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The Ancient Site of Novopokrovskoe 2

Excavation 1: Preliminary results

Valery A. Kolchenko and Philipp Rott

Abstract: This article presents the preliminary results of research at Excavation 1 on the site Novopokrovskoe 2 in the Ču (Chu) Valley (Kyrgyzstan). During this work, tachometric measurements were made, and two excavation areas were investigated: one in the south-eastern corner, and the second in the central part of the site where a trench was cut at its eastern wall. In the complex stratigraphy of the site, two horizons are defined (A and B), each of them contains some building periods. The site appeared not earlier than the second half or end of the 7th century CE, while the upper strata excavated belong to the end of 11th and beginning of the 12th centuries, though this does not exclude the possibility that there were also later ones, which could have been destroyed during the building activity on the site of the 1960s. The fortification system was studied; the remainders of the south-eastern tower have been almost completely excavated. The fortification system of the site degraded by the 10th to 11th centuries, where firstly the zone of the rubbish dump and later the living quarters appeared.

Keywords: Middle Asia, Kyrgyzstan, urban culture, Middle Ages.

Резюме: В настоящей статье представлены предварительные результаты исследований на Раскопе 1 на городище Новопокровское 2 в Чуйской долине (Кыргызская республика). За это время выполнена тахеометрическая съемка поселения; проведены археологические исследования на двух раскопах: 1 в юго-восточном углу и 2 в центральной части городища; произведен разрез восточной крепостной стены поселения. В сложной стратиграфии поселения выявлено два горизонта (А и В), каждый из которых включает несколько строительных периодов. Установлено, что поселение возникает не ранее второй половины-конца 7 в., верхние слои относятся к концу 11 – началу 12 вв., хотя не исключено существование и более поздних, которые могли бы быть разрушены в результате строительных работ 1960-х гг. Изучена фортификация поселения, практически полностью раскрыты остатки юго-восточной башни. Установлено, что фортификационная система поселения деградирует к 10-11 вв., превращаясь сначала в зону мусорок, а позднее перекрывается жилой застройкой.

Ключевые слова: Средняя Азия, Кыргызстан, городская культура, средневековье.

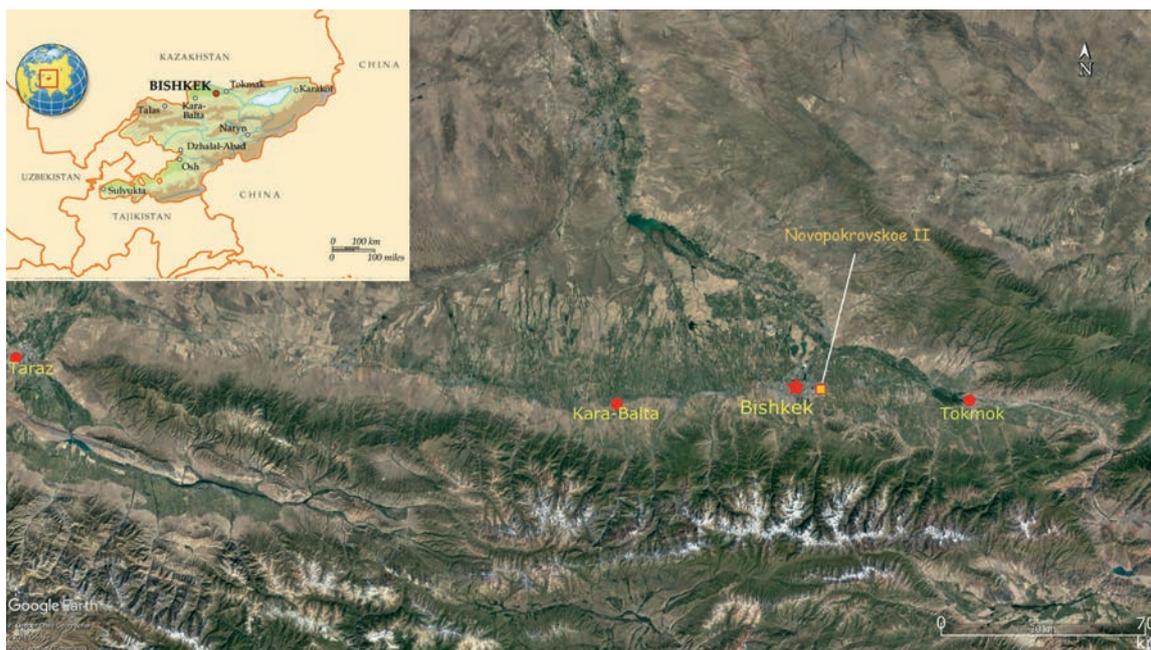


Fig. 1: The location of Novopokrovskoe 2 (Google Earth/©NPAE).

1 Introduction

The Novopokrovskoe 2 site is located in the Ču (Chu) valley, 11 km to the east of the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, in the centre of the village of Novopokrovskoe (Fig. 1). The coordinates of the site are UTM 43 T, N 4746593 m, E 0477345 m, H 783 m, or 42° 52' 17.7" northern latitude, 74° 43' 21.5" eastern longitude.

Novopokrovskoe 2 was first documented by A.I. Terenožkin in 1929 (KOLČENKO/ROTT 2005: 75), and in 1930 its schematic plan and description were drawn up by A. Vinogradova (KOLČENKO/ROTT 2005: 75–76). In the 1950s, this site, as well as other settlements in the Ču Valley, was researched by P.N. Kožem'yako, who gave the most complete description of its current form, drew its plan, and cut one archaeological trench (KOŽEMÂKO 1959: 141–142). In the 1960s, a House of Culture was built on this area of the site. During the construction works, a number of Buddhist objects were found, among them ones made of gilded bronze, stone and alabaster (Fig. 2:1–7).¹ These finds supported the view that the site was originally a Buddhist temple (GORÂČEVA/PEREGUDOVA 1996: 183), chapel or temple (STAVISKIJ 1998: 133).

Typologically, P.N. Kožem'yako included Novopokrovskoe 2 among the surrounding settlements of sites with long walls. In this case, the central site was Novopokrovskoe 1, which is located 1.5–2 km to the north-west.²

Today, the northern, eastern and southern areas of the site are partly covered by modern buildings, and the western area is bisected by an asphalt road. In the central part of the site, there are the building materials of the destroyed House of Culture.

In 2004, the Institute of History and Cultural Heritage of the National Academy of Sciences of Kyrgyz Republic, with the support of The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia (Switzerland),³ organized the Novopokrovsk archaeological expedition (NPAE) and started a new stage of research. The tachometric plan of the site was created (Fig. 3). The observations and archaeological work made it clear that the surface and upper strata of the site had in part been seriously damaged by the communications systems of the House of Culture (channels, trenches for electric cables, concrete trays, etc.).

Archaeological work was carried out in two areas, Excavations 1 and 2. Excavation 1, which is a square of 500 sq m, and includes the trench at the eastern wall of the site, is located in the south-eastern corner. The natural ground was reached here in some rooms. Excavation 2 is a square of 100 sq m located in the central part of the site.

In the current paper, we will deal with materials of Excavation 1 (Fig. 4). The presentation of the results of our work on Excavation 2 will follow in a separate paper.

Excavation 1 was originally conducted in the south-eastern corner of the site and includes the

1 This complex will be separately published by the authors.

2 For a detailed research history of Novopokrovskoe com-

plex, see KOLČENKO/ROTT 2005.

3 We are sincerely thankful to the Society for the Exploration of EurAsia, and personally to Dr Christoph Baumer and Prof Therese Weber, for their continuing support.

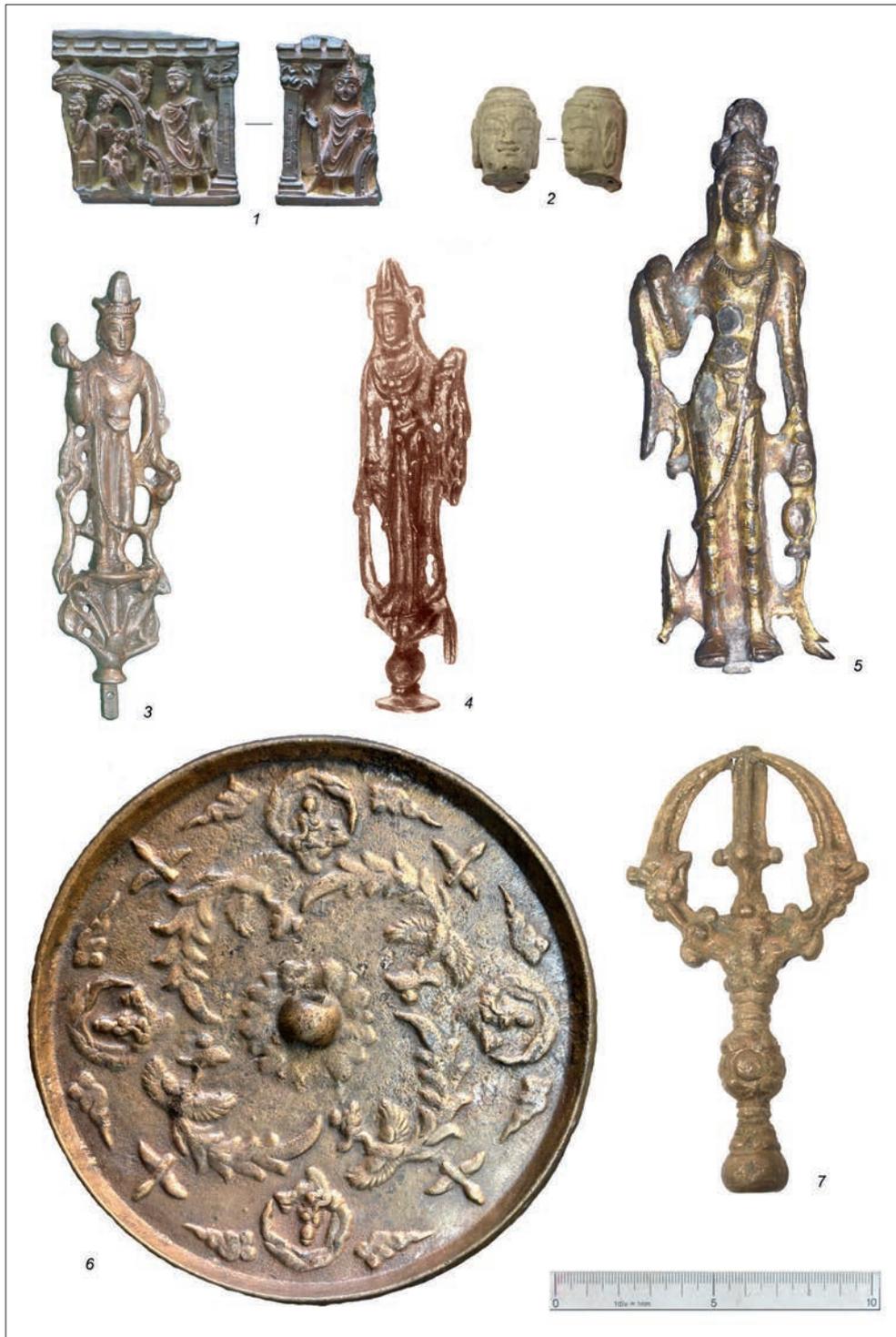


Fig. 2: Buddhist objects found during the construction works of the 1960s. 1: fragment of a stone relief; 2: head of stone sculpture Buddha; 3–5: bronze statues of Avalokiteshvaras; 6: bronze mirror; 7: bronze vajra (photos by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAE).

trench of the eastern site wall, because one of the goals of our research programme was to study the fortification system of the site. The trench was cut in the area where the site wall connects with the tower, which provided full information on this subject.

