

JANĎAVLATTEPA

The Excavation Report for Seasons 2002–2006

VOL. 1



Editors
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Jandavlattepa

The Excavation Report for Seasons 2002–2006 (Vol. 1)

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Introduction

Ladislav Stančo

After the long period of almost exclusively Soviet scholarly interest caused by the political situation, Central Asia became a forefront of international archaeological research early in the 90's. Several respected archaeological teams have established gradually their projects throughout post-Soviet republics of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. In 2002 this effort was joined by a small Czech-Uzbekistani team aiming to start archaeological investigation of northwestern part of ancient Bactria, particularly the area of Sherabad oasis. The preparatory season 2001 led to the decision to start the trial excavations on the Jandavlattepa, the major site of the oasis, located close to the town of Sherabad itself (Maps 1 and 2). This stage of our research was intended as initial step for gaining detail knowledge of the settlement structure and chronology of the Sherabad oasis as a whole.

The main goals of our project on the site of Jandavlattepa were as follows:

1. to refine the chronology of the site as well as of the region (Sector 02)
2. to obtain archaeological material sufficiently complex to enable us to study various aspects of culture and society of Late Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian periods (Sectors 06, 07, 08 and 20)

In this respect, one of the main concerns of the present publication is to present some freshly gained data in the field of Bactrian archaeology of Pre-Islamic periods and to shed some more light on different aspects of understanding its material culture especially during transitional period between Kushan period and early medieval times.

During the process of excavations on Jandavlattepa a large amount of archaeological material and data was unearthed and accumulated. Both coeditors decided early at the beginning of the joint work to publish all the material as soon as possible and the term of five years after termination of the

excavations was firmly set as the deadline. Herewith we try to fulfil, at least partly, our erstwhile undertaking. The present title, however, is far from being complete publication of our results. It represents just a pilot volume, which will be ensued by two other books in the near future. This one presents primarily the description of the process of excavation in the Sector 20, the Citadel, and its results, as well as several thematic studies of concrete groups of artefacts (see Structure of the publication below). The reader can expect a similar description of the Sector 07, i.e. upper Shakhristan, (L. Grmela, J. Halama, L. Stančo et alii) as well as a thorough study of ceramics from the Sectors 07, 08 and 20 in the second volume (M. Odler and L. Stančo) and a complete publication of vast material from the Sector 02 (stratigraphical trench, K. Abdullaev) and final conclusion in the third volume respectively. As the site of Jandavlattepa representing the core of the settlement structure in the Sherabad oasis did not function in a vacuum, we would like to analyse its position, spatial relations with the other sites of the oasis and dynamics of the oasis' settlement structure in general in yet another volume.¹

Structure of the publication

This publication has been divided into three parts. The first part contains a brief general description of the site and the history of its excavation, as well as geographical and topographical notes. The second, core, part contains a description of the archaeological situations in the various sectors. These descriptions have been grouped into three units, corresponding to their physical distribution over the site. The first unit is the area of the so-called Citadel, or sector 20. The second is the area of the lower town, or *Shakhristan*, comprising sectors 04, 07 and 08. Sectors 02 and 06 ought to be included here, but the material from sectors 07 and 02 in particular is extremely extensive,

¹ We focused on this aspect during our subsequent project, for some preliminary notes on this subject cf. Stančo 2009 and Danieľisová – Stančo – Shaydullaev 2010.

