

**Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan**  
**The Ikuo Hirayama International Caravanserai of Culture**

**REPORT**  
on archaeological excavations  
at the Qarshovul Tepa site  
in the Chinaz district of the Tashkent region  
in 2024

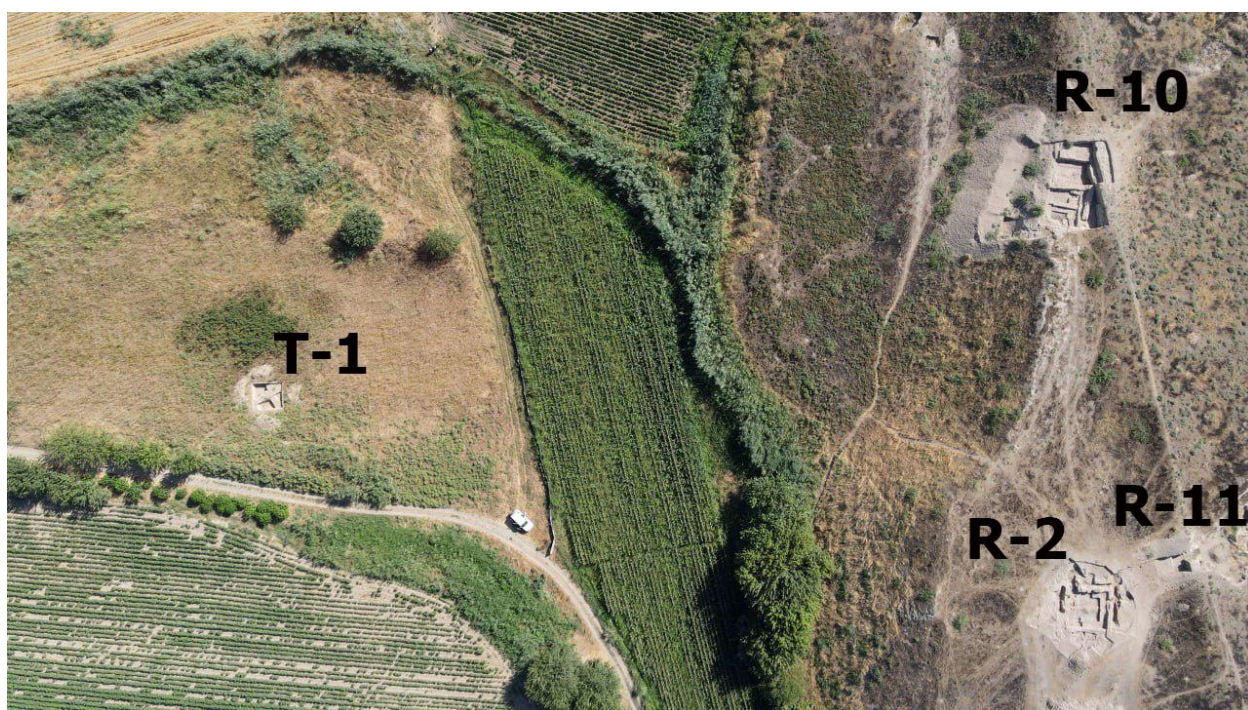
Authors: K.A. Sheyko,  
Dr. G.P. Ivanov,  
Dr. J.Ya. Ilyasov

**Tashkent 2024**

In April-June and then in September 2024, archaeological excavations were continued at the settlement of Qarshovul Tepa. The monument is located to the south-west of Tashkent, in Dustlik settlement, Chinaz district, Tashkent region, on the right supra-floodplain terrace of the Chirchik River, its coordinates are 40°58'24.03 'N, 68°54'31.64 'E (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. Qarshovul Tepa**



**Fig. 1. Qarshovul Tepa. Excavations objects of the year 2024**



This year's works were concentrated on four sites:

1. Trench No. 1, which is located to the north-west of the ancient settlement (Figs. 1, 2);
2. R-2, located in the north-western part of the ancient settlement;
3. R-10, excavation in the northern part of the settlement;
4. R-11, a cut in the inner wall separating the north-western part of the settlement.

**Trench No. 1** was laid 140 metres north-west of the fortification wall (Figs. 1, 3, 4) in order to find out whether the hillock located here was a settlement formed after the main territory of the town was abandoned in the middle of the 8th c. The selected site was a thickly grassed area with remnants of rhizomes of last year's unharvested crop. A 5×5 m excavation was made, orientated to the cardinal directions; its top point was at -11.5 m below the main zero marker of the settlement.