When work began, the surface of Excavation 1 was covered with household waste and building materials.

Excavation 1 includes three relatively separate areas: 1) in front of the site wall, 2) directly on the

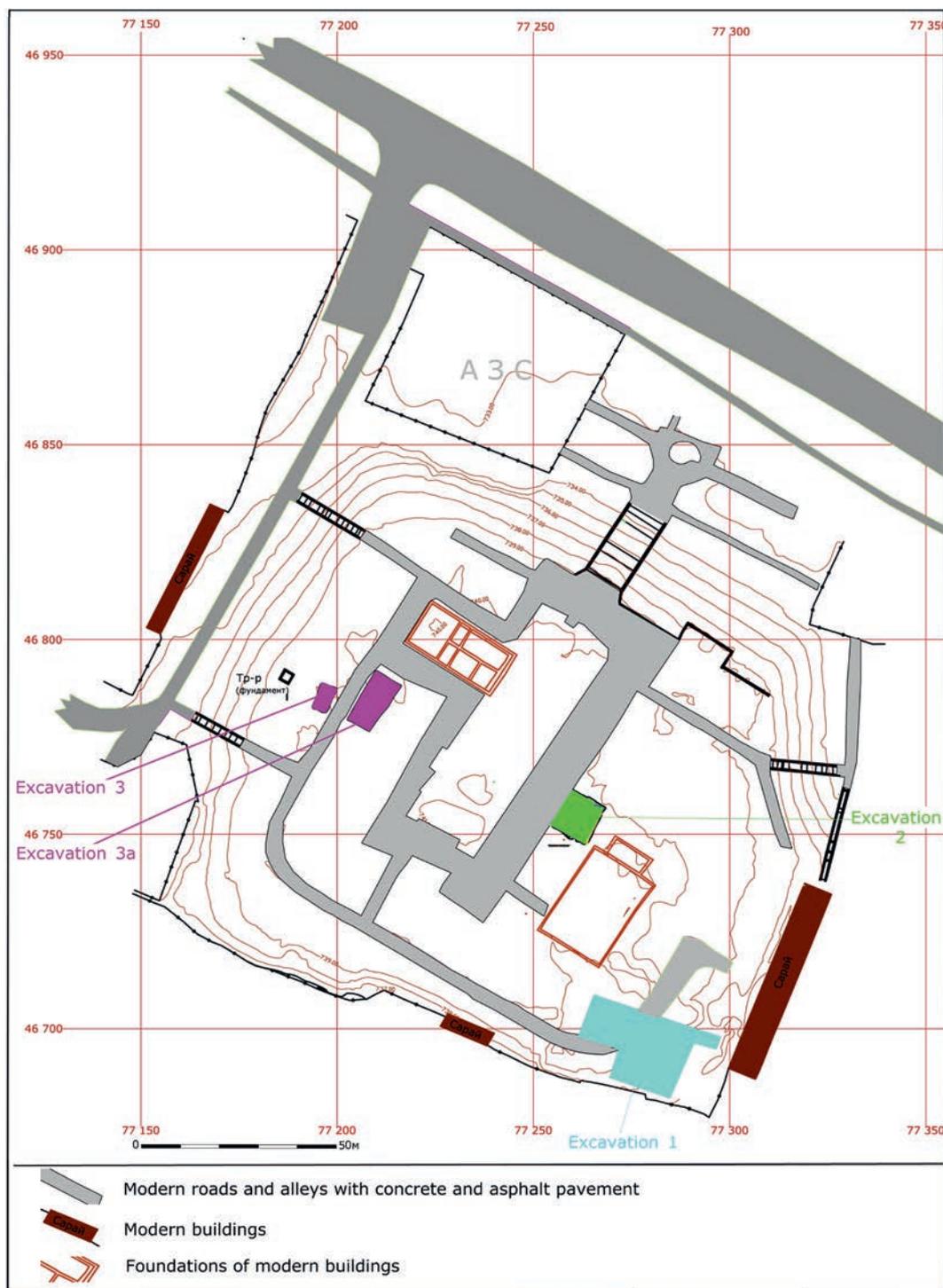


Fig. 3: Topographic plan of the site, with the remains of modern structures (drawing by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAE).

site wall, 3) inside the site wall. There is also a trench through the eastern site wall (Fig. 5).⁴ These three areas have no direct planigraphical connections through passages or adjacent walls. Stratigraphi-

cally, the situation here is clear: the upper strata of all those areas are synchronic and belong to a single Horizon A, which includes diverse building periods. Only in the third area were the building structures documented, which we designated Horizon B, and which covers three building periods.

4 The plans of different excavation years are not unified in some cases.



Fig. 4: View of Excavation 1 from the south-west, 2004 (photo by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAAE).

2 Fortification

Research on the fortification gave the following results. The eastern wall of the site was originally built on the edge of the elevation, possibly on the ancient terrace of the modern River Norus, which nowadays drains south from the mountains,⁵ and is a southern tributary of the Ču River.

The width of the site wall on the ground is around 4.4 m and its surviving height is ca. 2.5 m. It is built of *pakhsa*⁶ and consists of at least two layers of *pakhsa* blocks. The width of each row is about 1 m. On the second layer of *pakhsa*, there is a layer of mud bricks. In the trench, there were no vertical divisions to observe, so the row of *pakhsa* was a monolith along the whole wall. The external surface of the site wall is considerably affected by weathering. It has a modern vertical slope of 25–30 degrees. The site wall is opened up to 6 m, beginning from the line of the trench up the tower. No loopholes in the fortification were documented.

The tower itself was also built of *pakhsa* and was monolithic. The tower survives only partially, having been largely destroyed by weathering, and by the structures and rubbish pits made in later building periods. It can be observed that the length of the curtain⁷ of the tower is not less than 2.3 m and it is located perpendicularly to the face of the site wall. The form of the tower can be reconstructed as a drop. The towers of the citadel on the Ak-Bešim site in the Ču Valley are of the same form (SEMENOV 2002: Figs. 3–6).

5 The modern bed of the River Norus is located 3.2 km to the east. On the area between the river and the site there is one more waterlogged depression.

6 *Pakhsa*: beaten earth used as a building material.

7 Curtain: a defensive wall between two towers.

The internal surfaces of the site wall are better preserved, because they were covered up to the top with levels of filling. They have a vertical slope of 10–15°. The walls of the buildings inside the site walls are attached to it at ground level, which means that there was originally no free space along the site walls which could be used for fortification.

The question of the moat in front of the site wall is still being researched.

3 The living quarters in front of the site wall

Over the entire site, the upper layer is modern; it was formed during the construction of the House of Culture in the 1960s. It is not uniform – the ground from the central area of the site was removed to the edges outside the site walls, where this layer is much thicker. This layer is hard, mostly clayish; it contains ceramic fragments, pieces of mud bricks/*pakhsa*, and modern building materials.

This area consists of six rooms located in two rows along the eastern face of the site wall and the corner tower. In the west, they are bordered by a street which is a dead end and which abuts one of the opened rooms in the south (Room 5). In the south, the border of those rooms (including Room 5) could not be followed because of modern damage in this part of Excavation 1. To the north of Rooms 1 and 2, no building structures were documented. The thickness of the northern wall of those rooms is half a brick, but remained up to six layers of mud bricks. Based on this, we came to the conclusion that this house was partly built inside the clay massive of the

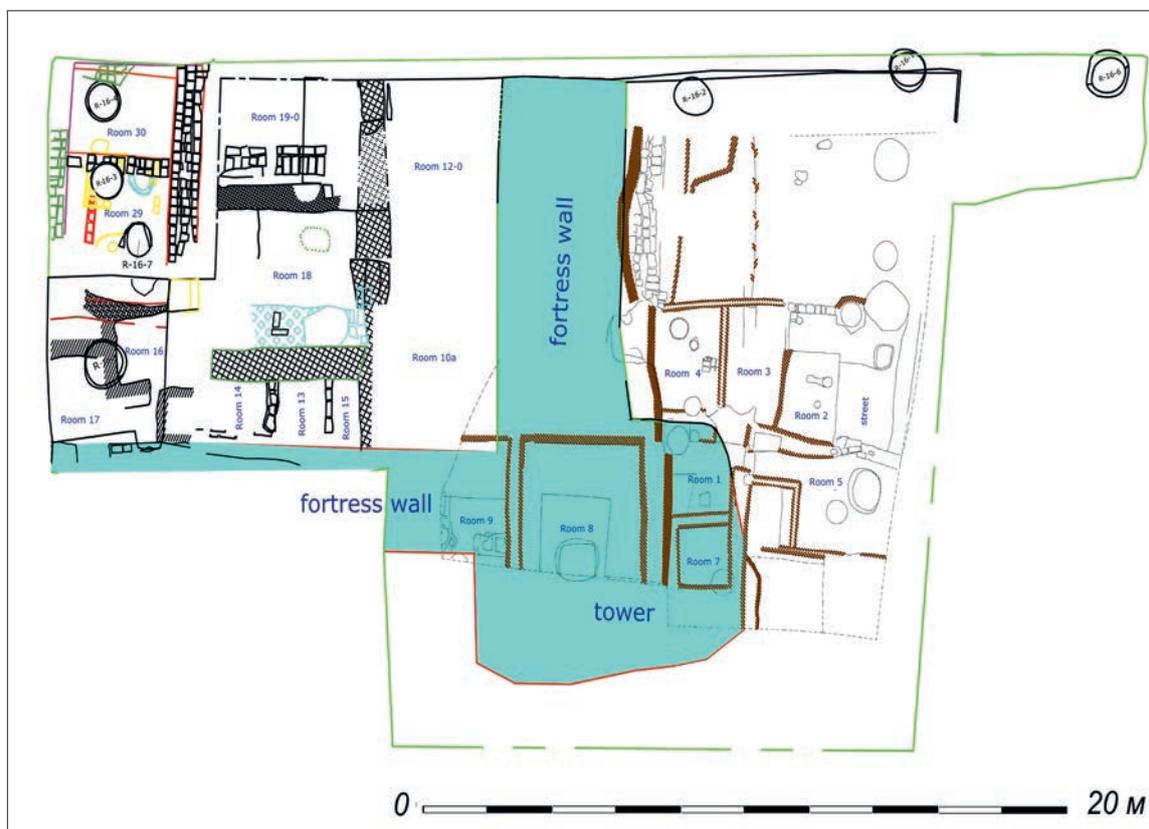


Fig. 5: Plan of Excavation 1. Building period A-1 (drawing by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAAE).

site wall and the tower. In fact, the northern wall of this house is a coat of the felled creep.

