is 16.8 cm.



Fig. 6. R-2. Jug from room No. 2 B



Fig. 7. R-2. Bottom of an ornamented mug from room No. 2

Closer to the western wall, a small bottom of a jug or mug was found (Fig. 7), covered with dark red engobe, its lower part decorated with relief ornamentation.

Near the passage in the northwestern wall of room No. 2 B, a round-bottomed plate with relief decoration on the bottom, orange-brown engobe, and polishing was found (Fig. 8). On the outer part

of the bottom, there is a *tamga* in the form of a double oval with four lines extending from it, scratched into the wet clay.

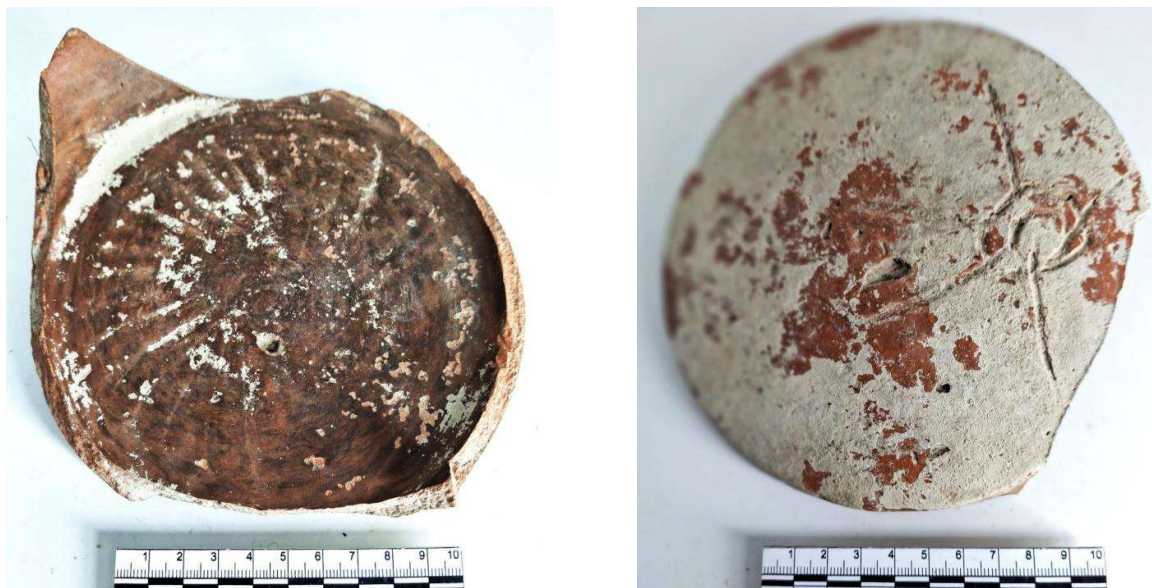


Fig. 8. R-2. Round-bottomed plate with a tamga on the bottom, from room No. 2 B

In the part of room No. 2 designated as room No. 2 C, i.e., in the southwestern section, a mug covered with thick dark brown slip and polishing was found on the floor (Fig. 9). Height – 14 cm, rim diameter – 7.5 cm, bottom diameter – 5.4 cm. Part of the rim is chipped off. Under the loop-shaped handle, before firing and engobe application, a tamga was applied to the wet clay, which is a figure combining rectangular and oval shapes. Its dimensions are 3×2.5 cm, with a smaller oval inside it (Fig. 10).



Fig. 9. R-2. Mug from room 2 C

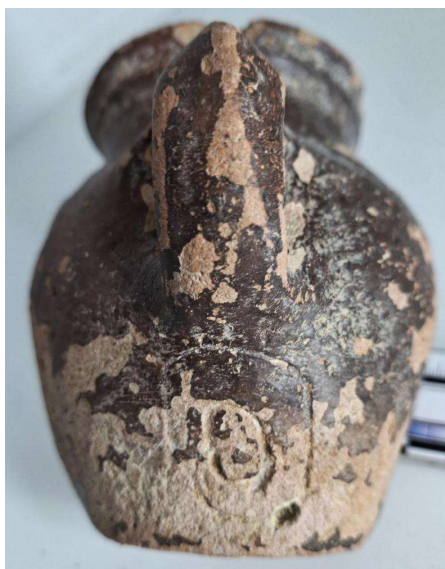


Fig. 10. R-2. Mug from room 2 C, tamga



Fig. 11. R-2. Fragment of a vessel with polishing from room No. 2



Fig. 12. R-2. Fragment of a round-bottomed plate from room No. 2



Fig. 13. R-2. Ceramic lamp from room No. 2

A fragment of a pot and a round-bottomed plate with orange engobe and polishing (Figs. 11, 12) and a ceramic lamp in the shape of a bowl with traces of use (Fig. 13) were also found in the room.

The vessels described above—a jug, pot, mugs, and plates with polishing (Figs. 6-12) — belong to the type of so-called “Kangar ceramics”, characteristic of the historical and cultural regions located along the Middle Syr Darya and dating from the second half of the 7th to the first half of the 8th century².