**Fig. 3. The site of the Trench 1. In the background is the north-western facade of the settlement**



**Fig. 4. Trench No. 1. The process of work**

Unfortunately, the excavations did not confirm our assumption about the existence of life on this site in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although the collection of excavated material in previous years indicated the presence of some artefacts of the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is possible that on the selected site the cultural layer of this time was destroyed in the process of agricultural works carried out for 50-60 years.

### **Excavations at R-2.**

From the very beginning of the study of Qarshovul Tepa we noticed that the north-western part of the city was separated from its main part by a wall stretching in a straight line from north-east to south-west (Fig. 1). In order to elucidate the structure of this specially designated part of the city, excavations were carried out this season at site R-2, where we started excavations back in 2010. At that time, the remains of two rooms were identified here, but these works were not continued (Fig. 5).

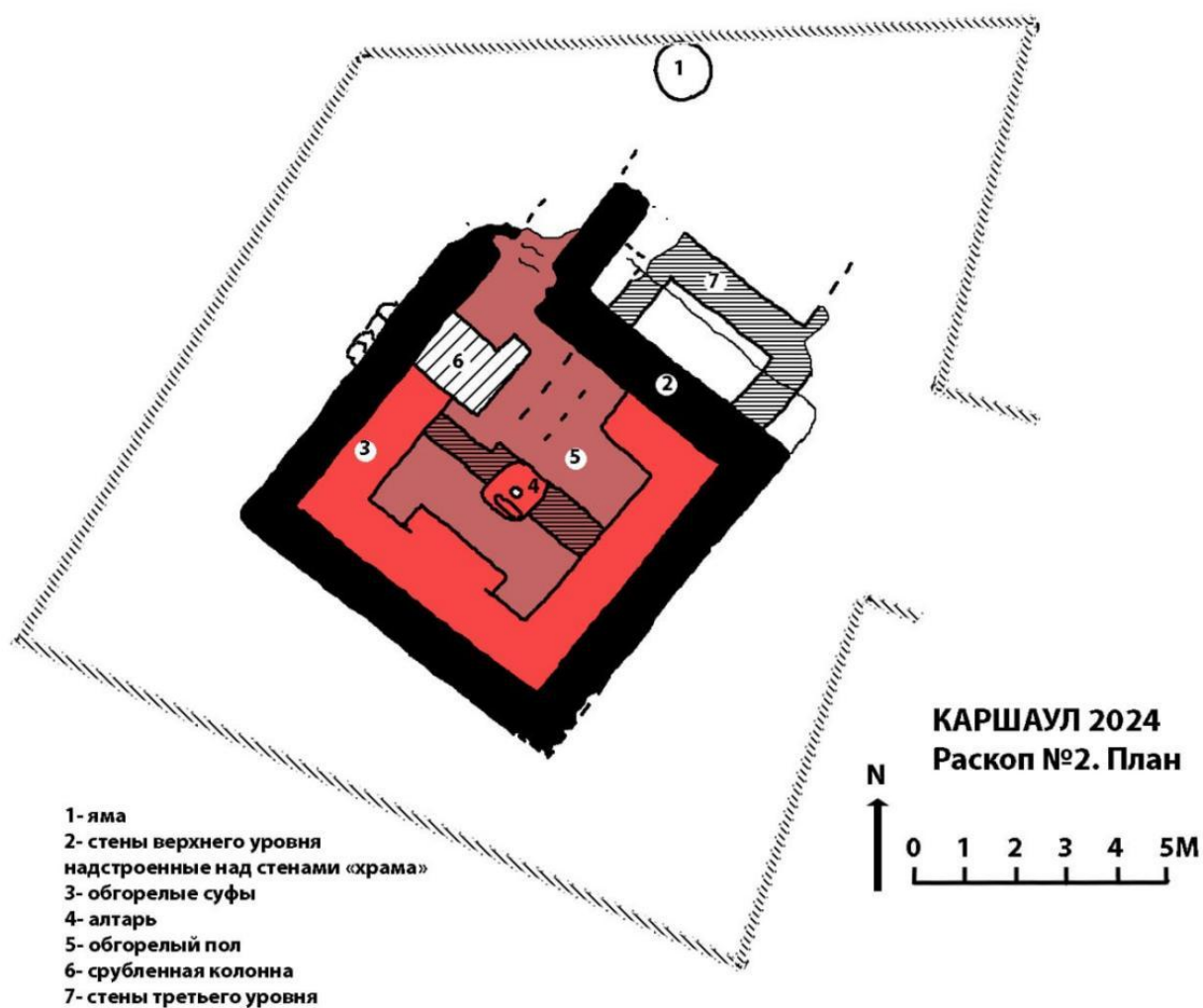




**Fig. 5. R-2. Clearing of the 2010 excavation**

The 2024 season showed that under the two rooms excavated in 2010 there were remains of an earlier structure, the walls of which had been destroyed to a certain level and served as a foundation for the above-mentioned 2 rooms. At the same time, i.e. in 2024, we managed to clear a small area in the southern part of the room, which belongs to the second (lower) construction period, and to catch a part of the wall. Our work was continued in this area.