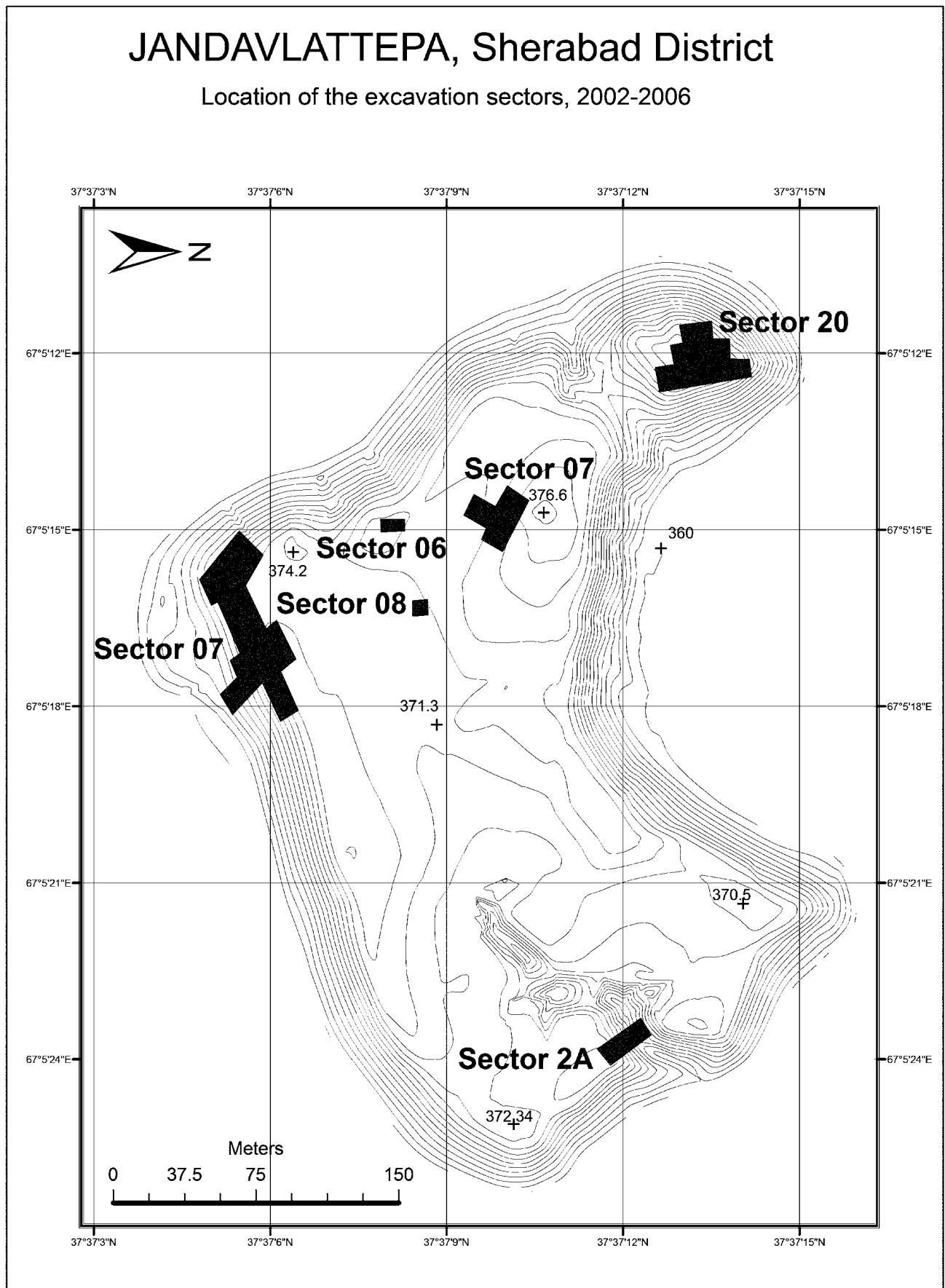
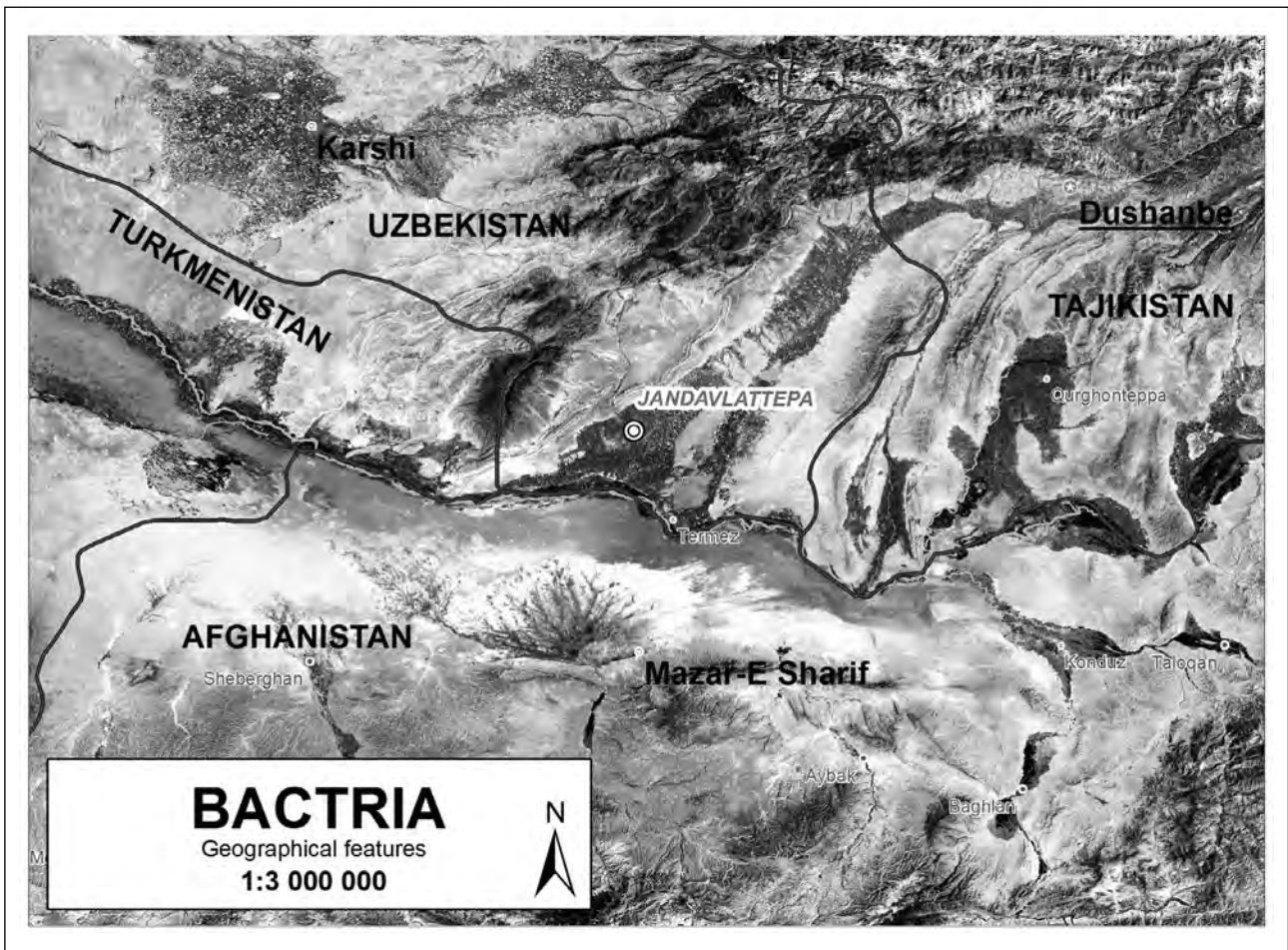