Stratigraphically, all those rooms belong to Horizon A. In the upper building period A-1, the walls of rooms were built of mud bricks and remained up to 80 cm in Rooms 1 and 2 in the north, and to one mud brick high in Room 5 in the south. Their thickness is 0.5–1 mud brick or ca. 10–25 cm. Rooms 4, 3 and 7 are attached to the site wall, which was a master wall for all of them.

The rooms are connected through the passages along one of the walls, in some cases the passages have one or two steps, which are reinforced by stones. In the rooms are documented: the *sufas*,⁸ *tandyr*,⁹ floor ovens, in one case a *tašnau*¹⁰ (Room 4). Based on all this data, we can state that we are dealing here with a part of one house.

The character of the filling (the absence of destroyed mud-brick roofs) and of building constructions (first of all, the width of walls) allow us to conclude that all those rooms had light roofs, supported on one side by the site wall and on the other by poles; on the floor in the central part of Room 4, a

stone was found that had clearly be used to support a pole.

The *sufas* which were found in some rooms of this house have two variations of construction: in one case, their external walls are made of mud bricks (thickness: 0.5 brick) three to four layers high; in the other case, of mud bricks set edge on. In both instances, their vertical and horizontal surfaces were carefully covered with plaster. In Room 5, the *sufas* occupy more than half of its area.

The entrance to this room from the north marked the end of the street. The entrance had a step and was originally closed with a door, as indicated by a posthole.

More needs to be said about Room 2. It is located in the north-eastern part of the house and corresponds with the street to the west. It opened to the street through a wide *sufa*, so there is no wall between this room and the street. In the central part of the *sufa*, there is an 8-shaped floor oven. Between the *sufa* and the northern wall of the room, there is a passage to the west into Room 1. At the eastern end of the northern wall, there is a *tandyr* open to the street. The *tandyr* itself is located in a square case made of mud bricks, and the internal surface of the *tandyr* is covered with ornamentation. It is the only *tandyr* in building period A-1. This whole structure can be interpreted as a small baker's shop.

8 *Sufa*: a kind of bed in the traditional dwellings of Central Asia.

9 *Tandyr*: a kind of oven in the traditional dwellings of Central Asia.

10 *Tašnau*: a kind of toilet in the traditional dwellings of Central Asia.

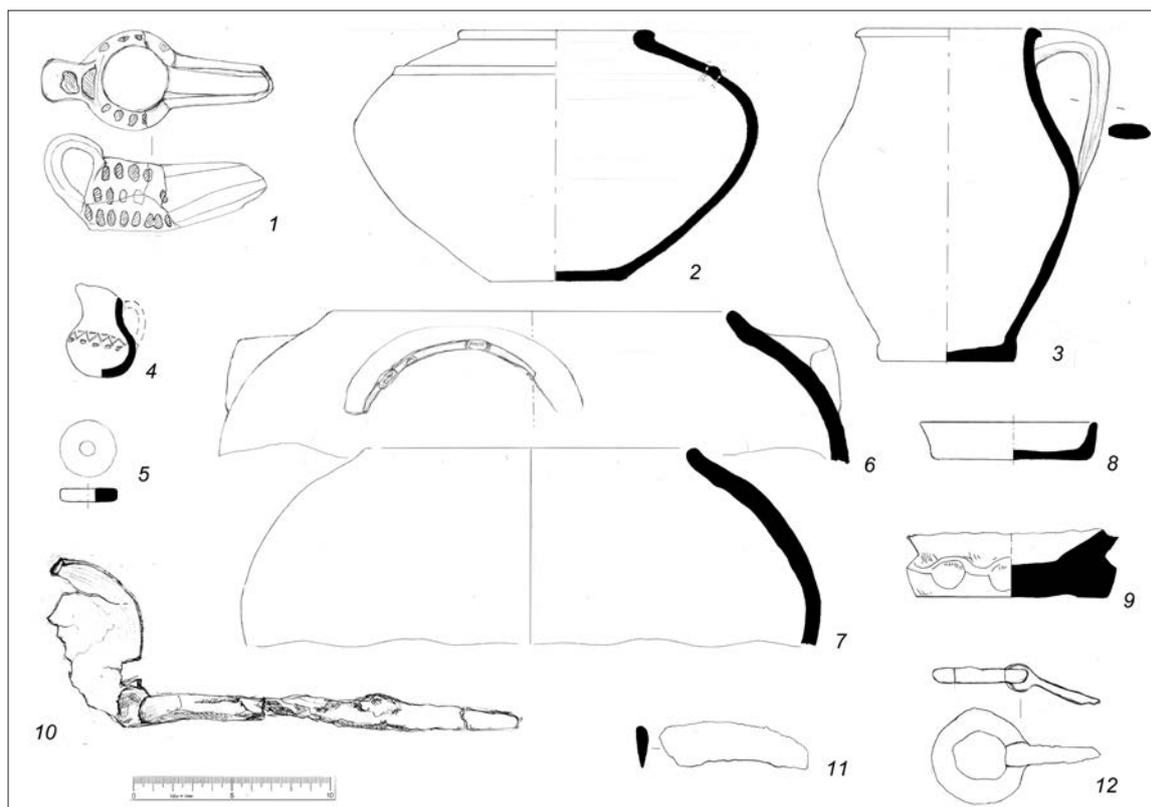


Fig. 6: Diverse finds from the strata of the building period A-1. **1, 10**: Room 9, floor; **2, 3**: Room 3, rubbish pit 3/2004; **4**: Room 4, filling; **5–7**: Room 2, *tandyr*; **8**: Room 9, *tandyr*; **9–11**: Room 3, filling; **12**: Room 6, filling; **1–9**: ceramic; **1**: white glaze; **10–12**: iron (drawings by Asan Torgoev and Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAE).

In Room 3 near the site wall there is the deep (ca. 4 m) rubbish pit (*badrab*) 03/2004,¹¹ which expands from the top to the bottom. Its mouth was stopped with mud bricks and stones, and its filling contained a rich and interesting collection of ceramics. Other *badrabs*, which can surely be associated with floors of these rooms, were not found. (Fig. 6)

In the strata of this horizon, three Karakhanid (Qarakhanid) coins were found, which could not be identified due to their condition, as well as a rich collection of ceramics.

Among the most interesting finds is a fragment of a *hum* (*khum*)¹² which bears a Sogdian inscription. It was found in the filling of Room 3 (Fig. 7:1).¹³ According to Christiane Reck (Berlin), the Sogdian inscription from the filling of the room contains following text:¹⁴

ʾyny yʾm ʾnxʾr /ʾzɣʾr pʾ

11 *Badrab*: a rubbish pit.

12 *Hum*: a large ceramic vessel for keeping solid and liquid products.

13 The analysis of the inscriptions will be done in a separate paper.

14 Email of 23 May 2005. The authors are very thankful to Dr Christiane Reck.

“This ... [belongs/contains/gave] (star/*Anxar*/...) *Pā*”

She makes following remarks:

- Other inscriptions begin also with the ʾyny (“this”). They are, however, formed so variously that no analogies are possible.

- *yʾmist* in Sogdian is not documented yet. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst pointed out that here Middle Persian/New Persian *jām* can be recovered, which is also written as *yʾm*. Indeed, *jām* means rather a vessel for drinking, while the *hum* was used for keeping dry materials. In various inscriptions the different terms of ʾyny are mentioned.

- ʾnxʾr is problematic in various aspects. “Star” would be normally written as ʾnxr, without a long a. The form of the letter allows a reading as r. Therefore the last letter must be read as w. ʾnxr means hard, stocky, and has no ending – w. ʾnxʾr (“star”) can be understood as a part of a proper name.

It is possible to read instead of ʾnxʾr also ʾzɣʾr, with z, which is often used, in this case, however, it is

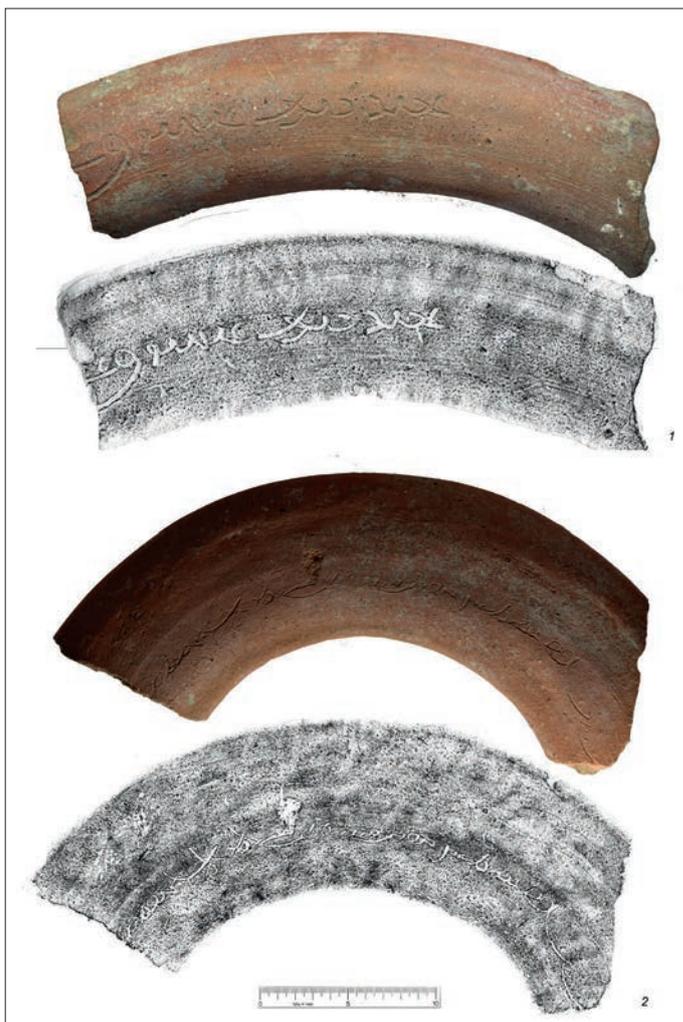


Fig. 7: Inscriptions on the *hum*'s rims: 1: Room 3, filling; 2: rubbish pit 1/2014 (photo by Valery A. Kolchenko / ©NPAAE).

written in connection with following letters. This word is documented in KG 478 (SUNDERMANN 1981: 43, 181) and translated in the context of *chr. zy'r* as (*"humidity"). The context around KG 478 is reserved very poor. There, twelve men are described who eat, make music, and "keep humidity". They can also keep a vessel in this place, of course.