The excavations revealed that Room 1 was a square-shaped ceremonial hall orientated by the corners to the cardinal directions (Figs. 6, 7). It's dimensions are 6.10 m from north-west to south-east and 5.80 m from north-east to south-west. The floor of this room was found at -3.40 m from the benchmark. The entrance to the room is located in the northern corner, it is preceded by a vestibule (so called tambour), which prevented the visitor from going directly into the room and seeing its interior.



**Fig. 6. R-2. General plan of room 1 (ceremonial hall)**

- 1 - pit; 2 - walls built up in the last period  
 (the first building horizon);  
 3 - sufes with burnt surface; 4 - altar of fire;  
 5 - burnt floor; 6 - pylon forming a vestibule at the entrance;  
 7 - walls of the third (lower) building horizon



**Fig. 7. R-2. View of room 1 from the west**

- 1 - walls of the room; 2 - sufas; 3 - place of honour or 'estrada';  
 4 - pylon forming a vestibule at the entrance; 5 - floor of the upper platform;  
 6 - wall of the third (lower) building horizon;  
 7 - vestibule; 8 - entrance from the corridor; 9 - wall section (R-11)

The walls of the room are preserved up to 60-70 cm high. Along all four walls there are sufas (Figs. 6-9).

The north-eastern wall is 4.90 m long. At a distance of 2.55 m from the entrance there is a 75 cm wide and 36 cm high *sufa* (couch) attached to it. The length of the sufa is 1.80 m. Closer to the doorway, the north-east wall was destroyed by a burrow (Fig. 7).

The southeast wall is 5.80 m long. Like the other walls, it is made of whole and half mud bricks. The size of the whole brick is 52×26-27×11-12 cm. Along its entire length there is a sufa 110-115 cm wide and 36 cm high, which is a continuation of the sufa running along the north-eastern wall of the hall (Figs. 6, 7, 9).