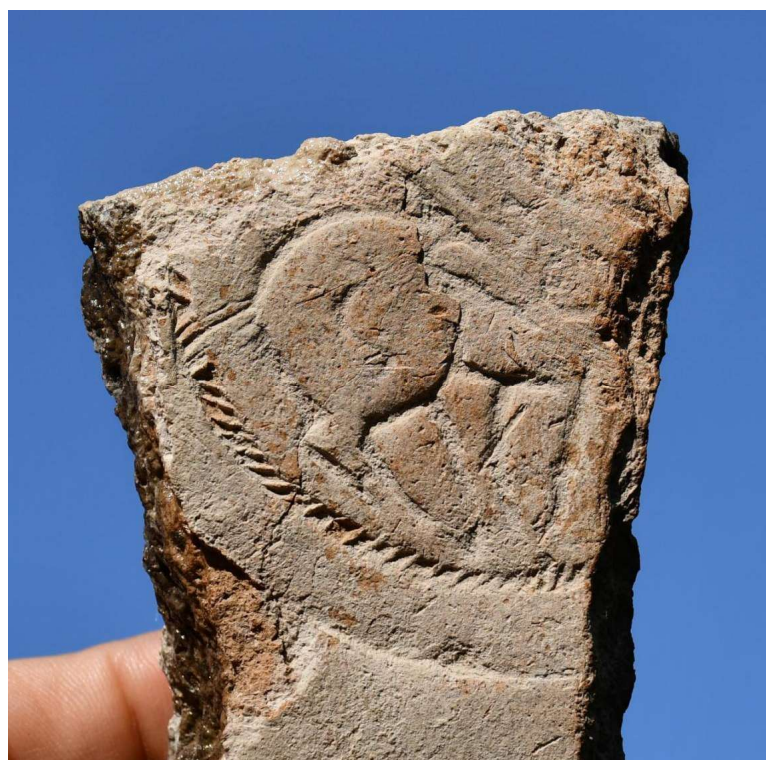


Fig. 14. R-2. Ceramic tile with a stamp impression from room No. 2

² Ilyasov 2021: 43-52.

A fragment of a ceramic tile or large lid was decorated with a big stamp impression. Despite the incomplete preservation of the image, it is clear that it depicts a winged horse facing right (Fig. 14). Within the grooved frame, we can see the horse's crupper, its legs, and part of its wing with separate long feathers. The diameter of the stamp was about 9-10 cm.

On the floor west of the cluster of khums, 60 cm from the northwestern wall and 5.90 m from the northeastern wall, a clay incense burner on a leg was found (Fig. 15). Its height is 12.4 cm, and the diameter of the reservoir is 9.3 cm. Unlike the earlier examples found, the leg has a sub-square cross-section. There are 16 indentations made with a punch around the circular base of the leg.



Fig. 15. R-2. Incense burner from room No. 2 B

As already mentioned, practically the entire space of room 2 was filled with khums installed on the floor, which were severely damaged by fire and broken when the roof collapsed. Only the lower parts of some khums remained *in situ*, surrounded by the debris of their upper parts, as well as coals and ashes (Figs. 16, 17).



Fig. 16. R-2. Traces of fire in room 2



Fig. 17. R-2, room 2. Khum No. 1 *in situ*

Khums mainly have rectangular and triangular variants of rims; often their shoulders and torso are covered with engobe drips. The diameters of the rim reach 36 cm, 38 cm, 40 cm, and 48 cm (Figs. 18, 19). There is a unique example of a khum with a zigzag decoration cut into the vertical surface of the rim before firing (Fig. 20).

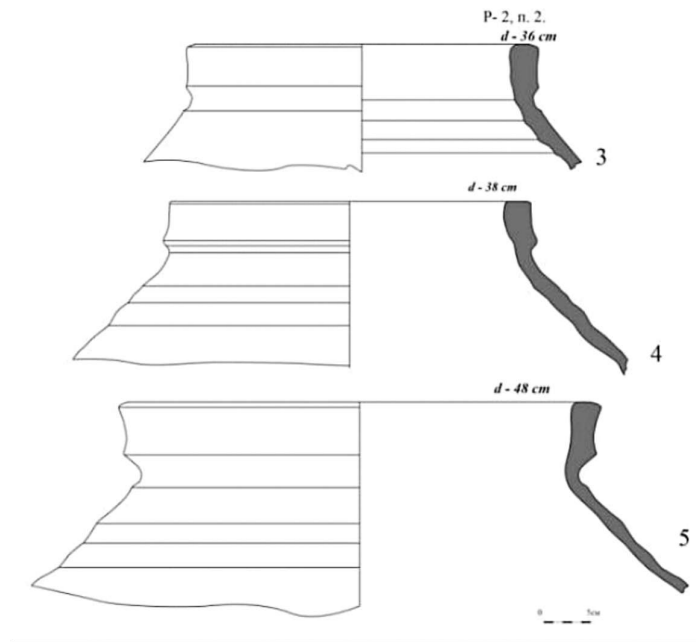


Fig. 18. R-2. Storage jars (*khums*) from rooms 2 (3-5), 3 (2) and 4 (1)