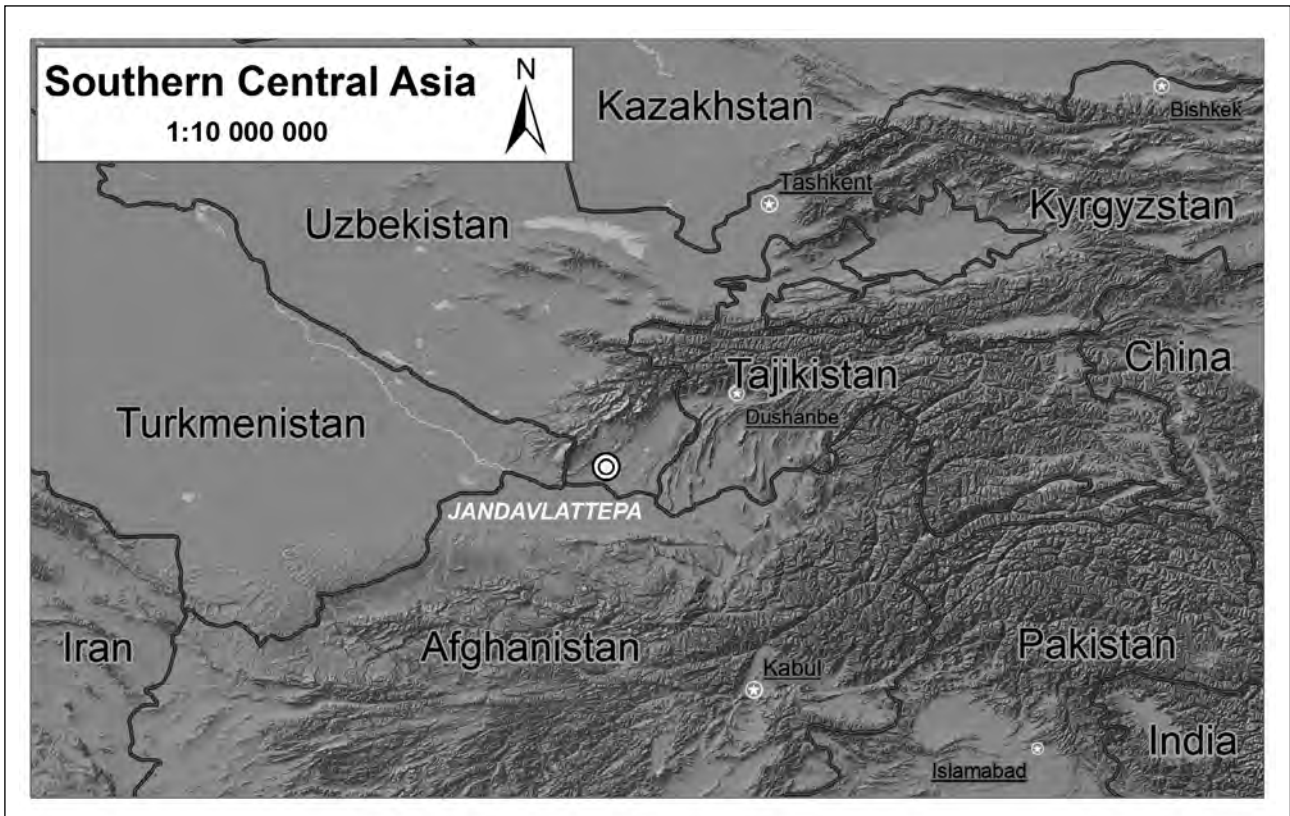