**Fig. 8. R-2. Room 1. View from the south**



**Fig. 9. R-2. Room 1. View of the eastern half**



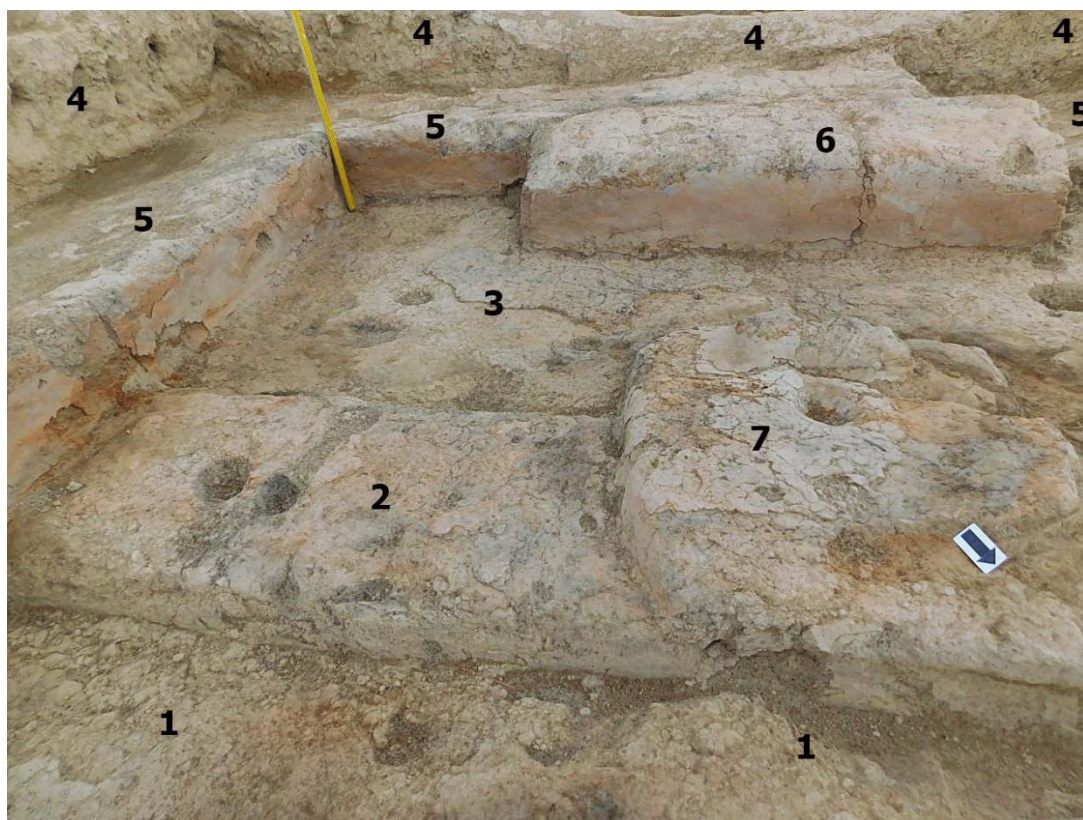


**Fig. 10. R-2. Room 1. View from the east**



**Fig. 11. R-2. Room 1. View from the south**





**Fig. 12. R-2. Room 1. View of the southern half**

1 - floor of the north-eastern half of the hall; 2 - wall of the lower building horizon used as a step of the upper platform; 2, 3 - floor of the upper platform; 4 - walls of the hall; 5 - suffrages; 6 - "bandstand"; 7 - podium/altar of fire



**Fig. 13. R-2. Room 1.**

**View of the sufa with a "bandstand" and the altar**



The sufa, located along the south-west wall of the hall, is 1-1.02 m wide and 38 cm high, with a ledge, the so-called ‘stage’, marking the most honoured place attached to its central part (Figs. 10-13). The length of the ‘stage’ is 2.10-2.15 m and it protrudes 52-54 cm beyond the sufa line, i.e. the total size of the place of honour is 2.15×1.55 m. The surface of the ‘stage’ is fixed at -2.90 m from the main hill-fort benchmark.



**Figure 14. R-2. Room 1 (square hall). View from the south-east**

**1 - north-west wall; 2 - pylon; 3 - suffrages; 4 - “stage”; 5 - vestibule; 6 - entrance to the hall; 7 - floor; 8 - floor of the upper platform; 9 - podium/fire altar; 10 - wall of the lower horizon**

The north-west wall of the hall, assuming that its continuation is the wall of the entrance vestibule, was traced for 6.90 m (Fig. 14: 1). It is preserved to a height of ca. 70 cm. This wall is also adjoined by a sufa, which is a continuation of the sufa at the south-west wall (Fig. 14: 3). It is 1.02 m wide and 36 cm high. The sufa

extends for 2.60 m and rests on a bollard or pylon that forms the strong southwest wall of the entrance vestibule (Fig. 14: 5; Figs. 15, 16). The pylon protrudes 1.62-1.63 m from the north-west wall and its south-east face, facing inwards into the hall, extends 1.68-1.70 m (Fig. 14: 2). The eastern corner of the pylon is formed as a 50-52 cm thick projection. This projection is the right cheek of the narrow entrance to the hall, which was only 50 cm wide (Fig. 14: 6; Fig. 16). The vestibule that preceded the entrance was accessed from a 90 cm wide corridor. The entrance from the corridor to the vestibule was 80 cm wide and was decorated with a raw brick threshold and vertical recesses in the walls, in which a wooden door frame was probably placed (Fig. 15). The vestibule was 1.15 m wide and 1.90-1.95 m long.