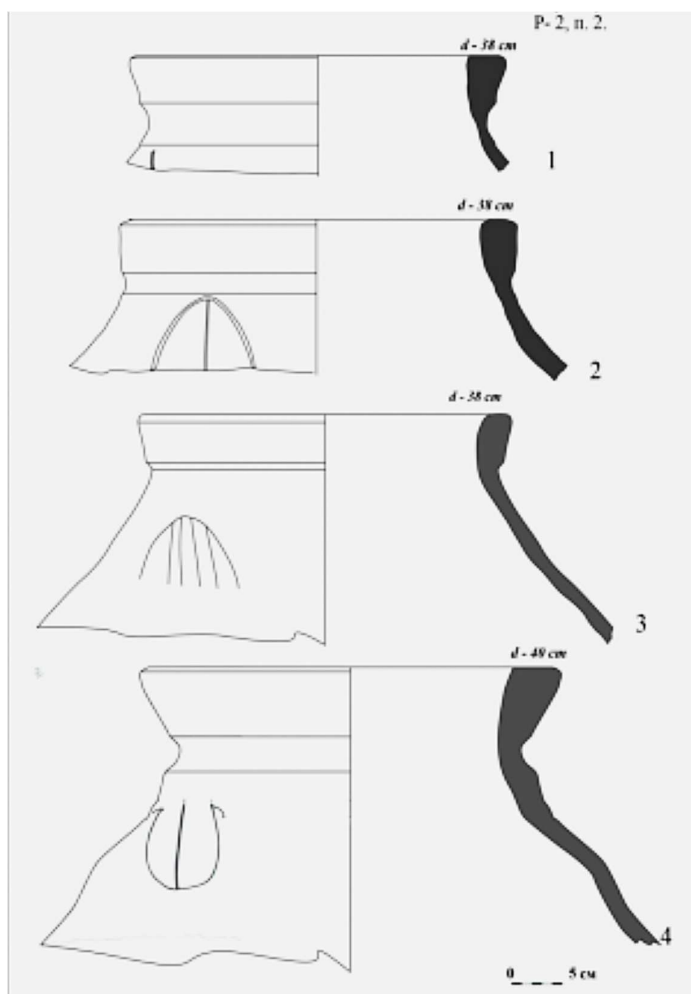


Fig. 19. R-2. Khums with tamgas from room 2

Another characteristic feature of the khums from room 2 is the presence of tamga marks on many of them, carved mainly on the shoulder part before firing (Figs. 19, 21). There are at least 25 such marks, and although not all of them have been preserved in their entirety, it is likely that they are all different tamgas, i.e., marks whose form is not repeated.



Fig. 20. R-2. Khum No. 4 from room 2A



Fig. 21. R-2. Khums with tamga from room 2



Fig. 22. R-2. Khum with tamgas from room 2

The most interesting is the fragment of one khum, which, unlike the others, has not one but two marks (Fig. 22). Moreover, while one of them was applied before firing, as usual, the second

was applied after firing. The first tamga resembles a fruit in shape; it consists of two rounded figures inscribed one inside the other, and so far we know of only one sign similar in shape, also originating from a ceramic vessel found at Kugait Tepa in the Tashkent region³. As for the second tamga, it is very well known. It is the so-called fork-shaped sign, which was placed on one of the most numerous groups of coins minted in Chach. According to the classification of V.D. Shagalov and A.V. Kuznetsov, these are coins of group 6, which includes 15 types [Shagalov, Kuznetsov 2006: 199-268; Shagalov 2025: 64-90]. E.V. Rtveladze dated the issue of this group from the second half of the 7th century to the beginning of the second half of the 8th century [Rtveladze 2006: 55]. This group includes coins found directly on the floor in room No. 2 (see below). Thus, the fact that on a khum, made to order and marked with a family/clan tamga, someone carefully carved out the tamga of the supreme ruler of Chach⁴ after the vessel had been fired, may indicate some socio-political events that took place in the city. For example, the family of the owner of the first tamga could have become related to the family of the ruler of Chach (*č'čynk xwβw*), or in some other way obtained a higher status, which was reflected in the marking of the khum.

In general, the presence of a large number of marked jars in the temple premises may indicate that there was a warehouse here where, for example, supplies of oil used to maintain the sacred fire in the central hall were stored. Since the oil was apparently brought to the temple as mandatory offerings from families living in the city and its surroundings, it was necessary for each of them to have their own container marked with a family tamga for accounting and control purposes.

At a distance of 1.35 m from the eastern wall and 0.40 m from the northern wall, a stone whetstone was found on the floor of room 2 (Fig. 23, left). Its length is 6.8 cm. At its widest point, it is 2.5 cm wide and has a hole with a diameter of 0.3 cm for threading a cord. The end of the working part is 0.4 cm wide.

A copper / brass ring seal was found next to the whetstone (Fig. 23, right; Fig. 24). There are marks on the 1×0.5 cm plate.



Fig. 23. R-2. Whetstone and ring from room No. 2

³ Ilyasov 2022: 388, fig. 12, 16.

⁴ On a number of types of coins with a fork-shaped tamga, researchers read "Ruler of Chacha", see: Shagalov, Kuznetsov 2006: 203-204, 206-208, 211-212, 218-219, 244-245, 248-252, 256-258, 264-265; Shagalov 2025: 66, 68-69, 71, 82, 84-86, 89.



Fig. 24. R-2. Bronze (brass?) ring from room No. 2

In the northwest corner of the room, at a depth of -3.70 m, a copper coin was found that can be attributed to the mint of the ruler Tarnavch. The obverse depicts a predator walking to the right with its tail raised. Its right leg appears to be raised in motion, and its mouth is bared. On the reverse side, in the center of the coin, there is a fork-shaped tamga surrounded by a circular Sogdian legend.

Two coins were found in the filling above the floor, near the northern wall. One of them, depicting a walking predator, belongs to the mint of the ruler Tarnavch and is similar to a coin from the same room found in the northeast corner, near the khums. However, unlike the first one, its obverse is heavily worn and the image is very difficult to see. The second coin, with a square hole in the middle, is also poorly preserved, making it impossible to identify.

Two more coins were found directly on the floor in the middle of the room, both of which also belong to the mint of the ruler of Tarnavch. The images of predators on the obverse sides of the coins are poorly visible due to wear and tear and prolonged circulation. The reverse sides of the coins are in better condition, and here a fork-shaped tamga and an Sogdian inscription around it are clearly visible.