Fig. 1 General plan of the site.



Map 1 and 2 Location of the site in southern Uzbekistan and main geographical features of Bactria.

and the plan is to publish it in separate volumes. The third is a description of sector 30, an area outside the *tepa* itself, where preliminary exploration took place. The overall map shows the location of the sectors in the site (fig. 1).

The third part of the publication consists of studies devoted to various groups of finds: coins, textile-

making implements, weapons and tools, jewellery and clay figurines.

At the end of the book, in addition to a bibliography, is placed a list of all small finds, with references to depictions of them in drawings and photographs, and to the places in the text where special attention is paid to these finds.

1. The site and its environs

1.1 General remarks and description of the landscape

Kazim Abdullaev

Southern Uzbekistan is characterised by alternating mountain ridges and river valleys (Maps 1, 2 and 3). The valley of the river Surkhan Darya (after which the whole region – Villoyat – is named) is exceptional in terms of both its dimensions and the landscape variability. It begins roughly in the district of the modern village of Dekhanabad where the Great Uzbek Highway passes along the river Kan (a left-bank tributary of the river Kichik Ura Darya).

In this tract, the road rises steadily up to the Chakchak pass (near Akrobat). Beyond the village of Akrobat, there is a watershed between the basins of the river Guzar Darya and that of the river Sherabad Darya, one of the important tributaries of the Amu Darya. Here, the mountains – the southwestern spurs of Baysun Tau – do not attain extraordinary heights but have fairly sharp outlines. The picturesqueness of

the mountains is enhanced by the presence of variegated rocks – white, greenish and red. A particularly striking visual effect is produced by the slightly inclined yellowish-white limestone slopes. Easily eroded by torrents of mud and water, they have been shaped into deep and narrow valleys. The main road hugs the slopes of the Sarymas ridge and subsequently emerges into the Shurob Say valley.