**Fig. 15. R-2. Vestibule/tambour in front of the hall. View from the north**





**Fig. 16. P-2. Vestibule/tambour in front of the hall and entrance.  
View from the east**

Inside, the hall has a two-level structure (Figs. 2, 7, 10-12, 14). That is, its south-western half is more elevated than the north-eastern one. Accordingly, in the elevated part, the floor level is 18-20 cm higher; this is the site of part of the sufa running along the south-east wall, the entire sufa with a “stage” along the south-west wall and almost the entire sufa lying along the north-west wall. Two-level halls of this kind are known in the early medieval architecture of urban dwellings and castles of Chach and Sogd. But in this particular case it is curious to trace how the walls of the underlying third building horizon were used in the construction of the hall. So, the facet of the elevation (or upper platform) can be traced at a distance of 2.40-2.70 metres from the north-eastern wall. But this is actually the face of the wall of the lower horizon, which was used as a step. It is 70-75 cm thick and can be traced at a distance of 4 m between the sufas of the south-east and north-west walls. The distance from the edge of the step-wall to the south-west



sufa is 2.35 m, and to the south-west wall, respectively, 3.35-3.37 m. Thus, the dimensions of the upper platform, excluding the sufa and the “stage”, are 4×2.35 m.

On the upper platform, directly opposite the “stage”, there was a square podium with rounded corners, made of mud bricks and plastered (Fig. 6, 10-14, 17). Its dimensions are 1.05×1 m, height 10 cm, distance from the “stage” 75-80 cm. On the side closest to the “stage”, at a distance of 10 cm from the edge, the podium has a ledge about 50 cm long and about 10 cm high. Its edges are about 25 cm away from the south-eastern and north-western edges of the podium. Behind the ledge is a circular hole measuring 17×14 cm. Apparently, the podium was used for lighting a fire, and coals were raked into the hole. In this case we can call this construction a fire altar. It is also possible that the podium served for installation on it some portable device for lighting the fire.



**Fig. 17. R-2. Podium/fire altar. View from the south**



Over time, the soil of the upper platform has sagged, except for the wall of the lower horizon, so this wall stands out as a 'rib' crossing the hall (Figs. 6, 7, 10-14). But according to the original plan, there should have been lower and upper platforms with sufas, i.e. a classical two-level composition.

As at other sites studied at Qarshovul Tapa, the ceremonial hall with sufas and altar perished as a result of a severe fire. This is evidenced by the fill of Room 1 in the form of burnt roof beams, as well as the red-hot surfaces of the walls and floors. Red-orange plaster has survived on part of the north-east wall, on the walls of the vestibule, on the surface of the pylon, the faces and surface of all the sufas and the podium.

As the remains of the walls of the upper (first) building horizon testify, after the building was destroyed by fire, here, as well as on other investigated sites, levelling layers of clay were laid on top of the fire and walls were added, but the life in these constructions did not last long. And the upper building was badly weathered and destroyed. As for the mentioned wall of the 3<sup>rd</sup> building horizon, used as the edge of the upper site, it was found out during the clearings that another wall from the north-east, belonging to this period, approaches it from the north-east. The study of the buildings of the lower horizon remains to be done, but in the near future we have the task of revealing the layout of the building of the 2<sup>nd</sup> building horizon, the central element of which was probably a square hall with a place of honour and an altar. This building could be either a palace, in which case the excavated hall was a *mehmonkhana*, i.e. a reception hall, or it could be a building/room of cultic character.

### **Excavations at R-10.**

A new excavation under the number 10 was laid at the junction of the main wall of the city and an additional wall, which separated the north-western section where R-2 is located (Figs. 1, 2, 18). The aim of the excavations was to determine the nature of the fortification on this section of the city wall, as well as the chronological relationship between the two walls.

It was also necessary to check whether there was an additional entrance that would have allowed direct access from the outside to the north-west walled-off area.



**Fig. 18. R-10. Plan**

1 - the first (lower) city wall; 2 - the upper wall; 3 - the wall of the second level;  
4 - walls of the third level; 5 - sufes in the Room 1

After clearing the site from the previous years' spoil, a 15×10 m excavation was laid, orientated along the line N-E - S-W (Figs. 18, 19). Here, on the crest of the second (upper) fortress wall, a height marker was established, which is -1.10 m below the main bench-mark of the settlement.





**Fig. 19. Beginning of works on R-10**

Since the excavated area is located on a slope, R-10 has a sharp drop in its northern part. The turf layer over the whole excavation area was up to 15-20 cm. Under it, in the northern part of the excavation, the surface of the lower (main) fortress wall of Qarshovul Tepa was cleaned (Fig. 20). It is made of pakhsa and is 3.75 m thick. From the outside, i.e. from the northern side, this wall was opened up to the bottom. It stands on the mainland soil, with its base at a depth of -7.50 m from the main bench-mark. Adjacent to the wall is a layer of compacted soil formed by the collapse and weathering of the body of the wall after the city was abandoned by its inhabitants. At the foot of the wall, there are recorded layers of accretions and influxes.