Room No. 3. As mentioned above, inside Room No. 2 there is a rectangular structure made of *pakhsa* blocks measuring 0.5-0.6×0.5-0.6 m (Figs. 25, 26). The internal dimensions of the structure are 4.80×1.80 m. The walls of the room have been preserved to a height of 0.60-0.65 m. It is conditionally designated as room No. 3. As already noted, no entrance to it has been found. Apparently, it is something like a bin. It has been excavated down to the first floor.

A grinding stone with three polished working sides was found in the fill above the floor (Fig. 27).

A one-handed jug with a narrow neck, made of light brown clay, was found on the floor (Fig. 28). Its height is 27 cm, the diameter of the mouth is 6.9 cm, and the diameter of the bottom is 11 cm. The handle of the jug was broken off in ancient times. The rim on the side opposite the handle is pressed in the form of a plum.

Next to the jug was a small plate on a flat tray, made of light-colored clay (Fig. 29). Its height is 5 cm, the diameter of the rim is 16 cm, and the diameter of the bottom is 4.6 cm. The rim is straight and pointed. The shard is light in color, without impurities.

Next to the jug, a coin with a paired portrait of the ruler and his wife was also found on the floor. The face of the wife, who is depicted on the left side, is better preserved than that of the ruler. The eyes, nose, and mouth are clearly visible. The hairstyle is rendered with three short vertical strokes that emphasize its volume. The ruler has some wear on the left side of his face, but overall the image of his face is clearly visible. It should be noted that the coin differs from earlier finds in its small denomination.



Fig. 25. R-2. View from the west side of room No. 3 (storage room)



Fig. 26. R-2. View of room No. 3 and the southwestern section of room No. 2



Fig. 27. R-2. Grinding stone from room No. 3



Fig. 28. R-2. Jug from room No. 3



Fig. 29. R-2. Flat tray from room No. 3

Room No. 4. It is located southeast of Room No. 1 (central hall) and shares a common wall with it, which is the northwestern wall for Room No. 4. This wall has been preserved to a height of 1.37 m in the southern part and 1.07 m in the northern part. It has been traced for 3.70 m. Room No. 4 was a passageway – there are doorways in its north-eastern and south-western walls. The south-eastern wall is 2.90 m long. Its height is 0.75 m. The width of the room is 3-3.05 m. The walls of the room are made of pakhsa blocks and covered with plaster, which shows traces of fire. The room has two floor levels, of which floor 1 (the upper one) is the last level of operation of room No. 4.

A wall-mounted hearth was found near the south-eastern wall, approximately in the middle of the wall (Fig. 30).

In the central part of the room, near the stove, a two-handled pot with a flat bottom was found on the first floor (Fig. 31). Approximately 60% of the vessel has been preserved, with no more than 3% of the rim remaining and one handle missing. It is 18.9 cm high and has a bottom diameter of 18 cm. It was handmade from light brown clay, with a coarse, fireproof texture and small stones added.



Fig. 30. R-2. Room No. 4. View from the north



Fig. 31. R-2. Pot from room 4

Here, in the debris above the floor, two coins were found. The first coin has a stylized predator walking to the left on the obverse, and a fork-shaped tamga on the reverse. To the right of the tamga are the remains of Sogdian inscription. The second coin has a heavily worn obverse, where the image of the head and front legs of a predator walking to the right is faintly visible. On the reverse, in the centre of the coin, there is a fork-shaped tamga and a circular inscription on the Sogdian script.

A third coin was found in the southern corner of room 4, between the hearth and the south-western wall, on the floor of the room. It is heavily worn, but the upper part of a paired portrait is visible. On the reverse side, offset to the left, there is a lyre-shaped tamga, of which only half of the image has survived.

Room No. 5. It is located south of room No. 4 and is connected to it by a doorway, the width of which could not be determined due to the destruction of the north-eastern wall. Most likely, there was a small pedestal attached to the south-eastern wall of the temple, but it has been completely destroyed. Its remains are visible on the eastern side. It also forms the south-western wall of room No. 4. The south-eastern wall of the room has been destroyed, simply collapsing into the room at an angle of 40-45 degrees. Like the other walls of the room, it shows signs of fire damage. A structure resembling a storeroom was attached to the north-western wall, in which, in all likelihood, fuel for the stove in room No. 4 was stored.

Further excavations will help to clarify the layout of the rooms surrounding the central hall.



Fig. 32. R-2. Fallen wall in room No. 5



Fig. 33. R-3. Plan of the rooms under the northeast part of the platform
Excavations at R-3.

Since we concentrated our efforts on R-2 in 2024, no work was carried out on R-3. In 2025, excavations continued with the aim of revealing the layout of the buildings buried under a monolithic brick platform measuring 10×5 m. Earlier, under the north-eastern part of the platform, the remains of rooms 4, 5, 6 and 7 located beneath it were identified (Fig. 33).

In order to reveal the southern wall of room 5, considerable effort was required to cut down the monolithic brick- and pakhsawork that still remained above the room after previous years' research (Figs. 34, 35). Underneath the pakhsa, it was possible to reach the remains of the southern wall adjacent to room 1 (the 'throne room'). It turned out that they were not connected by a passageway.



Fig. 34. R-3. Room 5 at floor level 1, view from the west

So, in room 5, the south, east and north walls have been identified. Its size from south to north is only 2.40 m. The height of the south wall from floor level 2 is 1.20 m. Judging by room 1, it goes down to a great depth, as it is one of the main walls of construction horizon II, to which later walls were added many times, the last of which were the eastern wall of room 1 ('throne room'), the southern wall of room 4, and the eastern wall of room 5. On the side of room 1, at a depth of 70 cm from the top of the wall, the top of the niche is fixed; on the side of room 5, there are no traces of a passage, so it is precisely a niche in room 1, and not a passage from room 1 to room 5, as had been assumed. The eastern wall is adjacent to room 4, and the northern wall is adjacent to room 6; both of these walls have been preserved to a height of only two rows of bricks above floor level 1 (Fig. 34), which was located at a depth of -4.65 m from the benchmark. The base of the monolithic foundation, from which the platform above the filled rooms of the second construction horizon began to be erected, at a depth of -4.45 m. Under the masonry of the northern and eastern walls, layers of fill are visible, some loose, and in places consisting of brick rubble and small brick fragments (Figs. 36, 37). That is, there was no room 5 below floor 1 in this configuration.