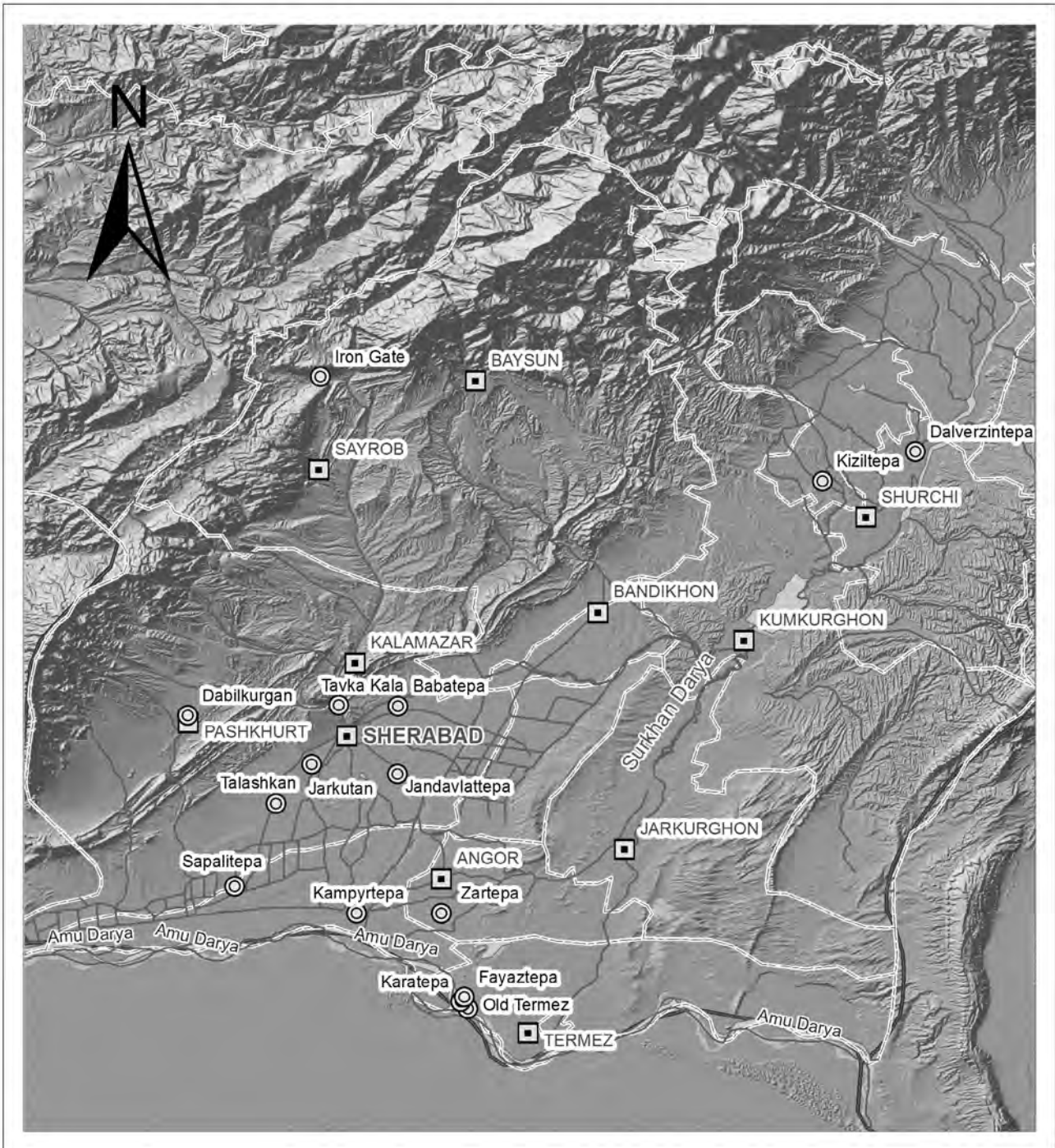
After the confluence of the salt-water river Shurob Say (“Salty Water” in Tajik) and the fresh waters of the Machay Darya, which rises in the Baysun Tau Mountains, the waters of the Sherabad Darya become salty. The Sherabad Darya valley, stretching from north to south, is shaped by one of the principal tributaries of the Amu Darya, which rises in the southern spurs of the Hissar mountains, in Baysun Tau. After passing through picturesque foothills (fig. 1.1, 1), the river enters the plain after the Kangi



Fig. 1.1, 1 Piedmont landscape in the river valley of Sherabad Darya, photo L. Stančo.

Surkhandarya Province of Uzbekistan Southern Part

1:1 000 000



Legend

- ⊙ Archaeological sites
- ⊠ Towns
- District borders
- Rivers and irrigation channels

Map 3 North-western Bactria, location of the site of Jandavlattepa in southern Uzbekistan.

foothills approximately in the outskirts of the modern regional centre, the town of Sherabad.

Archaeologists have detected human habitation in this region since the upper Palaeolithic era. The finding of remains of Neanderthal boy in the cave of Teshik-Tash near the Machay district is one of the earliest testimonies to human presence.