Regarding the inscription of the fragments of *hum* from the rubbish pit 1/2014, she writes following:

"The second inscription is longer. But here it is practically impossible to recognise a single meaningful word. The collection of strokes at the beginning and in the middle of the remaining parts of the inscription could be interpreted as numbers: 1.: 5, 2.: 8 or 9, according to a suggestion of Peter Zieme. The following words cannot be identified as units of measurement or something

similar. Trying to read the inscription in Turkish was also not successful."¹⁵

In the earlier building period A-2, the outlines of this house were the same, but there were some changes inside the rooms. The surviving height of all building constructions (apart from those in use later, in the building period A-1) is 25–30 cm. They were cleared on this level and the area between them was filled for the construction of the floor of structures of the building period A-1.

The walls (as later) were built of mud brick. There was one main wall that was parallel to the site wall. Made of *pakhsa*, it is 25–30 cm wide. It may have originally been the external eastern wall of the house, but became its middle wall when the house was later expanded. At the northern end of this wall, and to the east of it, in Room 1a, there is a *tandyr* in a

15 Translation by Philipp Rott.



Fig. 8: Constructions of the building period A-2 and rubbish pits of the building period A-3. 1: floor-oven in Room 2a and rubbish pit 20/2006; 2: *sufa* in Room 5 and rubbish pit 06/2006 (photos by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAE).

case made of mud bricks. In the filling of the *tandyr*, some fragments of the top part of a *hum* were found.

On the floor of Room 2a near the western wall, a small floor-oven was documented, square in form and with low skirtings (Fig. 8:1).

The constructions of the building period A-2 lie on the strata cut by a huge series of rubbish pits. We ascribe all of them to building period A-3 (Fig. 8:2). In an area 15 × 8 m, more than 50 rubbish pits were counted. They have various forms: conic, barrel-shaped, and others, the diameter of the mouth ca. 1 m, the depth ca. 1.5–1.8 m. In some cases, they cut into each other. In some of the rubbish pits, no artefacts were found, their filling consisting of pieces of building materials, including pieces of mud bricks and *pakhsa*, and also some animal bones. Others provided rich collections of ceramics. In rubbish pit 1/2014, among other finds was a fragment of a *hum* with an inscription (Fig. 7:2). A big ceramics complex was collected in rubbish pit 6/2006 (Fig. 9:1–41). Based on the available data, this stratum can be dated to the first stage of the so-called Karakhanid period according to the historical chronology developed for this region.

The strata, which are cut by rubbish pits, were formed over a relatively long time. They lie on the natural slopes that descend smoothly from the bases of the site wall and the tower. The pits contain building materials, including pieces of mud bricks and *pakhsa*, and also stones. In the south-eastern corner of Excavation 1, on the level of the base of the tower (40–50 cm from its natural slope), a lenticular layer of pebbles and sand was documented. These

are obviously traces of the stream that originally flowed along the eastern site wall. Based on the thickness of this layer, 5–10 cm, it may be supposed that the stream did not run there for long.

4 The living quarters on the site wall

The second relatively separate area was opened on the south-eastern tower and the site wall. Here, two neighbouring rooms were excavated, labelled 8 and 9. Both rooms were made inside the fortification constructions and partly destroyed the last ones.

The southern wall of both rooms has not survived. The wall between these rooms, as well as the eastern wall of Room 8, was built of mud bricks whose maximum height is ca. 50 cm.

Along the eastern, northern and western walls of Room 8, *sufas* are documented. Their width varies, though their construction is identical: the external wall built of mud bricks put on the edge, which determinates their same height of 15–20 cm. The vertical and horizontal surfaces of *sufas* are covered with a coat of clay; their filling consists of clay ground with pieces of building material and fragments of ceramics.

The rooms are connected through a passage located in the southern part (only its northern end has survived). This passage possibly went along the southern wall, which has also not survived.

The single wide *sufa* in Room 9 extended along the northern wall. Its construction is different from

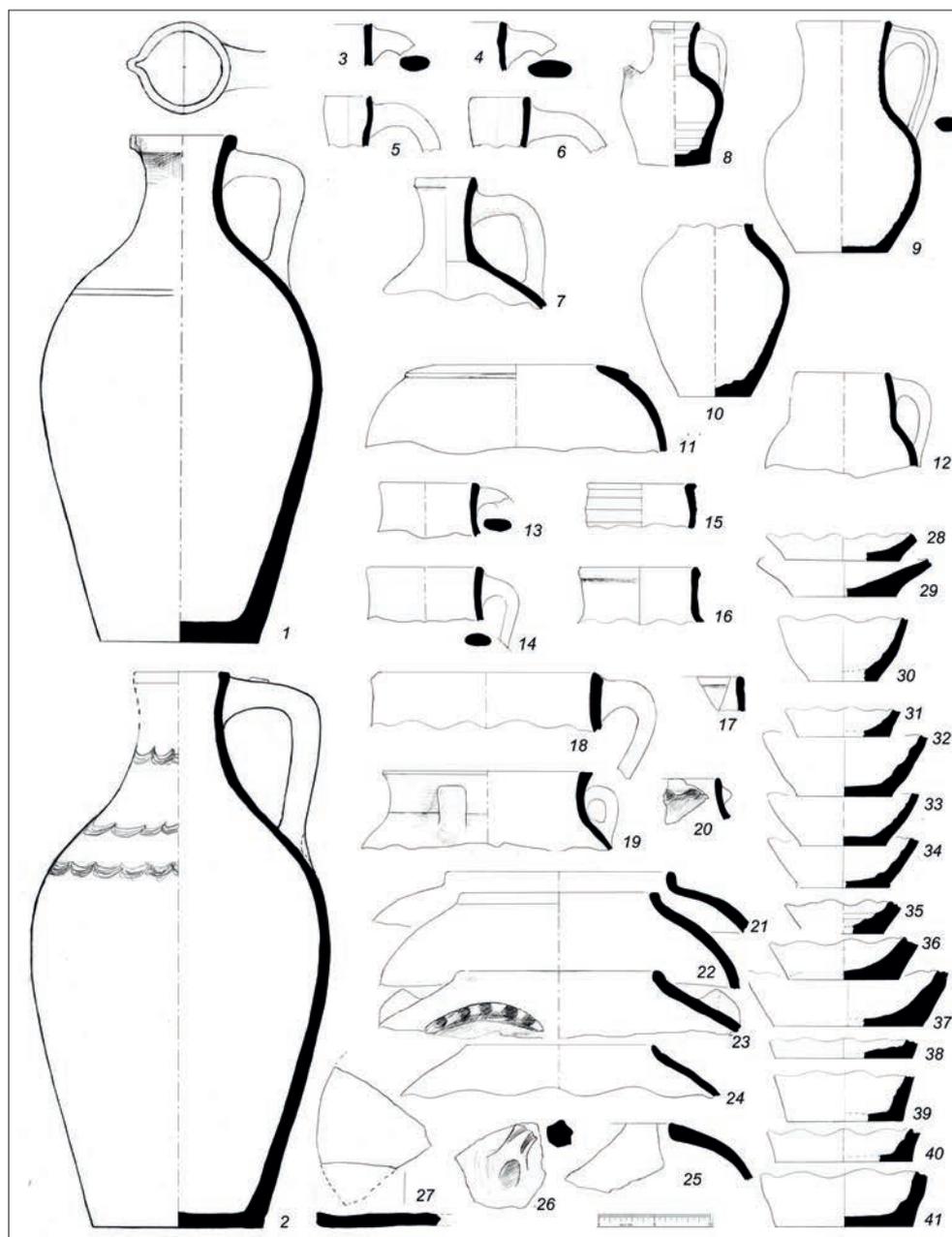


Fig. 9: 1–41: Ceramic complex from rubbish pit 6/2006 of the building period A-3
(drawing by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAE).

that of the *sufas* in Room 8: it was constructed in the body of the site wall and covered with a coat of clay.

The edge of the passage enters the southern wall of the first *tandyr*-block of Room 9. The *tandyr*-block itself consists of a floor-*tandyr* and two compartments attached to it in the east and the west. The last ones were filled with ash and charcoal. So these compartments functioned as reservoirs. The second *tandyr*-block of the same construction was located along the western wall of the room. It was attached to the *sufa* at the north. The southern wall of the second *tandyr*-block lies on the same line as the south-

ern wall of the first *tandyr*-block. There is a passage to the west from this room.

The northern wall of Room 8 is a cut surface of the site wall/tower. Plaster was documented on the surface of its top part. The northern wall of Room 9 was made in the same way, but in this case not the site wall/tower was cut, but the layers inside the site wall. That surface was covered with brickwork, which has a plaster coat.

Rooms 8 and 9 formed a complex, the first being a living room, the second a kitchen.

In the rooms, a rich complex of finds was collected, including an iron soup ladle (Fig. 6:10) and

a fragment of an unidentified wooden object found near *tandyr* 1.

For the dating of Horizon A, a Karakhanid dirham found on the floor of Room 9 is of extraordinary importance – on it can be identified the name *Sana' ad-Daula*, which is known only on the obverse of coins of *Tunkat* 444 AH.¹⁶

Because of considerable damage, the connection between Rooms 8 and 9 and the complex of Rooms 1–7 could not be determined. But both these groups of rooms are synchronic and belong to Horizon A. Based on the numismatic data, this Horizon can be dated to not earlier than the last quarter of 11th/beginning of the 12th century.

5 The living quarters inside the site wall. Horizon A

Upper Horizon A inside the site walls has an elaborate building history, and is divided into several building periods.

From the upper building period (A-0) immediately under modern layers, only Room 27 in the north-western corner of Excavation 1 has survived. It is located meridionally and is rectangular: 6.5 × 3.25 m. The walls have survived to a height of around 30 cm. It is built of mud bricks on grey mortar.

It can be assumed that most of the structures of this building period were destroyed during the building works of the 1960s.

The northern wall of the room is located mostly outside Excavation 1. It went over the wall of the lower building period; there is an ash layer of around 5–7 cm between them. The western wall was also located mostly outside Excavation 1. It was 1 brick wide. The eastern wall is almost completely destroyed.

There are three rubbish pits in Room 27, which produced interesting fragments of ceramic: coppers, their caps, and jugs. The middle of these three rubbish pits is interesting. Its mouth had a rectangular platform built of mud bricks covered with plaster; so here we are dealing with a special construction of the rubbish pit's mouth.

Near the southern wall of the room, a semicircular platform covered with plaster was documented. A burned spot from a portable oven or *tandyr* was on it. So, based on this, we can identify this room as a living room.

Under Room 27, there were two more rooms, 29 and 30: 3.45 × 3.3 and 2.6 × 3.3 m respectively. Their external outlines copy those of Room 27, but they are divided into two by the latitudinal wall in this building period. The wall is built of mud bricks. The preserved height of the walls of the room: three

layers of mud bricks, or 35–40 cm. The eastern wall was constructed in the technique in which the top part of the wall, which is a single one for the whole of Horizon A, was covered with mud bricks (0.5 brick). The northern wall was only partly documented, for it goes beyond Excavation 1. The western wall was also not documented.