**Fig. 20. R-10. Northern section of the fortress wall in the course of the excavation process**

Among the few finds, we note the rim of a *khum* and other ceramic fragments in the form of walls of khums, jugs and pots. A so called ruler Tarnavch coin was also found here in the layer, 30 cm from the wall and 40 cm from the bottom.

Further work was continued to the south of the aforementioned fortress wall. Here the following picture was revealed. The above-described fortress wall is adjoined from the inside by rooms, three of which were completely and two partially penetrated into the excavation area R-10.

The rooms are rectangular in plan, extending from north-west to south-east (Figs. 18, 21). They were numbered as they were opened.





**Fig. 21. R-10. View from the south-west**

Room 1 is at the extreme south-west, 3.85 m wide and at least 6.10 m long (Figs. 21, 22). Judging from the fact that there are wide sufas along three walls, this room could have been intended for resting of soldiers on guard duty. In the middle of the room there is a rectangular hearth for heating and cooking. The room was filled with the remains of the lower defensive wall, which had gradually collapsed.

Room 2 was located to the north-east of Room 1 and measured 2.75 m wide by 6.35 m long (Figs. 18, 21, 22). The room shows evidence of a small fire.

Room 3 is located further to the north-east (Figs. 18, 23). Its dimensions are 4.35 m wide and 7.55 m long. Room 3 was probably a storage room (*khumkhana*). It showed traces of a heavy fire, during which the roof beams were burnt. The collapsed roof had broken container vessels (*khums*), which stood on sufas along the walls. According to the number of rims, there were more than ten *khums* here. But since the room has not been excavated completely, their number may increase. As a result of the fire, the walls of Room 3 were red-hot (Fig. 24).





**Fig. 22. R-10. Rooms 1 and 2. View from the southeast**



**Fig. 23. R-10. Room 3, where the humae were stored.  
View from the south-west**





**Fig. 24. R-10. North-eastern wall of the Room 3**



**Fig. 25. R-10. Fragment of khum with snakes depiction**

A fragment of khum found in Room 3, on which the image of two snakes in parallel movement is drawn before firing (Fig. 25). They seem to be crawling towards the mouth of the khum.

In the south-eastern part of excavation R-10, a section of the wall running in the direction from north-east to south-west was excavated below the sod layer. The wall was traced for 15 metres, its thickness is not yet determined, as it partially goes under the south-eastern edge of the excavation. It is part of the same wall separating the north-western section of the city, where excavation R-2 is located. It lies above rooms 1-3, their south-eastern parts going under this wall, so these rooms were not fully excavated. Its base is at a depth of -2.55 metres from the zero bench-mark. Consequently, the separation of the north-western part of the city by the construction of an additional bypass wall occurred later than the construction of the main defensive walls of Qarshovul Tepa.

### **Excavations at R-11**

Back in 2011, during the survey of the plan of the settlement of Qarshovul Tepa, it was suggested that the north-western part of the settlement was separated from the main part of the site. The study of the relief gave grounds to assume the presence of an internal defence wall. In 2017, we made an attempt to detect it in the north-eastern corner of excavation R-3, but this attempt was not completed (Fig. 26).

In the 2024 season, work in excavation R-10 revealed that the inner defence wall was built late in the functioning of the city. It became necessary to investigate this wall in the area between excavations R-2 and R-3 to try to understand the relationship between these two structural parts of the city: the public-cult complex (the platform and the surrounding buildings) and the palace (or temple?). In this regard, we cut the wall shaft by laying excavation R-11 with a width of 3.5 m (Fig. 27).