The archaeological sites located in the river's alluvial plain (fig. 1.1, 2) can be dated to various periods, and testify to human settlement in the territory from the most ancient times. The territory of the Sherabad oasis formed part of the ancient historical and cultural region of Bactria. Without entering into details of the question of the borders of Bactria mentioned in cuneiform rock inscriptions from the 6th century BC, it should be noted that the northern limits of Bactria included the territory north of the river of Amu Darya – Oxus.¹

This is confirmed by basically all categories of artefacts, which show cultural development along common lines, with common tendencies and, it appears, from common sources (both north and south of the river). In any case, the territory north of the river Amu Darya/Oxus up to the spurs of Baysun Tau (i.e. the southern spur of the Hissar ridge) is considered by more and more scholars to be a uniform cultural region.² At Baysun Tau a system of defensive constructions has been identified by archaeologists, in-

cluding a monumental fortification wall near modern Darband. Archaeological surveys of the sites within the Sherabad oasis testify to the presence of an advanced culture in the area as early as the Bronze Age. It is in this region that monuments such as those at Sapalitepa and Jarkutan were unearthed and investigated. Excavations by Uzbekistani archaeologists indicate ancient societies with complex and particular forms, and a highly developed material and spiritual culture.

At the site of Jarkutan, in particular, excavations of the ancient settlement revealed the initial stage of development of proto-urban cultures and traces of cultural ceremonies of which elements would reappear subsequently in a religious doctrine close to Zoroastrianism. So, for example, the sacred terrace discovered at Jarkutan, with its precise lay-out composed around the Chokhortag, makes the complex comparable to well-known monuments in Iran (Bard-e Nishande, Takht-e Suleyman, Nush-e Jan).

One of the interesting features of the Sherabad oasis is the continuity of settlement, with sites surviving from one archaeological period to another. So for example, the final phase of Jarkutan, in the late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, apparently continues in a number of other neighbouring sites in the oasis (Tashkan 2, Kuchuktepa, Pshaktepa etc.). It is therefore likely, going by excavations of the lowermost levels



Fig. 1.1,2 Typical landscape in the irrigated lowlands of Sherabad District, photo L. Stančo.

¹ There is some discrepancy among ancient writers as far as the northern limits of Bactria (Bactriana) are concerned. Traditionally, they place the border on the Oxus river (Arr., VII, 5, 1–2; Strabo, XI, II, 2; Ptol., VII, II, I). This opinion seems to prevail down to the 4th century AD, judging from the work of Ammianus Marcellinus who appears to follow the tradition set by Ptolemy quoted above (Amm. Marc., XXIII, 6, 57). Among modern scholars, it was W. Tomaschek who placed the border on the Hissar ridge (cf. Tomaschek 1877, pp. 28–31).

² Masson 1968, pp. 14–26; Staviskiy 1976, p. 74; Staviskiy 1977, p. 36ff; Abdullaev 1997, pp. 54–60.

of Jandavlattepa (with fragments of painted pottery), that the beginning of human presence in the site is connected with a period of dwindling human activity in a number of other sites, including Jarkutan.

The history of archaeological research into this period in Central Asia may be subdivided into four stages. In the archaeological literature the first stage is traditionally connected to the pre-revolutionary period (before 1917) and is characterised by the investigations of military topographers and engineers, and also local history amateurs.

The second stage, preceding the Second World War (until 1941), is associated with the first archaeological expeditions organized by the main museums of the Soviet Union and Departments of the Academies of Union Republics (Museum of the History of Eastern Culture, the State Hermitage, Termez Complex Archaeological Expedition), led by such outstanding scholars as B. P. Denike, M. E. Masson, and others. The most fruitful period in the history of archaeological research in Bactria is that following the Second World War – the third period.

At this time the right-bank part of Bactria was studied by large expeditions such as that of the Leningrad Department of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (now the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences), headed by V. M. Masson; that of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (Institute of Archaeology of

the Russian Academy of Sciences) under the direction of G. A. Koshelenko; that of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR (now the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan) led by A. A. Askarov; the Southern Tajik Archaeological Expedition under the leadership of B. A. Litvinski.

A big contribution to the research into Kushan culture was made by the expedition of the Uzbek Art History Institute under the direction of G. A. Pugachenkova. Important roles in the studies of Kushan culture were played by the works of such scholars as L. I. Albaum, E. V. Rtveladze, A. M. Mandelshtam, B. J. Stavisky and others.