In Room 29 near the northern wall, there are the remains of a floor-oven; along the western wall of the room there is a *sufa* which is ca. 1 m wide. Its external wall is built of mud bricks (thickness 0.5 brick). Only one layer of mud bricks has survived.

The following rooms, 10a, 13–18, 19–0, and 31, belong to building period A-1. The largest is Room 18, which is 3.9 × 4.5 m. Its walls are built in the regular brickwork of mud bricks of a brown colour on grey mortar (thickness 1.5 bricks). The maximum height of the remaining walls is around 1 m (six layers of mud bricks on thick mortar). No *sufas* or other structures were documented in this room. Also, no remains of building materials were found in the filling. The filling itself consisted of horizontal layers (soft grey-green ash and brown clay) which decreased in the centre. This allows us to see an open yard here.

To the east of it, Room 10a extends to the site wall; its width is around 3 m. To the south, there is Room 9. They are separated by a mud-brick wall (thickness 0.5 brick). The northern wall of Room 10a was not documented.

To the south of Room 18, there is the series of Rooms 13–15. They are (from east to the west): 1.45 × 0.9 m, 1.45 × 1.5 m, and 1.45 × 1.7 m respectively. Their southern wall is built of mud bricks (thickness 0.5 brick) and runs parallel to the eastern site wall; the distance between them is about 1 m.

To the west of Room 18, there is Room 16, which is 1.75 × 2.55 m. To the south it has a passage to the series of rooms on the site wall. The walls of the room are covered with plaster, and their surviving height is 40–60 cm. Room 16 had two *sufas*, which extend to the south and north. To the west of Room 15, there is Room 17, which was only partly excavated. To the north of Room 18 is Room 19–0. The height of all the walls is ca. 10–15 cm. Room 31, which is located to the west of Room 19–0, and to the north of Rooms 16 and 17, lies stratigraphically under Rooms 29 and 30, and was not excavated.

The condition of all these rooms does not allow us to determine their function.

Under these rooms, another series of rooms was excavated: 10b, 19a, 22 and 23. The meridional walls are aligned with those of the upper building period, while the latitudinal ones have shifted. It was clearly documented that the top parts of the latitudinal walls of this building period correspond with the bases of the same walls of the upper building period, and the bases of meridional and latitudinal walls of the new building period lie on the same

16 Identified by V.G. Koševar, Biškek.

level. The technique and materials of the latitudinal walls of both building periods are the same – they are built of mud bricks (thickness 1.5 bricks) on relatively thick mortar.

During this building period, the site walls were used as walls of the rooms. Rooms 10b and 22 and 23 are located along the southern wall, beginning from the corner of the site. They are divided by the massive meridional walls, which go to the north. The northern wall of Room 10b is not documented. The northern and western walls of Room 22 are located outside Excavation 1. Room 19a is located to the north of Room 23.

The dimensions of Room 22 are 4.3×3.35 m. The *sufas* extend along the eastern and southern walls of the room, their width being 1.3–1.35 m. A *tandyr*-block (*tandyr* in this case with a space for ash) is documented on the floor of this room, its dimensions 1.35×0.8 m. In the filling of the southern *sufa*, fragments of ceramics were found, as well as a fragment of a bronze belt plaque with an oval frame and tenon. Its length: 3.2 cm. A strongly corroded bronze coin of Turgeš/Chinese type (25 mm in diameter) was found here as well.

The dimensions of Room 23 are 2.5×5.15 m. All the walls (apart of the southern, which is a *pa-khsa* site wall) are built of mud bricks (thickness 1.5 bricks). The western and eastern walls go into the upper building period. The single passage to the north went along the western wall, but it was destroyed by rubbish pits 2/2008 and 9/2011. No *sufas* or other constructions were documented inside the room.

The documented size of Room 19a, which is located to the north of Room 23, are: 4.95×4.95 m. The western wall was outside Excavation 1. The northern wall of the room was considerably damaged by the later rubbish pits. It was built of mud bricks, and there is an oven in the room, attached to the northern wall. The room is rectangular, and the height of its wall 20–30 cm. There are *sufas* along all the walls; they are destroyed as well, so their reconstruction is problematic. The width of the southern *sufa* is 2.05 m, of the northern 60 cm. Their external walls are built of mud bricks (thickness 0.5 brick). The surviving height of the *sufas* is 1–2 layers of mud bricks, or 20–25 cm.

It is remarkable to note the increasing area of rooms in comparison to the upper ones. Based on the absence of passages in the meridional walls, it can be supposed that there are three parallel houses here. Some of the rooms had the character of living quarters, as confirmed by the presence of *sufas* and ovens. The function of Rooms 10a and 23 along the site wall is not clear.

The described building period seems to be synchronous with the building period A-2, separated outside the site walls, which can be confirmed by the detailed analysis of ceramics.

6 The living structures inside the site wall. Horizon B

Under the above-described group of rooms, a series of other rooms was opened. They belong to period B-1. They are: Rooms 10b, 12b, 19b, and 24. The area of the excavation of this period is somewhat smaller, because some western rooms have not been completely excavated.

The latitudinally oriented wall, which runs from the eastern site wall, separates the area here into two groups of rooms: Rooms 10b and 24 are located to the south, and Rooms 12b and 19b to the north of this wall.

The site wall forms the southern wall of Rooms 10b and 24.

Room 10b (5.1×4.1 m) is located in the corner of the site. In contrast to the wall of the upper horizon, the western wall is located 65 cm to the west. In this wall along the northern wall, there is a passage into Room 24b, its width 60 cm. At the time of excavation, it was filled with bricks put on in an irregular way; in the filling, a piece of burned brick was found.

In period B-2, instead of a single big room, 10b, there were two smaller ones. The latitudinal wall divides the area in two. Room 11 ($4.15\text{--}4.2 \times 1.7\text{--}1.75$ m) is located in the corner of the site. It was connected by the passage along the site wall with Room 24-b in the west, and possibly (the area here was destroyed by rubbish pit) along the western wall with Room 10 in the north. The southern and eastern walls are the site walls. The height of the eastern wall is ca. 4 m. The southern wall, which was cut during the creation of Room 9, survives to a height of 1.6–1.7 m. The western wall, built of *pa-khsa*, is monolithic, very hard, and brown in colour. As its continuation into Room 10 allows to suppose, it was constructed from the lowest floor, in other words from the level of the site walls. Its width is ca. 70 cm, its height 1.35–1.45 m from the level of building period B-2. There are some small areas of wall covered with plaster. The northern wall of the rooms neighbouring Room 10 is somewhat unusual. It was originally covered with plaster. On both sides, single mud bricks arranged chequerwise were documented. The bricks, which do not touch each other, are long and of a yellowish colour. The space between them was filled with a hard, homogeneous brown clay. For the creation of this wall, formwork was used. The width of the wall is 70–75 cm, its height 1.35–1.45 m.

Along the southern wall of the room on the floor of the period B-2, a platform was documented, built of mud bricks. It is also documented that there is brickwork in four layers along the site wall – the remains of the *sufa* along the southern wall: its width ca. 50–70 cm, its height 30–35 cm. *Sufas* of the same character went along the northern wall of the room.

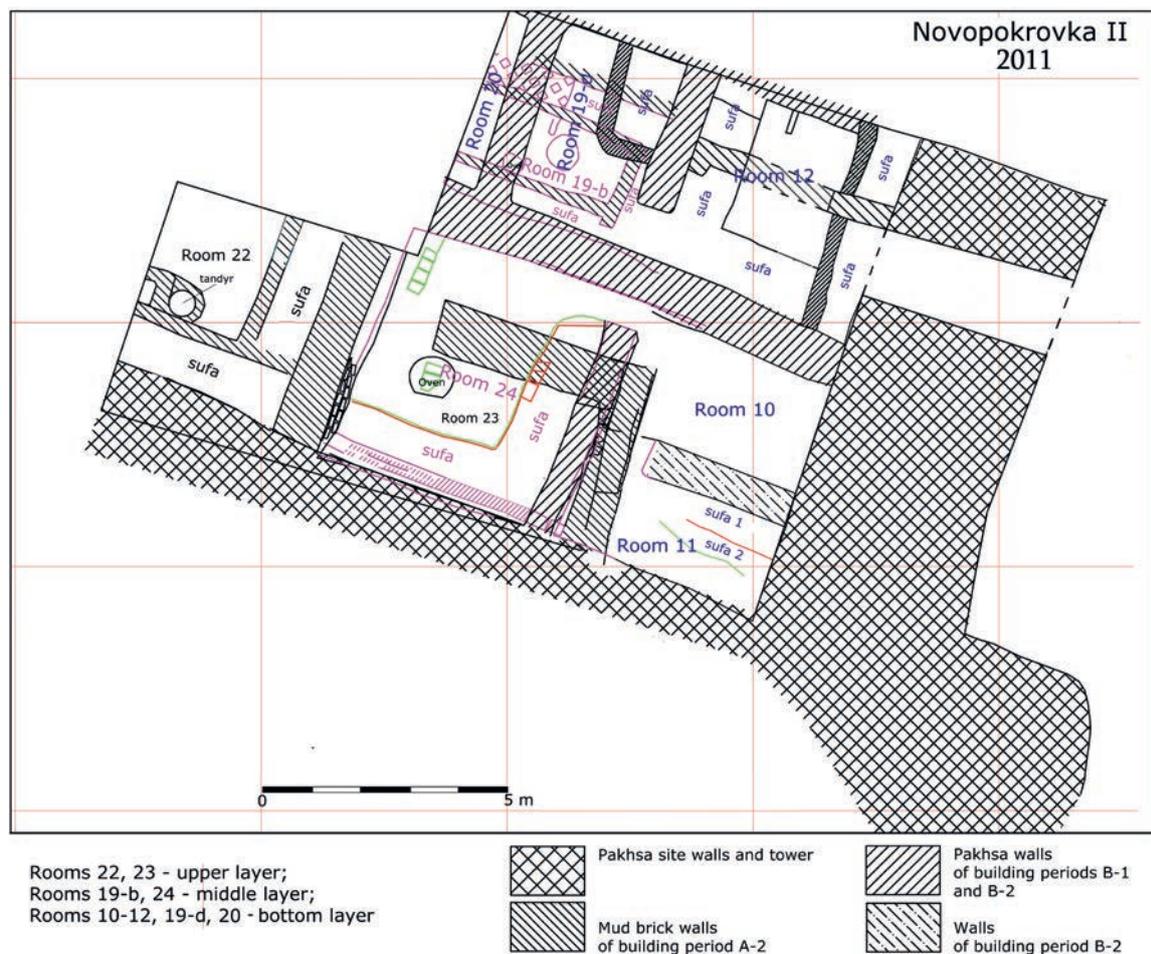


Fig. 10: Plan of Excavation 1. Building periods A-2 and B-1 (drawing by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAE).