Fig. 35. R-3. Eastern part of room 5 at floor level 2, view from the west



Fig. 36. R-3. North wall of room 5, view from the south

The eastern wall of room 5, adjacent to room 4, has some distinctive features. It is 90 cm thick and built of unfired bricks measuring 51×32×10 cm and 48×28×9 cm. On the side of room 5, like the northern wall, it has 2-3 rows of bricks preserved, rising above floor 1. Below the masonry, layers of loose fill with small brick fragments and brick debris are visible (Fig. 37). However, on the other side, i.e. on the side of room 4, this wall can be traced to the floor 2, although below the two upper horizontal rows, bricks measuring 50×30×10-11 cm are laid, or more precisely, attached to the wall in horizontal row (Figs. 39, 40).

The south-eastern corner of room 5 is occupied by a *sufa* (podium) measuring 85×72 cm at the top and 85×78 cm at the bottom, with a height of 40 cm. It is lined with 42×28×10 cm unfired

bricks, under which there is loose fill, plastered on the outside, with a plaster thickness of 2-4 cm (Figs. 35, 38). Its surface is at a depth of -4.70 m from the benchmark. It stands on floor 2, covered with an ash-coloured dark grey layer 3-4 cm thick. Floor 2 is at a depth of -5.10-5.12 m, 75 cm above it is the base of 1.5 m thick monolithic *pakhsa* layer, which served as the foundation for the upper part of the platform.

In the corner formed by the eastern wall of room 5 and the sufa, a fragment of a stone grain grinder measuring 17×16×5 cm was found on the floor (Fig. 37).

The filling of room 5 between floor 1 and floor 2 consisted of loose soil with a small amount of ceramic fragments and bones (ribs, sheep/goat astragalus).

In the neighbouring room 4, near the western wall, excavations in 2023 revealed the contours of a pit, which could not be opened at that time due to lack of time. This season, work continued and it was determined that this pit was dug from floor level 2, located at a depth of -5.26 m from the benchmark, for the installation of a large khum, the mouth of which was covered using the bottom part of another khum as a cover (Figs. 39, 40). The height of the khum is more than 1.20 m, and the outer diameter of the rim is 48-50.5 cm.



Fig. 37. R-3. Eastern wall of room 5, view from the west



Fig. 38. R-3. Sufa in room 5, view from the north



Fig. 39. R-3. Khum in room 4, view from the east



Fig. 40. R-3. Khum in room 4, after clearing

Above, we discussed the peculiarities of the wall separating rooms 4 and 5, namely that on the side of room 4, it is faced with bricks laid flat against the wall (Figs. 39, 40). Apparently, in the process of installing a fairly large khum in this room, the western and southern walls were cut and damaged, and then repaired, but only on the side of room 4. The fact that the wall is slightly damaged is evidenced by the fact that in the south-eastern corner of room 5, above the sufa, it is slightly inclined towards the interior of the room.

It should be noted that the khum from room 4, lowered from floor 2, i.e. the level corresponding to the floor level of the 'throne room' during its period of operation, differs in shape from the later khums of the second half of the 7th – early 8th centuries, found in abundance at excavation site R-2 (see above). It has a profiled rim, a more swollen body with pronounced shoulders, and no engobe drips characteristic of the latter. The stratigraphy of the layers, the shape

and texture of the khum, as well as the use of bricks measuring 51×32×10 cm, 50×30×10-11 cm, 48×28×9 cm, and 42×28×10 cm in the walls of rooms 4 and 5, dating back to the period when, apparently, the classical early medieval standard for Central Asian adobe bricks, i.e. one to two⁵, had not yet been established, indicate that the structures under the platform are earlier than the second half of the 7th century, as already mentioned in the results of our previous studies.

Excavations at R-8.

During the 2024 field season, no excavations were carried out at R-8, as the main focus was on uncovering the temple at R-2. In 2025, we continued clearing room No. 17 in the south-eastern section of the excavation, which had not been fully excavated in 2023. It is located east of room No. 16 and shares a wall with it (Fig. 41). For room 17, this is the south-western wall, and its length is 4.35 m. The north-western wall is part of the south-eastern wall of room No. 15. Its length in room No. 17 is 2.40 m. The north-eastern wall of room No. 17 is 4.50 m long and, together with the end of the south-eastern wall, forms a 0.80 m wide doorway in the eastern corner. The south-eastern wall is 1.65 m long and differs in design from the three walls of the room described above. At a distance of 0.70 m from the doorway, a 70×50 cm pedestal is attached to it. A small wall is attached to this pedestal from the inside, which completely divides the room. As a result, the western part becomes a storage, probably, for bulk products. The top of the walls of the opened room is at a level of -2.70 m from the general reference point. The floor of the room is fixed at a level of -3.15-3.20 m. The room was filled with collapsed room and bin walls.

A clay incense burner on a thick, sturdy leg was found on the floor near the entrance (Fig. 42). Its height is 9.9 cm, the diameter of the reservoir is 8 cm, and the diameter of the lower part of the leg is 7.5 cm. The reservoir is shallow, about 2 cm deep.