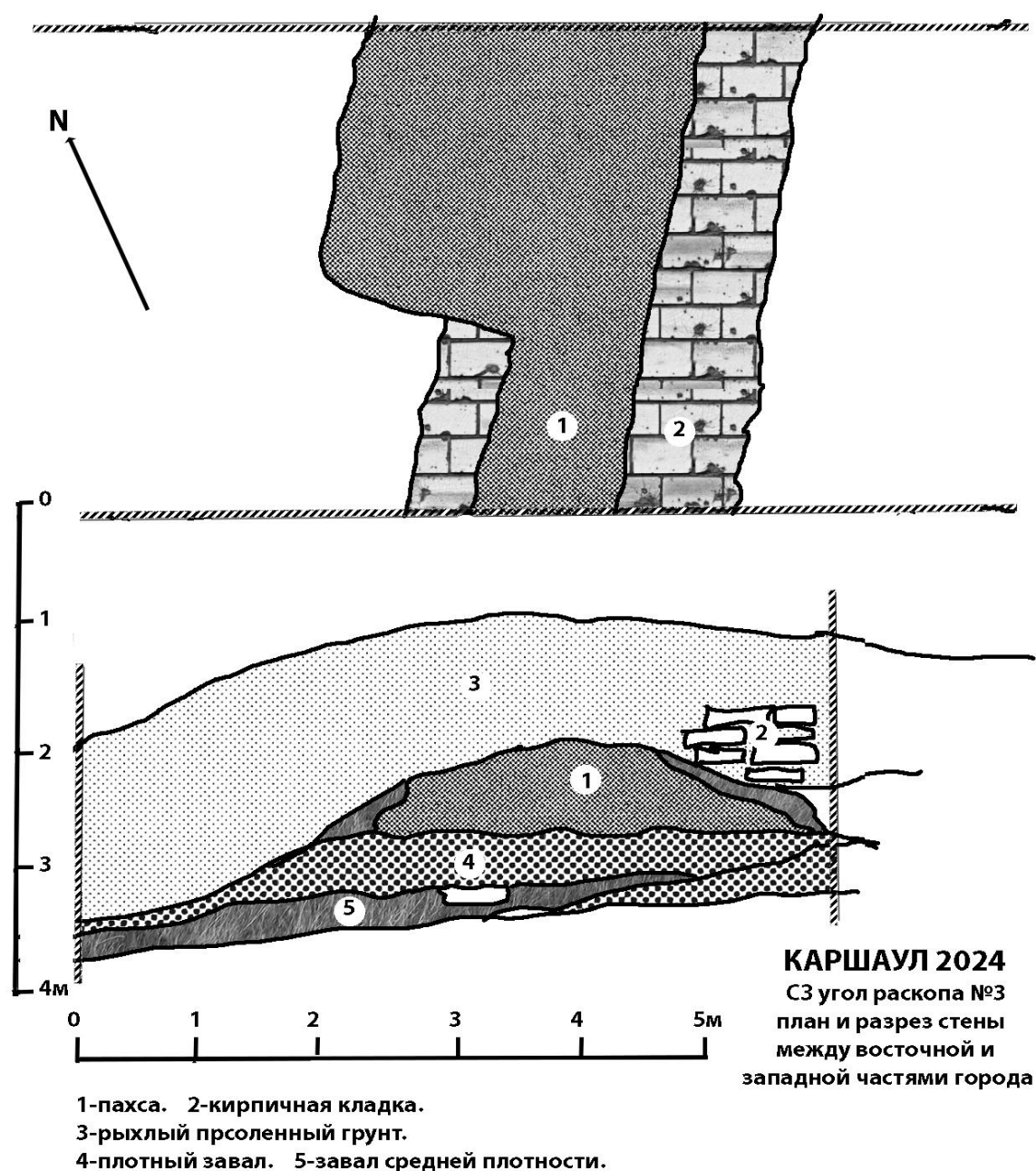




**Figure 26. R-3. North-west corner of the excavation after the works of 2017**

In this place, the highest point of the monument surface is -80 cm below the zero bench-mark. The 10-15 cm thick sod layer, as well as on the whole territory of the settlement, is very dense due to the abundance of plant roots. Below the sod layer, a very loose, highly saline soil was observed throughout the entire transect area from the edge of R-3 to the edge of R-2 (this distance is equal to 10.7 m). This layer was recorded to different depths due to the general lowering of the hillfort relief from south-east to north-west in this part of the site. In the eastern part of the section it was recorded to a depth of -1.6 m from the zero mark, 2 m to the west - 1.95 m, 4 m to the west -2.5 m, and at the edge of excavation R-2 at the level of the upper floor of the late buildings discovered in this area -2.8 m. At the eastern end of the trench, a wall of mud brick began to open from a depth of -1.6 m. This wall stood on top of a pakhsa wall exposed to the west from a depth of -1.95m. The pakhsa wall is heavily weathered and has no clear facades. Its thickness at the base, recorded at -2.65 m, is 2.4 m; in the north-eastern part of excavation R-11 it widens to 3.20 m. The thickness of the wall is not clear. Due to the limited size of the trench, it remains unknown whether this ledge is a buttress or the lower part of

the tower. The brick wall mentioned above is 0.80 m thick and its surviving height is 0.85 m. It was not closely adjacent to the pakhsa wall and was a repair wall in relation to it (Figs. 27, 28).