Room 10 belongs to the building period B-2 and is located near the eastern site wall to the north of Room 11 and to the east of Room 12. It is connected through a corridor with Room 24b, which is located to the west of it; its dimensions: 4.25×2.35 m. In the period B-2, the northern wall of this room is of *pakhsa*, its southern surface is of a good quality, smooth, and ca. 1.9 m high. It is also attached to the eastern site wall; no plaster was documented. This wall is synchronic with the site wall and goes deeper into the underlying period.

The walls of the *sufa* were found in the room under the hard and patchy filling, which includes destroyed mud bricks and pieces of *pakhsa*. The *sufa* extends along the eastern wall of the room. The thickness of the *sufa*'s external wall is 0.5 brick. It is considerably damaged and documented only in parts. Its width is ca. 60 cm, its height not less than two layers of mud bricks. Its horizontal surface has been completely destroyed. In the filling of this *sufa*, some ceramics fragments were found, including the top part of the jug with a short spout and abducted sink and down spout-sink. There was probably also a *sufa* along the northern wall of the room. If so,

it was somewhat shorter. But no remains of it have been documented.

Under Rooms 10 and 11 of building period B-3, the large Room 10c was found: 4.45×4.85 – 4.9 m. Its eastern and southern walls are the site walls. Its northern wall is built of *pakhsa* of a brown colour, its width on the ground 85–90 cm. It was built on the natural ground and goes into building period B-2. Possibly it was built at the same time as the site wall – there is no gap between them. The western wall was also built of *pakhsa* of a dark-brown colour. It also goes into the period B-2. Its connection to the northern and southern walls is not clear, because it has passages at both ends.

In the north-eastern corner of this room, a *sufa* was found (2.8×1 m), extending along the northern wall. Its external walls, which are of mud bricks (thickness 0.5 brick) and have survived to a height of four layers, which is around 40 cm. The walls of building period B-2 were built from this level and the floor of this building period constructed. The space to the west was filled by two layers of mud bricks. The colour of these bricks is different from that of the bricks of the *sufa*'s external walls. It is possibly connected with the passage to the west into

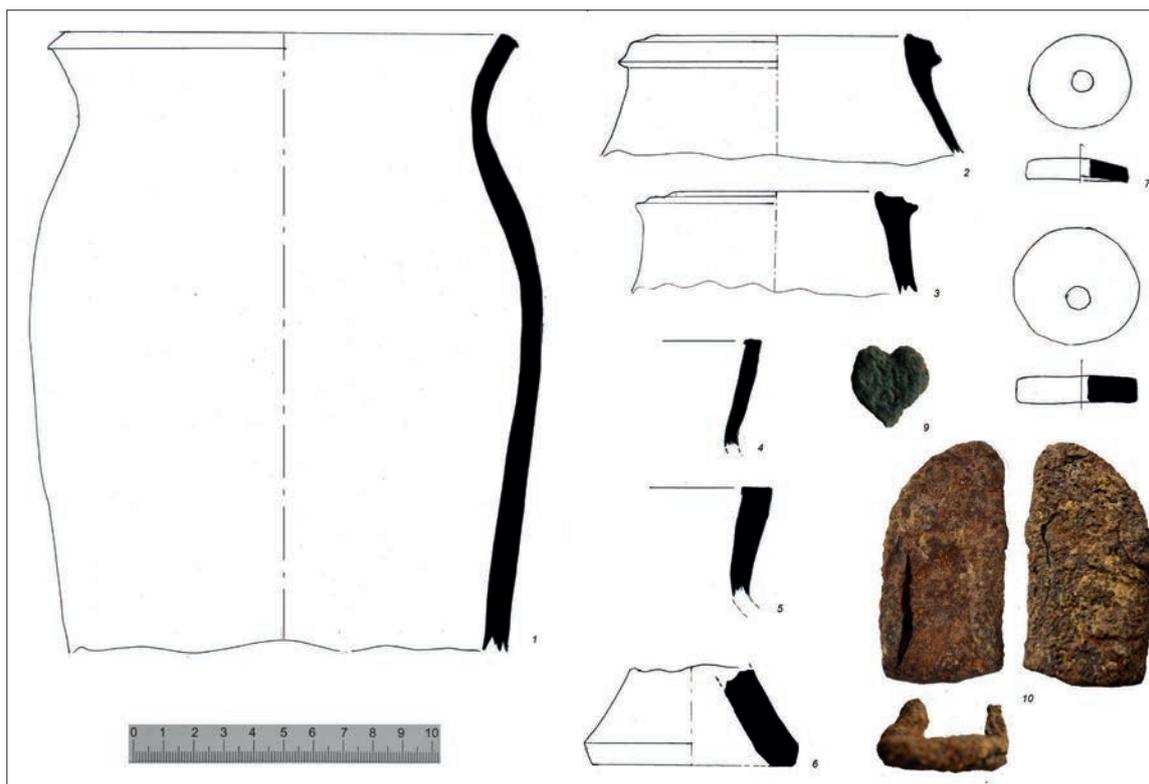


Fig. 11: Collection of finds from the *sufa* of room 24 of building periods B-1/B-2. 1–8: ceramics; 9: bronze; 10: iron (drawings and photos by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAE).

Room 26. The *sufa* is divided into two parts by the wall. In the eastern part, there are traces of burning on the surface of the site wall, and it is assumed that there was a stationary oven here which was later destroyed by the filling of the *sufa* during the creation of the constructions of building period B-2.

A *sufa* of the same character went along the southern wall, its width 1.3 m. But its external wall is built of mud bricks and its thickness is one brick (followed only on the lower layer).

The walls of *sufas* in the northern part of the room cover the mouths of three rubbish pits, the diameter and the depth of which are quite small; one of them is a little oblique. A relatively small collection of ceramics in small fragments was found inside them. The rubbish pits appear to date from the early days of the site.

Room 24 was only partly excavated. Its western wall is located outside Excavation 1 in this building period. The excavated dimensions: 5.15 × 4.5 m.

On the southern wall of the room, which is the site wall at the same time, vertical clayish layers are followed, coming from the level of the floor of Room 23 to the *sufas*. The width of each layer is ca. 1.5–2.5 cm. It gives us grounds to claim that this room was abandoned for a while, which allowed to the atmospheric condensation to flow down the site wall.

The above-described block of mud bricks is remarkable. It is almost horizontal, with a slight slope of 1–2 degrees to the north; it was followed to ca. 2 m and goes to the edge of Excavation 1; the western face of this block is almost parallel to the last one. The base of this block is built of layers of mud bricks on mortar. To the west, three such layers are documented; possibly there were more. The location of these mud bricks is characteristic of arch constructions. However, the absence of any roundness, as well as the stratigraphic location of this block, speak against this suggestion.

Along the southern and eastern walls there are *sufas*, their width 1.0 and 1.2 m respectively. The external wall of the eastern *sufa* is built of mud bricks, its thickness 0.5 brick. There are two layers of mud bricks, so its height is ca. 20–25 cm. The filling of this *sufa* is a soft ground with small ceramic fragments and small pieces of mud bricks. Two *hums* were also found inside the *sufa*, dug into the ground. It is interesting to note that one of them is integrated into the bottom of the other *hum*, which stood here before, belonging to building period B-2. In the filling of *hums*, a bronze heart-shaped plaque with ornamentation was found, as well as an iron instrument in the form of a *teša*¹⁷ (Fig. 11:1–10). A bronze coin

17 *Teša*: an instrument in the shape of a hoe.



Fig. 12: Rooms 24c, 25, and 26 of building period B-3 (photo by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAAE).

of the so-called *Tuchsi* type (17.15 mm in diameter) was also found here.

The southern *sufa* is more monolithic; in its filling are mostly pieces of the mud bricks. Two levels of this *sufa* were documented, which correlates with *hums* put inside each other. It also corresponds to two building periods, B-1 and B-2, which are documented in this room.

The *sufa* also went along the western wall of the room, but it was so extremely decayed that its borders could be not accurately documented. Its construction was the same as that of the southern one, built fully of clay. The surfaces of the *sufas*, as well as the floor of the room, were covered with a coat of clay.

There is a burned spot in the southern part of the *sufa*, ca. 1 m in diameter. At its centre is a row of three burned bricks (36 × 18 × 4 cm) of a grey-blue colour, which are oriented north-south. In the southern part, there is a mud brick. These details allow us to conclude that there was a floor- or *sufa*-oven here.

On the floor near the oven, a so-called Turgeš coin was found (24 mm in diameter), as well as a fragment of bronze belt plaque with a rectangular hole, in the south-western corner of Excavation 1 (building period B-1). Under the above-described remains of the oven, the remnants of another oven were found. It was approximately square, measured 1.05 × 1.0 m, and was built of mud bricks (25 × 22 × 8–9 cm and 25 × 16 × 8–9 cm).

The room of building period B-2 was designated Room 24b.

In the next building period, B-3, this large room, 24 b, was divided into three further rooms, 24c, 25, and 26, using thin *pakhsa* walls (Fig. 12).

Room 24c occupies the south-eastern part of Room 24b. It is located meridionally and measures 3.5 × 1.85 m. To the east of it there is Room 10a, to the west Room 25, to the north Room 26. The southern wall of this room is the site wall. The eastern wall is built of *pakhsa*, the western and northern ones are built of mud bricks.

Along the southern wall there is a *sufa*, its width 1.1 m wide, its surviving height 20 cm. The external wall of the *sufa* is built of mud bricks. The *sufa* has been very badly damaged by rubbish pits 2/2009 and 2/2012. It can be supposed that there was a passage along the site wall into Room 10a to the east; in the later building periods, it was filled with mud bricks.

The western wall had a thin layer of plaster (3–4 mm) on its surface; it has remained on some areas. Near the northern wall, a spot with small stones was excavated. It goes partly to the western wall, and can be interpreted as a destroyed base of a support post of the roof/any other construction. The northern wall was also covered with plaster.

Along the eastern wall there was possibly a *sufa* as well. If so, it was no wider than 70 cm. A series of mud bricks to the north of rubbish pit 2/2009 indicates this. This rubbish pits destroyed all possible construction in the southeast corner of the room.