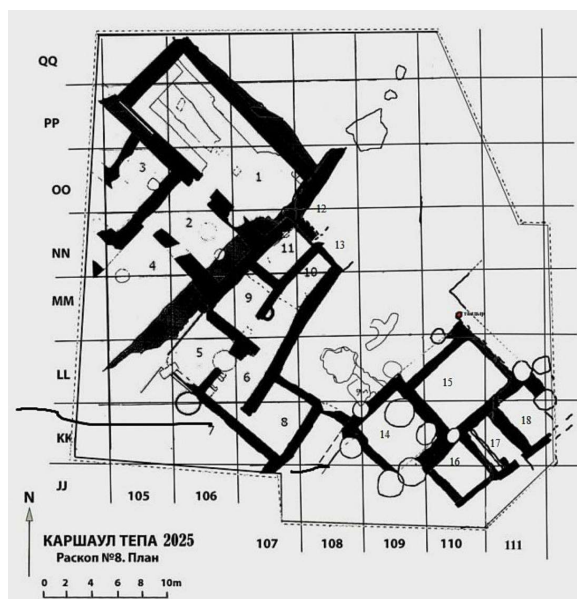


Fig. 41. Plan of R-8

⁵ The most common size of early medieval bricks is 50-52×25-26×10-12 cm.



Fig. 42. R-8. Incense burner from room No. 17

Overall, being similar in type to the incense burner from excavation R-2 (Fig. 15), this incense burner appears to be more crude.

A fragment of an ornamented vessel lid was found in the passageway of the room (Fig. 43). It is made of fireclay with the addition of chamotte, which cracked during drying and firing. The surface is decorated with wide recessed stripes radiating from the centre.

The room was destroyed, probably as a result of a fire, as evidenced by traces of fire damage on the bricks and charcoal in the fill. Four coins were found, one of which was in the rubble of the destroyed walls, and three were lying on the floor. The coin from the rubble has a square hole and cannot be identified due to its poor condition.



Fig. 43. R-8. Fragment of a lid from room No. 17

Three coins found on the floor of room 17 were located in the area of the so-called granary. The coin found in the southern part of the room, near the south-western wall, has an image of the ruler in profile on the obverse. On the reverse side, there is a lyre-shaped tamga and the remains of an inscription in Sogdian script. The other two coins were found in the northern part of the room, in the corner, and belong to the mint of the ruler of Chach named Tarnavch. Both coins are heavily worn on the obverse, but the image of walking leopards on the reverse is visible.

Room No. 18 is located to the east of Room No. 17 and has a rectangular shape; measuring 4.40×2.40 m. The south-western wall is shared by these two rooms.

The walls are built of bricks measuring 41-43×23-25×10 cm. A large number of broken bricks were used in the masonry. In places, plaster has been preserved on the walls. The north-western wall is 2.40 m long and has been preserved to a height of 0.5 m. The north-eastern wall is badly damaged by pits that were dug at a later date, when this room was no longer in use and had been bricked up. The south-eastern wall has been completely excavated. Among the finds in the room, we note a moulded mug decorated near the handle with a relief appliqué resembling a snake (Fig. 44).



Fig. 44. R-8. Handmade mug with appliqué

At a distance of 0.30 m from the south-western wall and 1.25 m from the north-western wall of room 18, a mug was found, covered with a wavy pattern, dark brown engobe and glaze (Fig. 45). The handle and part of the rim of the vessel are broken off, but it can nevertheless be concluded that it belongs to the Kangar pottery type.



Fig. 45. R-8. Mug from room 18

Excavations at R-10.

In 2025, research continued on the north-western section of the settlement's defensive wall (excavation R-10) to study the gradual changes in the town's defence system (Fig. 46). The section was expanded by 6 metres to the west (expansion area 12×6 m) and to the south of room No. 3, which was opened last season.

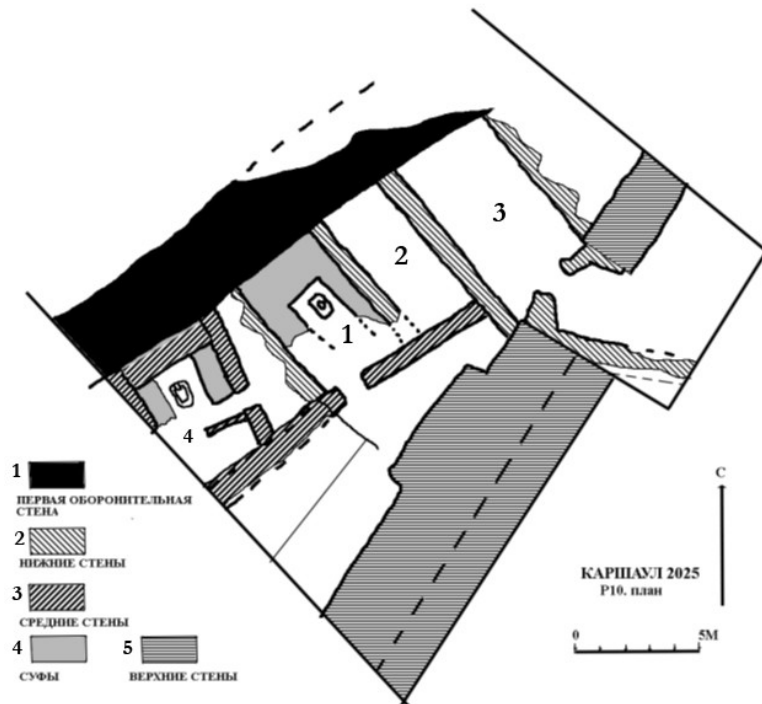


Fig. 46. Excavation R-10. General plan after the 2025 works: 1 – 1st defensive wall; 2 – walls of the lower layer; 3 - walls of the middle layer; 4 – sufas;