It should be noted that archaeological expeditions from France, Italy and Japan worked simultaneously in the territory south of Amu Darya (Afghanistan). Particular mention should be made of the activities of the French Archaeological Mission (MDAFA) directed by such outstanding scholars as A. Foucher, d. Schlumberger and P. Bernard. Their discovery and lengthy excavations of the Greek city of Ay Khanum made a significant contribution to the understanding of Hellenistic cultures in Central Asia. Another expedition on the territory of Afghanistan was the Soviet-Afghan expedition led by I. T. Kruglikova and later by V. I. Sarianidi. The various publications that followed these excavations were invaluable in enlarging our knowledge of the history of the ancient culture of Bactria.

1.2 General description of the site, history of research

Ladislav Stančo

Location

Position: GPS – measured from the topmost point of the Shakhristan (former Soviet topographical point, 37.619720°, 67.087370°).

37.619050° E 67.088536° N (source: GoogleEarth)

Straight lines of distance to related archaeological sites:

A) Regional importance: to Tafka Kala 13.6 km¹; to Talashkan 16.5 km; to Kampyrtepa 23.8 km; to Fayaztepa 38 km; to Old Termez 40.3 km; to Zurmala 41.5 km; to the Iron gate (Darbant) 65.5 km; to Dalverzintepa 86 km.

B) Interregional importance: to Baktra 96 km; to Ai Khanum 211 km; to Sogdiana (Yerkurgan) 190 km, (Marakanda) 227 km; to Merv (Gyaur Kala) 432 km; to Khwarazm (Ayaz Kala) 711 km, (Toprak Kala) 718 km; to Sirkap (Taxila) 673 km; Kashgar 802 km.

The site of Jandavlattepa is located in an intensely irrigated and cultivated plain close to rather deep riverbed of the Sherabad River (Uzb. Sherobod Darya), 7.67 km from the town of Sherabad, the district headquarters (Map 3). The river², itself, flows 780 m to the east of the site (fig. 1.2, 1). Nowadays, most of the surrounding fields are used for the cultivation of cotton, and the whole area is interwoven with irrigation ditches³. This flat plain dominates the whole southern horizon while the northern and north-western views are dominated by the ranges and foothills of the Kougitang and Baysoun Mountains. Lower ridges of Haudag hills rise also on the east side, separating the valleys of Sherabad Darya and Surkhan Darya. Jandavlattepa commands the area being strategically well located only 10 km from the outflow where the Sherabad River leaves the moun-

tains. At one time, when travelling from Sogdiana to Bactria (as understood in the prevailing view of modern scholarship), the first large settlement of letter on the way was Jandavlattepa.

Dimensions

General surface area including slopes: 72,820 sq. m; Shakhristan⁴ – upper surface 40,203 sq. m; Citadel – upper surface 920 sq. m.

Maximum length SE to NW: 416 m

Maximum length NE to SW: 341 m

The height of the Citadel above the surrounding cotton fields is about 20 m, while the height of the Shakhristan varies between 12 and 18 m. The highest point, the top of the Citadel, lies at an elevation of 378.4 m above sea level, while the elevation of the original topographical point on the top of the Shakhristan is marked on the Soviet-era topographical plan at 376.6 m.

Judging simply by its dimensions, we are inclined to classify the site of Jandavlattepa in the Graeco-Bactrian and Kushan periods as a small fortified town or “townlet”, in Russian terminology the term “Городище” is favoured. Its extent in the earlier periods, i.e. in the Achaemenid and the Early Iron Age, is hard to determine in the present state of research.

Shape

The ground plan of the site has a strange polygonal shape, which resembles a deformed rectangle. Irregularities, especially the inward curve in the northern part, are hard to explain. While theories concerning large-scale erosion inflicted by the earlier riverbed of the Sherabad River or the building of the settlement

¹ All distances are measured as the crow flies.

² The river is actually almost not existent at present, especially in the summer and autumn time, being reduced to a tiny stream by the extensive use of its waters for irrigation of the cotton fields. Rough picture of the river as it used to be can be gained some 10 km upstream, just before Sherabad Darya leaves the piedmont steppe and rocky ranges.

³ It is only relatively recently, however, that the landscape in the immediate surroundings of Jandavlattepa gained this character. In the 1960s, large areas on the right bank of the Sherabad Darya were uncultivated and looked more like a steppe. The considerable increase in the area under crops in recent decades has had a very negative effect on the state of archaeological sites, especially burial grounds, rabats and smaller *tepas*, and thus contributed to a significantly distorted picture of the historical landscape. See Chapter 4, Concluding remarks.