There were few finds, mostly ceramic fragments (Fig. 13:1–3). Among these is the top part of a burner. The burner has a small round reservoir with 16 rays on its edge, the base is monolithic

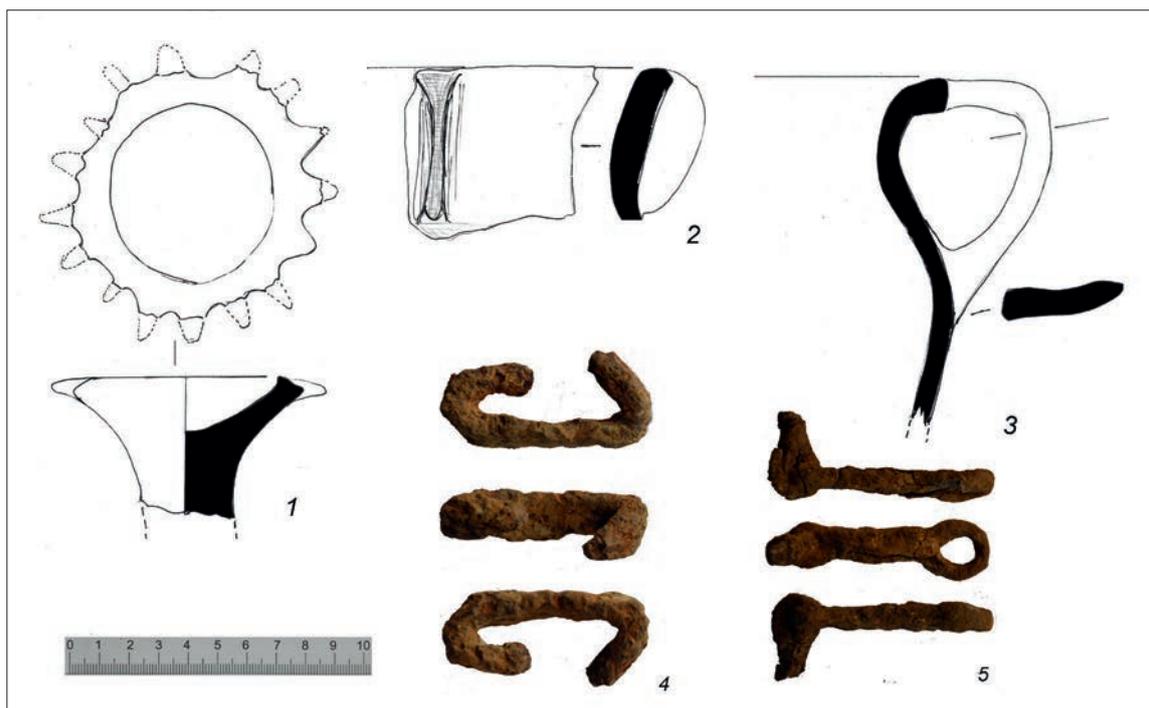


Fig. 13: Some finds from the strata of the building periods B-3. 1–3: Room 24c; 4: Room 26; 5: Room 24; 1–3: ceramic; 4–5: iron (drawings and photos by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAAE).

(Fig. 13:1). It was found on the floor in the southern part of the room. A big bronze belt buckle with tongue was found under the floor of Room 24b.

Room 25 occupies the south-western part of Room 24b of building period B-2. It is also located meridionally, its dimensions being 3.15–3.2 × 1.9 m. To the east of it is Room 24c, to the north Room 26, and to the south the site wall. The single narrow (50 cm) passage to Room 26 went along the eastern wall. It has a wide step, the height of which is ca. 7–10 cm. It is possible that there was another passage along the western wall, but it could not be identified because the western wall of the room is located outside Excavation 1.

There was a *sufa* in the room along the southern wall. Its width is 0.95–1.0 m. The external wall of the *sufa* is made of mud bricks, which has survived to a height of two layers of mud bricks, or 20–25 cm.

Near the northern wall there was a construction built of stones and clay, ca. 80 × 60 cm: the base of the pole. Its height is the same as that of the walls.

Among the finds from this room is a two-part iron ring-bit (found in fragments) (Fig. 13:5). There are also some ceramic fragments.

Room 26 occupies the northern part of Room 24b. It is extended latitudinally, its dimensions being: 1.1–1.2 × 4.35 m. To the east is located Room 10a, to the north Room 19d, to the west a border of Excavation 1, to the south the above-described Rooms 24c and 25.

The northern wall of the room is the main one; built of *pakhsa*, it begins from the eastern site wall in

Room 10c and goes into the western border of Excavation 1. It has no plaster. The southern wall, built of mud bricks, has been destroyed. Along the northern wall there is a passage to Room 25, its width 60 cm.

In the eastern part of the room, near the southern wall, there are the remnants of construction which could not be precisely identified; it was possibly a *tandyr*-block. A flint was found on the floor of this room (Fig. 13:4).

7 Rooms of the northern part of Excavation 1

To the north of the above-mentioned main wall in building period B-1, which is latitudinally oriented, there are Rooms 12b and 19b.

Located near the site wall, this room is designated Room 12b. Its dimensions in building period B-1: 3.75–4.5 × 4.2 m.

In period B-2 under Room 12b, two rooms, 12 and 12a, were found. The wall between them was built of mud bricks of yellowish colour, its maximal remained height 80 cm, its width 50 cm. In its central part, it was cut by rubbish pit 15/2009, which dropped from the level of the fall that appeared inside the room.

The northern room of the building period B-2, Room 12a, has the following dimensions: 1.3 × 4.2 m. It has a passage running in a northern direction along the site wall. The width of this passage is 1.35 m. Along the northern wall, the re-

mains of *sufas* were documented, extremely eroded and damaged. They were covered by a thin layer of sand and pebbles, which indicates that there was a stream here at that time, possibly a mudflow. The southern wall of Room 12a was built of mud bricks of a yellowish colour, its width 1.5 bricks. The four to five layers of mud bricks of this wall have survived, its height ca. 1 m.

In the bottom part of the waste ground in Room 12, the mouth of rubbish pit 32/2008 was found. It cuts through the layers to the floor and even deeper into the natural ground. A very interesting and rich collection of ceramics was obtained from the filling of this rubbish pit. Some forms are very specific, for example, pots with cuff-rims.

It was found that Rooms 12 and 12a had been a single room, 12c, in building period B-3, its dimensions 4.1 × 3.15 m.

The southern wall, which is adjacent to Room 10c, is of a good quality. It is covered with two layers of plaster. The lower layer is raw and contains straw, the upper layer is of fine clay of yellowish colour. The northern wall of the room is built of mud bricks on yellowish mortar. The room has *sufas* along all the walls, which are located on different levels. The eastern *sufa* crossed the whole room, its width 1.1–1.15 m. Its external wall is built of mud bricks in regular brickwork. The thickness is 0.5 brick, its height 2–3 layers of mud bricks. The southern *sufa* was attached to it; its width is 1.2 m, so it was higher. Its external wall was built of lengthy mud bricks of yellowish colour, put on the edge; its height is 38 cm. The height of the western *sufa* is similar to that of the southern one, and has a single surface with it. Its width is 1–1.05 m. The northern *sufa* is badly decayed and could not be measured correctly. Its amorphous remains went along the northern wall to a height of ca. 1 m.

On the *sufa*'s level, Room 12c has passages running in a western direction along the southern wall to Room 19d, and in a northern direction along the eastern wall (outside Excavation 1).

Immediately on the floor of the room was the mouth of rubbish pit 14/2009. The mouth was covered with a floor's good quality clay daub. It has a very specific plate-form. Its construction can be explained by the fact that the builder of the room needed to level the natural micro-relief of this area, covering the gaps. Its filling is a soft clay ground with organic inclusions and charcoal. In the filling, the small ceramic fragments and pieces of mud bricks were found. Rubbish pit 14/2009 was later cut by rubbish pit 32/2008, which partly destroyed the western *sufa* of this room.

The ceramic complex, which was collected on the floor of Room 12c, consists of fragments of vessels with cuff-decorated mouth with ornamentation on it, as well as a fragment of a cap of the vessel.

In building period B-1, Room 19b was located to the west of Room 12b and the north of Room 24a. It had a common northern wall with Room 19. Its width is 75–80 cm. The western wall was not documented, as it is located outside Excavation 1. The eastern wall was not clearly documented; it was built of mud bricks. In the next building period, a *pakhsa* wall appears in this area which stands on the natural ground. The southern wall of the room is built of mud bricks and is in poor condition. Its surviving height is ca. 20–30 cm. The documented dimensions of Room 19b are 2.9 × 4.75 m.

There are *sufas* along the walls, their external walls built in a regular brickwork in 0.5 brick. Layers 1 and 2 are extant. The width of the *sufas*: 55–60 cm (*sufa* along the eastern wall) and 80–90 cm (*sufa* along the northern wall). The horizontal surfaces of the *sufas* were not documented, so we have no data to reconstruct their original height.

The condition of Room 19b (as well as of Room 19a), both wall and floors, is very poor, for rubbish pits were dug during upper building periods.

Under the floor of Room 19b there is Room 19c, belonging to building period B-2. The northern wall is located on the border of Excavation 1, so its width could not be measured. It is built of mud bricks (50–52 × 22–24 × 8–9 cm) of yellowish clay on thick mortar (ca. 7–8 cm) of a browner clay. The wall was covered with plaster. There are clear ash layers between this wall and the level of building period B-1. The width of the western wall, which is built of *pakhsa*, is not less than 0.5 m. The southern and eastern walls are also built of *pakhsa*. The room's dimensions are 3.65–3.7 × 3.25–3.3 m.

Along all walls there are *sufas*. Their horizontal surfaces are in a good condition. Their height is 20–25 cm, and their width is 1.1 m (northern), 1.05–1.1 m (eastern), 65–70 cm (southern) and 45–60 cm (western).

All those *sufas* are monolithic, built of *pakhsa*. The surfaces of the *sufas* and of the floor were covered with a single layer of clay plaster.

There is one passage to Room 12 along the southern wall to the east, its width being 1.05–1.1 m. In the centre of the room, there is a rectangular elevation 75 × 95 cm, and 10–15 cm high.

The room was filled with a hard, wet clay ground. It is to suppose that during the construction of Room 19b, the walls of Room 19c were partly destroyed and their remains were used filling material.

Here a series of ceramic fragments was found, mostly of a wheel production. They give an idea of the forms of vessels.

More should be said about two artefacts. On the southern *sufa*, a big fragment of a disc of a thin bronze mirror (60–65 mm in diameter) was found, and inside the *sufas* of this room, a three-bladed iron

arrowhead. Its shaft is broken. The remaining length of the tip is 4.5 cm.

Further excavation of Room 19 allowed us to reach the last or the lowest building period, B-3, with Room 19d. This room is rectangular, aligned west to east, and measures 2.55 × 3.9 m. It has a single passage into Room 12 along the southern wall. In other words, Room 19c, which is located above it, copies its plan.

Its floor is ca. 0.95–1.05 m deeper than the level of the floor of Room 19c. The walls which were used in building period B-2 went from the level of building period B-3.

The room was filled with very hard and wet ground, so its excavation was somewhat complicated.

Here the parts of the *sufa* along the eastern wall of the room were documented. Its dimensions: 2.27 × 1.25–1.45 m. In the filling of the *sufa* on its floor, a layer of the gravel was found.

In the filling between Rooms 19c and 19d, only one iron tip of an arrow (length 45 mm) with a long pyramid-formed tetrahedral head was found, along with three small ceramic fragments.

In front of the entrance, a trench was cut that showed that under the floor level of this room is natural ground – sterile clay of a reddish colour.

The area to the west of Rooms 19c and 19d was designated Room 20. It was only partly opened. Situated at the edge of Excavation 1, this opening goes 50 cm along the northern wall and 1.3 m along the southern wall.