5 - walls of the upper layer

As a result of the expansion to the west, the total length of the northern projection of the inner defensive wall (which was recorded last season) was revealed. It measured 5.50 m. The width of the projection, only 70 cm, does not allow us to conclude that there was a defensive tower here, but it is undoubtedly an element of defence from the last stage of the city's existence. To the west of the projection, a brickwork one brick thick, measuring 46×23×7 cm, is attached to the main part of the wall (Fig. 47). It has been preserved to a height of two rows of bricks from a depth of -1.85 m from the zero benchmark, while the main buttress part of the inner defensive wall was built on a surface lying at a level of -2.25 m (Fig. 48). On the excavation site, it was noted that the base of the inner defensive wall gradually rises from a depth of -3 m in the east to a depth of -2.20 m in the western part of the excavation. At the same time, no brick repair masonry was found to the east of the protrusion. North of the inner defensive wall, the layers were quite loose, with large fragments of rubble from the collapse of the wall. These layers lay on a dense sloping surface. This surface was uneven, rising from the northeast to the southwest. Immediately at the base of the wall, it rose from a level of -3.60 m in the east to a level of -1.80 m at the western edge of the excavated area. There was also a slope towards the northern edge of the settlement.



Fig. 47. R-10. Western part. Northern facade of the inner defensive wall

Underneath the described surface, a wall from the second period was excavated last season, standing at a depth of -3.60-3.70 m. Excavations in the western part revealed the continuation of this wall to the west after a 90 cm wide passage. To the west of the passage, the wall could only be traced for 1 m. No excavations were carried out west of the southern side this season. On the northern side, its facade could not be traced due to severe destruction. However, it appears that in this section, the wall served as the southern wall of excavated room No. 4.

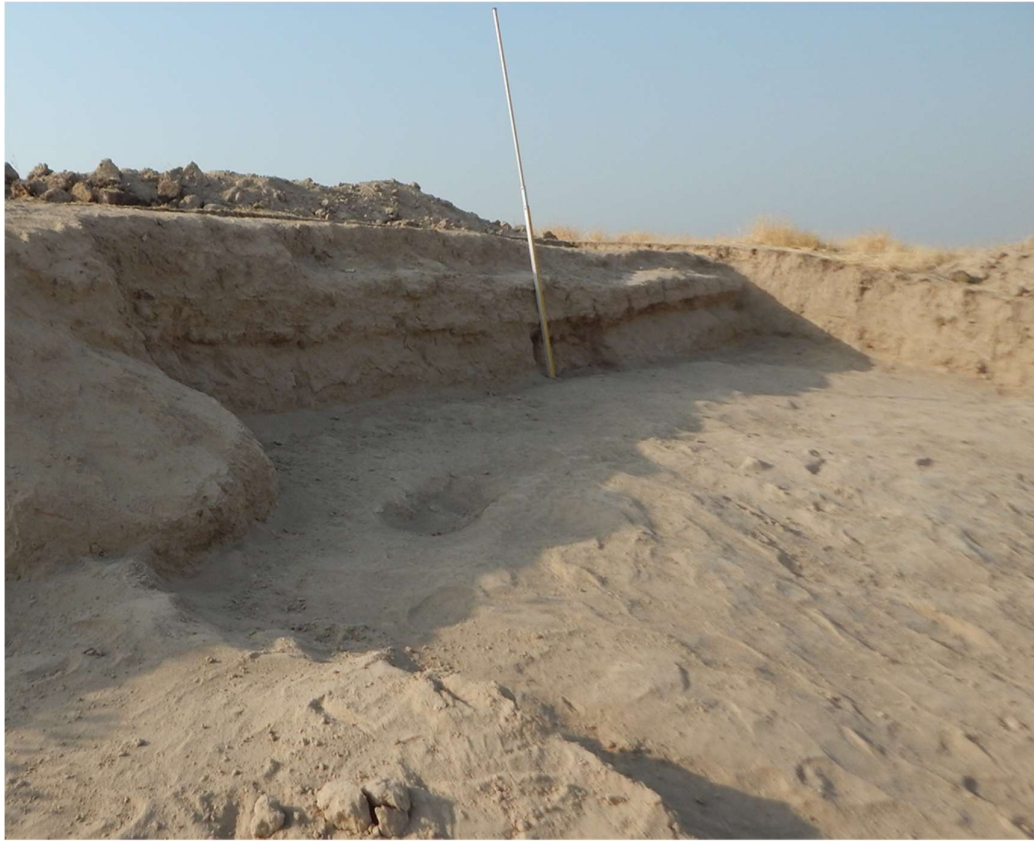


Fig. 48. R-10. Surface adjacent to the base of the inner defensive wall. Western part

Room No. 4. In the western part of the site, north of the middle period wall, a room was discovered, adjoining by the northern wall and the end of the western wall to the remains of the city's defensive wall, which stood directly on the mainland (Fig. 49). The floor of the room and the bottom of its walls were at a level of -2.75-2.90 m, i.e. at the level of the platform between the edge of the settlement and the middle period wall discovered last season. The platform was a well-compacted surface above a layer of rubble covering the remains of rooms No. 1-3 discovered last year. It is possible that the southern wall of room No. 4 was destroyed precisely to create a dense surface layer. The southern part of the western wall of the room was also completely destroyed. Only a remnant slightly more than a meter high from the floor in the north-western corner of the room remained from its facade. At a distance of 1.80 m from the corner, the wall was cut off to floor level. The western wall was a parapet wall. Its northern end rested against the remains of the northern (first) defensive wall of the city. It was not possible to determine the thickness of the wall, as its western part is outside the excavated area. A 90 cm wide and 25 cm high *sufa* adjoined the western wall from the east. The *sufa* was constructed as follows: parallel to the wall, the edge of the *sufa* was laid out in two rows of large unfired bricks. Then the space between this masonry and the wall was filled with dense clay and covered with a thin, even layer of clay plaster. The northern end of the *sufa* rested against the northern wall. Its southern part (1.80 m from the northern wall) has been completely destroyed.