**Fig. 27. R-11. Plan and section of the wall**  
1 - pakhsa wall; 2 - mud brick repair wall; 3 - loose soil layer;  
4 - dense obstruction; 5 - obstruction of middle density





**Fig. 28. R-11. Mud brick repair wall. North-eastern profile of the section**



**Fig. 29. R-11. Mud brick repair wall. North-eastern profile of the section**





**Fig. 30. R-11. Pakhsa wall. View from the east**



**Fig. 31. R-11. Pakhsa wall. View from the north**



To the western facade of the pakhsa wall was added a wall made of mud brick measuring  $47 \times 24 \times 10$  cm, its thickness 0.5 m (Fig. 32). It, as well as the wall on the eastern side, was clearly a repair wall.



**Fig. 32. R-11. Pakhsa wall and repair brick wall. View from the west**

The surface on which the walls stood lies at -2.65 m, but it drops sharply to -3.5 m in a westerly direction. Beneath this surface a dense rubble of crude building remains was observed, which continued to a level of -3.0 m in the eastern part, and to a level of -3.6m in the western part. Below this obstruction to the surface at -3.7-3.85 m (east-west dip) we recorded two different layers. A dense wedge rubble in the east, tapering from east to west (there may be remains of mud-brick buildings east of the cut edge) and a medium-dense rubble layer in the western part.

No excavations were carried out below the -3.85 m level in this area.

As a result of the work on the section between R-2 and R-3, it was possible to establish that the wall separating the north-western part of the city was built at one of the last stages of its life. It is synchronous with the layers overlapping the layers of the palace (temple?) found in excavation R-2.

### **Kleinfunde**

The following finds were made at R-2 in Room 1 (the ceremonial hall). When clearing the floor between the south-eastern sufa and the altar, fragments of a khum, which was crushed by the collapsed roof of the room during the fire, were found. On one of the fragments of the vessel shoulder there is a pre-firing scratched sign (*tamgha*) in the form of the letter 'X' (Fig. 33).



**Figure 33. R-2, room 1. Fragment of a khum with an X-shaped tamga**

A fragment of a khum bottom with a hole in the side was found in the same pile of fragments. Most likely, the khum was located on a some stand and served



for storing oil. The hole served to release the oil and was plugged with a wooden plug. The storage of oil in the khum is evidenced by dark oily stains on the inner surface of the fragment.

Several metal objects were also found.

A bronze ring seal was found near the doorway, 20 cm from the northeast wall and 1.20 m from the sufa (Fig. 34). The seal measures 21 mm in diameter and weighs 8.2 grams. The 1.3×1.0 cm shield depicts a deer with branching antlers running to the right side (on the impression). On the side of the shield there is a rounded lump, typical for early medieval metal seal rings.



**Fig. 34. R-2, room 1. Seal ring and sealing with depiction of running deer**

A bronze belt buckle with a movable tongue was found in the north-eastern corner of the hall, it was lying on the floor near the sufa (Fig. 35). The dimensions of the buckle are 3×2.7 cm. The tongue and the front part of the buckle are well preserved. The place for connection to the strap is not preserved.



**Fig. 35. R-2, room 1. Bronze buckle**



**Fig. 36. R-2, room 1. Bronze belt plate**



In the western corner of Room 1, a bronze belt plate was found (Fig. 36). It has the shape of a “heart” connected to a ring. On the reverse side of the heart-shaped part there is a pin for attaching it to the belt. Apparently, the plate was attached to the belt vertically and the ring served for hanging some elements of equipment. Dimensions of the plate: length 2.5 cm, width of the “heart” 1.5 cm, diameter of the ring 1.2 cm.



**Fig. 37. R-2, room 1. Part of a bronze knife blade**

A fragment of a bronze knife blade was found on the floor in the passage to Room 1 (Fig. 37). It is 41 mm long and 11 mm wide. The knife is single-bladed.

A fragmented jug decorated with orange engobe, with a vertical handle decorated with lateral indentations, was found in excavation R-10 (Fig. 38).



**Fig. 38. R-10. Fragment of a jug**

Continued excavations at Qarshovul tepa will provide a better understanding of the domestic, social and religious life of the small town of the Chach/Shash domain, one of the important historical and cultural regions in present-day Uzbekistan.