In the south-eastern corner of this room, rubbish pit 7/2010 was found. It goes from the level of the floor of the rooms of building period B-2. The diameter of its opening is 90 cm. The pit cuts the southern and partly the eastern site walls. Its filling is a soft ground with ash inclusions, pieces of mud brick, and ceramic fragments.

8 Some analytical remarks

The archaeological work done in Excavation 1 allows us to state that the original settlement inside the site walls appeared not earlier than the second half of the 7th/the beginning of the 8th century. The upper layers which were documented belong to the end of 11th to the early 12th century. Nevertheless, the finding of the fragment of the *kašin*¹⁸ vessel in the upper covered layer does not exclude the possibility that the settlement existed later, in the Mongol era. But the layers of this time, even if they existed, were considerably damaged by the constructions of the House of Culture in 1960s.

Stratigraphically, two large horizons, A and B, were documented with some building periods in-

side each of them. Between Horizons 1 and 2, the period of destruction (A-4) has been documented, which stratigraphically belongs to the second half of 8th and the 9th century; if there was any occupation of the settlement, it was very limited. This question is still being analysed in a context of correlation with the other settlements of the region, as well as with the data from written sources.

The issue of the time and the extent of the final destruction of the settlement is made problematic by the extensive modern destruction of the upper strata. Of the upper two strata, Horizon A is well dated based on the numismatic finds and belongs to the last quarter of 11th to the first half of the 12th century. Those are typical for Karakhanid-period living quarters, which were destroyed by natural forces, there being no traces of fire or the other damage.¹⁹ On this site, it seems, we can extrapolate a situation that has been documented on other settlements in the Ču Valley, where the last were laid waste in the second half of the 12th to the beginning of the 13th century and later had living activity only sporadically.

The detailed analysis of the ceramics and the other artefacts, based on the micro-stratigraphy, as well as a building technique, will be carried out in the special monographic research. We can now set out some general aspects.

The ceramic complex from the rooms of the building periods A-1 and A-2 have good parallels with those from the settlements of the Karakhanid era of the Ču Valley (its developed stage), first of all of Krasnaya Rečka and Ak-Bešim. Those are coppers, *ħums* (*khums*) and *humčas* (*humchas*)²⁰ *tagoras*,²¹ *čirags*,²² and glazed pottery.

The complex of the material culture of this period (ceramics complex, metal objects, as well as a building technique and fortification) has broad parallels in Middle Asia. This can be explained by the fact that the diverse regions were unified in the single Karakhanid state at this time, where within the tactically uniform borders objects spread rapidly due to fashion, so there was a standardisation of material culture. This historical factor had also a very important influence in particular on the fortification – on the Novopokrovskoe 2, as well as on the other settlements, we documented the destruction of the defensive structures. At the Novopokrovskoe 2 the site, walls and towers do not function any more at this time, living quarters appearing on them. The same processes can be seen, for example, at Afra-

19 A.M. Korženkov, who studied the architectural remains of Novopokrovskoe 2, came to the conclusion that diverse earthquakes played a role in the destruction here; KORŽENKOV/KOL'ČENKO/ROTT/ABDIEVA 2012: 1–13.

20 *Humča*: a small ceramic vessel for keeping solid and liquid products.

21 *Tagora*: a ceramic vessel in the form of a bowl.

22 *Čirag*: a lamp.

18 *Kašin*: a kind of ceramic.



Fig. 14: Fragment of a ceramic jug with an image of a musician from the building period A-3 (photos by Valery A. Kolchenko/©NPAE).

siab, where the necropolis Shah-i-Zinda appears along the site walls.

Nevertheless, a series of ceramic vessels from these layers is unique in forms for the Ču Valley, for example, a turnip-formed vessel, decorated with paste inserts on its neck, which came from rubbish pit 03/2004 (Fig. 6:2).

The ceramic complex from the rubbish pits of building period A-3 belongs to the early stage of the Karakhanid period based on the finding of a glazed *čirag* with conic reservoir without the catch on the handle, in one of the rubbish pits, along with a series of fragments of glazed pottery. Some of rubbish pits gave a series of so-called oven stands (*kurylnizas*), which are decorated with a rich carved, mostly floral, ornamentation. A.N. Bernštam, who carried out the first systematic archaeological works in the Ču Valley, connected such oven stands with Sogdian colonisation and Zoroastrian-shaman rituals, and dated them to the 5th to 6th centuries CE (BERNŠTAM 1950: 115–117). This dating was based not only on the materials of the excavations, but also on the common historical context. The finds from Panjik-

ent were not available to that time; there were only the publications of G.V. Grigoryev describing his excavations in Tali-Barzu (GRIGOR'EV 1940). Nowadays, it is obvious that it is not a Sogdian tradition, because those objects do not find parallels in Sogdia (in Čač there are only a few examples known). Their technique and ornamentation have, on the contrary, sound parallels in the Middle Syr Darya, in the materials of so called Džetyasarskaya culture, which is dated to the 7th to the 9th centuries CE (LEVINA 1971: 80–86, Figs. 20, 21). However, there are considerable variations in vessel forms there.

It is important to mention a unique find which belongs to the building period A-3 (Fig. 14). It comes from rubbish pit 22/2007, the mouth of which is located under the level of the floor of Room 5. It is the fragment of a jug; its spout is short and widens slightly at the top, and it has a flat shoulder and a kneed-form handle. On the top of the handle there is an oval relief, which was separately made in a special form – *kalyb*²³ – and put on the handle. The re-

²³ *Kalyb*: a form for producing items from different materi-

lief is of a sitting musician seen frontally. He wears a caftan without neckline that ends at the knees. The top part of the clothing is not presented in detail. The face is oval, with a short forehead. On his head is a diadem with high decorative elements, and in the right ear is an earring. Behind the head there is a ribbon, which comes down the body.

In the hands of the musician there is a string instrument with an oval body and a fingerboard on which there are three strings.

An anthropomorphic image for the Karakhanid period, when Islam became a state religion, seems unlikely. However, there are many anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images of this time from the Ču Valley, including some in metal. This fact reflects the degree to which the local population had assimilated Islam.

The instrument is a type of lute (or *barbat*),²⁴ which appeared in Central Asia most possibly due to Hellenism. Among many examples known in Central Asia is a similar example from the settlement of Kanka (Shash/Čăč) in Tashkent oases which belongs, according to the authors of excavation, to the pre-Islamic period, 5th century CE.²⁵

In the ceramic complexes of the strata of building periods B-2 and B-3, hand-made vessels dominated. In particular, it is a vessel with vertical handles and the fragment of a figure of an idol. However, there are vessels made on the pottery wheel, fully or partly. So there are, for example, *hums* and *humčas*, the rims of which are adjusted on the pottery wheel. These vessels have an egg form, the diameters of the bottom and the mouth are about the same, they have small vertical necks, and their rims are rectangular or square in section, turned-out and decorated with tucks, which disappear later.

Among this complex there are some forms known in the archaeological publications as “burners”. This type of vessels is widespread in all regions of Central Asia, and there are such vessels in the ceramic complex of this period from Novopokrovskoe 2. One of them in particular has a rectangular reservoir and hollow tray. The rims vary: in one case, the rim is just turned down, in the other it has a toothed form. We could not find any traces of burning on these vessels, which could indicate that they really were used as incense burners. The vessels of such form from the other regions of Middle Asia, which have not direct genetic connections, are known as goblets or vases. In the publications on the northern regions of Middle Asia, they are broadly dated to the 6th to 8th centuries. Based on our stratigraphy, and what has been mentioned above, they can be dated not earlier than the 8th century.

als, including clay.

24 For more on this topic, see DŽANI-ZADE 2010: 232–276.

25 VYZGO 1980: ill. 28.

The lowest stratum stratigraphically correlates with structures built on the natural ground. In the ceramic complex from this stratum, there are some handmade vessels which have a kitchen function. Those are mostly not coppers but rather pots. They have a flat bottom, egg-shaped body, and a short spout. In some cases, their rim is vertical, added with three vertical moulds. In the other cases the vessels have a cuff with a decoration in the form of rows of 4–5 pinched points along the rim. Such kind of decoration is specific. Until our excavation, these ceramic vessels were not known in the Ču Valley. In the latest republication of materials of the Ak-Bešim’s excavations 1953–1954 by L.R. Kyzlasov, where the detailed ceramic tables are presented, we could identify some close profiles. However, they are not commented on (KYZLASOV 2006: ill. 47, 38–39–43).

The parallels to those vessels can be found in the materials of the Syr Darya region (for example: Džety-Asar, Bolšoi Dom No. 3, Džety-Asar No. 9), assembled by L.M. Levina and her colleagues. In her monograph, she dated these to the 4th to the 7th centuries, with a possible prolongation into the 8th century (LEVINA 1971: 17, 20, ill. 3, 149–153, 159–160; 24, ill. 6, 86–90, 96–97). Based on the materials of Novopokrovskoe 2, we date them to the 8th century – in the strata there are so called Turgeš coins which are dated not earlier than CE 699, when the Turgeš dynasty has replaced the West Turkish one in the region.

So our research allows us to speak about one more line in the development of the tradition of urbanisation in the Ču Valley which had not yet been defined. That is a Syr Darya line. Now we can see that the cultural development in the region was much more complex than former researchers have assumed. The following played a significant role in this process: that of Syr Darya, Sogdian and Chinese.²⁶ The autochthonic urban development among the local population is becoming more evident.

The concept of Sogdian colonisation proposed and developed in the studies of V.V. Bartol’d and A.N. Bernštam should be reviewed based on the new materials. For the Ču Valley, as we assume, the infiltration of a Sogdian population (in the broadest sense) is correlated mostly with the Arab invasion of the Middle Asia, so it took place somewhat later. As an indirect argument, the Sogdian inscriptions

26 It is known, for example, that the Chinese built a Dayun Buddhist monastery in Suyab/Ak-Bešim (FORTE 1994: 41–57). There is generally a lot of evidence of Chinese influence on the cultural development in the Ču Valley. The Chinese were present in the region at least until their defeat in the battle against the Arabs on the River Talas in 751 CE, possibly even longer. The whole Buddhist tradition in the Ču Valley seems to be predominantly influenced by the Chinese at this time; for more on this, see ROTT (forthcoming).

on the *hums* can be mentioned, which are a confirmation of the information provided by Mahmud al-Kāschgharī, according to whom the Sogdian language was widespread in the country of Argu.²⁷

So the early stage of the urban development in the Ču Valley, which is still associated with Sogdian colonisation and known in the scientific literature as a Sogdian phase, should now be understood somewhat differently.

Unfortunately, to date our excavations have not produced clear finds to confirm the Buddhist character of the original structures inside the site walls. Historically, and based on the complex of Buddhist artefacts discovered during the construction of the House of Culture in the 1960s, and its date, such structures should be correlated with Horizon B. This point will be clarified by the continuation of archaeological work, first of all on Excavation 2 in the centre of the site.

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27 The country of Argu is firmly connected with the settlement of the valleys of the Ču and Talas rivers (KLÂŠTORNYJ 2003: 168–181).