Fig. 49. R-10. Room No. 4. View from the southeast

The northern wall of the room, built of large-format unfired bricks (approximate dimensions 47×25×10 cm), has been preserved to a height of 40 cm from the floor. The bricks are in very poor condition, as the wall stood at the edge of the monument and was heavily eroded. The wall is 3.60 m long and adjoined an earlier western partition wall to the west. The thickness of the northern wall of room 4 is 60 cm. Its inner façade was covered with a thin layer of clay plaster. The outer façade has been almost completely washed away. Between it and the fragments of the first northern defensive wall, a filling of loose lumps of clay 20 cm wide was found.



Fig. 50. R-10. Room No. 4. Remains of the western wall and sufa

The eastern wall, built of *pakhsa*, has been preserved to a height of 55 cm from the floor of the room (-3.75 m from the benchmark). At a level of -3.15 m, it was probably deliberately cut off when levelling the surface for the upper construction period. The wall is 70 cm thick and adjoins the first northern defensive wall of the city to the north. The inner façade of the eastern wall is covered with several layers of plaster made of finely ground clay. The length of the wall from the north-eastern corner of the room to the south is 2.25 m, followed by a 70 cm wide passageway, and after the passageway, it continues for another 1.90 m to the junction with the remains of the southern wall. Consequently, the area of room No. 4 can be determined as 4.25×3.60 m. Along the northern section of the eastern wall, there was a sufa 90 cm wide and 15-20 cm high (Fig. 51).



Fig. 51. R-10. Room 4, north-eastern corner, eastern wall and sufa

A 30 cm thick wall was added to the southern section of the eastern wall of the room, directly from the passageway, extending 1.60 m to the west (Fig. 52). This wall has been preserved to a height of 50 cm at the passageway and 25 cm at the western end. Thus, this vestibule wall, the surface of which was carefully plastered, separates a corridor in the south-eastern corner of room 4 (Fig. 53).



Fig. 52. R-10. Entrance to room 4 and vestibule wall



Fig. 53. R-10. Vestibule wall and couloir in the southeastern part of room 4.

In the northern part of the room, a rectangular hearth with an arched southern edge has been cleared on the floor between the sufas (Fig. 54). The hearth measures 90×70 cm and was built 40 cm from the western sufa and 90 cm from the eastern sufa. The hearth was constructed as a small depression in the floor, edged on four sides by earthen ridges 5-8 cm high and 10 cm wide. In the centre of the northern ridge, there was a 5 cm high square protrusion measuring 25×25 cm. The hearth was filled with a lot of burnt red clay and ash. The floor of room No. 4, coated with light-coloured clay, was clearly visible at a depth of -3.75-3.80 m only in the northern part and in the passage between the sufa and the vestibule wall. Above it lay a layer of ash and cinders. In the rest of the room, it had been broken through by later excavations and the burnt layer was not visible.



Fig. 54. R-10. Fireplace in room 4

In the south-eastern section of the excavation site, the inner defensive wall was cut through in order to determine its stratigraphy and clarify the dimensions of room No. 3, which was opened during the 2024 season. As a result, it was established that the inner defensive wall in the section of the cut was built entirely of *pakhsa*. Its thickness is 2.70 m. The base of the wall is at a depth of -3 m from the zero benchmark, and it has been preserved almost to the modern surface, to a height of 1.10 m. The western part of this section of the inner defensive wall rested against the uncut part of the western wall of room No. 3 of the lower period. Below, down to the floor at a level of -3.60 m, there was a fairly loose layer of rubble throughout the entire section, except for the western edge, where the upper part of the western wall of room No. 3 was observed.



Fig. 55. R-10. Cross-section of the wall in the eastern part of the excavation



Fig. 56. R-10. View from the north of the entrance to room No. 3

Further down, as in the rest of the excavation area, we observed a dense layer of rubble that levelled the surface for buildings from the middle period. In the south-eastern part, this layer ended above the floor at a level of -4.15 m from the zero benchmark. In this layer, two 80 cm thick partition

walls were discovered, perpendicular to the eastern and western walls of room No. 1, and a 1.05 m wide passageway into the room between them (Fig. 46). The eastern wall was preserved to a height of 60 cm, and the western wall to 75 cm from the floor. The ends of the walls and the floor between them were badly burned as a result of a fire in room No. 1.

In layer 2 on R-10, a fragment of a large pot with relief decoration and polishing on orange engobe was found, belonging to the Kangar group of ceramics (Fig. 57).



Fig. 57. R-10. Fragment of a two-handled pot

We believe that work on excavation 10 should continue, as three important questions remain unanswered:

1. What is the layout of the buildings south of the original northern defensive wall of the city?
2. Where did the destruction of the original defensive wall begin?
3. Was there any wall on the edge of the hill during the last stage of the city's existence, when its north-western section was separated from the main part of the city?

Thus, the continuation of research work at Qarshovul Tepa in 2025 has added new and significant data to our understanding of the history of the material and spiritual culture of a small town in Chach, which ceased to exist before the beginning of the Islamization process in Central Asia.

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