⁴ For definitions of the individual parts of the *tepa*, see below in “Shape.”



Fig. 1.2, 1 Sherabad Darya close to the Jandavlattepa, photo L. Stančo.

in a backwater of its earlier course are rather unlikely⁵, another theory, that the site had grown gradually and spontaneously in the earlier periods of its occupation⁶ and that its shape was respected also in later, let us say, historic periods, make more sense.

The site (*tepa*) could be divided into two principal parts: Citadel and Shakhristan. Both terms are borrowed from Russian and local archaeological terminology. The Citadel refers to the smaller, separate, usually higher, part of the settlement with some specific function either religious or defensive or representative. The term “Shakhristan” indicates the lower town, larger as a rule, primarily functioning as living and craftsmen quarters.

The slopes of the *tepa* are very steep, except for the southern part (see excavations in Sector 04, Chapter 2.1). The surface of the lower town (Shakhristan) is rather flat and descends slightly from west to east (fig. 1.2, 2). Almost the whole surface of the plateau is covered by shallow depressions indicating the slumps of the cavities of recent grave pits. These loose-soil depressions are covered with more

luxuriant vegetation, grass and dry little shrubs. To the contrary, the surface of the Citadel is uneven (figs. 1.2, 3* and 1.2, 4).⁷

Unlike many other sites in Surkhan Darya, little can be said about the extent and character of those parts of the settlements, which arose in the vicinity of the main *tepa* outside the town walls because of the extensive cultivation of the area (fig. 1.2, 5). For the results of our preliminary survey, see Chapter 2.4.

Name

The historical name(s) of the site is, unfortunately, not known to us. Unlike several other sites in Bactria, there have not yet been any proposals to identify it with some names recorded in historical sources, in particular Chinese. The meaning of the name Jandavlattepa refers to the personal name indicated by the courteous preposition *jan* or *jon* (meaning “soul” in Turkic languages; *davlat* means “power” or “state”), while *tepa* (elsewhere also “tepe”), needless to say, means artificial mound like the Near Eastern *tell*. In publications, it is possible to find several differ-

⁵ Huff – Pidaev – Chaydoullaev 2001, p. 219; besides the other reasons, the main argument against such theories is the existence of traces of human activities (buildings) in the assumed course of the river and the absence of characteristic landscape features, such as a distinct fault or riverbed in the area. Despite this, on the high right bank of the present riverbed, between the river itself and Jandavlattepa, it is possible to find small archaeological sites and structures, which would have otherwise been completely washed away by the moving watercourse.

⁶ Huff 1997, p. 84.

⁷ The figures marked with * are attached only on accompanying disc while the others are included both on the CD and in this printed version.



Fig. 1.2,2 Jandavlattepa, view from north, photo L. Stančo.

ent transcriptions of the name. V. M. Masson, Sh. Pidaev and E. V. Rtveldze used Джандавлат-Тепе in their Russian publications, but Sh. Pidaev utilized also another version, namely Жандавлаттепа. D. Huff used to write Džandaulattepe in his German articles. A. Schachner uses Džandaulat-Tepe (English text) and Djandaulat-Tepe or Džandavlatepe (German text). A French publication utilizes one more option – Djandavlat Tepe.⁸ To make matters

more confused, we ourselves had initially used other transcriptions (Russian Джандавляттепа, English Djandavlattepa), and the quite accurate Czech transcription Džandavláttepa is still used.⁹ After all this, these days we tend to use the English transcription, Jandavlattepa, because it is the best phonetic transcription. Note that Pidaev intentionally used the name of Джандавлаттепа for the neighbouring site of Pachmaktepa initially.¹⁰



Fig. 1.2,5 Jandavlattepa, view from south, photo L. Stančo.

⁸ Masson 1974; Pidaev 1973; Pidaev 1974; Pidaev 1978, p. 22; Rtveldze 1974; Huff 1997; Schachner 1995/1996, pp. 154 and 159; Schachner 2003–2004; Huff – Pidaev – Chaydoullaev 2001, p. 219.

⁹ Abdullaev – Stančo 2003; Abdullaev – Bohach – Stančo 2003; Abdullaev – Stančo 2004a; Stančo 2003; Stančo 2006a.

¹⁰ Pidaev 1973, p. 78, note 1.