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Preliminary Report for the Archaeological Survey in the Baysun District (South Uzbekistan), Season 2017

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ABSTRACT
This report represents an overview of the archaeological data that were acquired by the extensive archaeological surface survey conducted by the Czech-Uzbek team in the Baysun Mountains, south Uzbekistan, especially on the ridges of Sarymas, Susiztag and Alamli, as well as in the adjacent valleys, in spring 2017. The work focused predominantly on the detecting of ancient roads, fortifications and places of refuge.

KEYWORDS
Baysun Mountains; Darband; Machay; surface survey; Bactria.

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2017, the Czech-Uzbek team started an extensive surface survey in the surroundings of Darband, Baysun District, south Uzbekistan, which was based on the field walking methods developed in the seasons of 2014 and 2015 in the Pashkhurt Valley of the same province (Stančo *et al*. 2015; Stančo 2016). The principal goal of the project was to verify the hypothesis held by a number of scholars concerning the route of Alexander the Great's army on its march from Bactria northwards to Sogdiana (and back). In the process, however, we did not limit ourselves to detecting sites dated to Antiquity. Our team documented each single anthropogenic feature that we came across with particular focus on our other projects' aims in southern Uzbekistan. i.e. the study of kurgans, rock art and settlement dynamics in general.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The main objectives of our investigations were connected with the principal aim of the two-year project entitled 'On the Oxyartes' Mountain: Detection of Forts and Refuges of the Alexander the Great Period.' We have focused on the verification of various statements of reputable scholars concerning the identification of specific geographic places or areas as 'venues' of particular historical events connected with Alexander the Great's campaign (see below). As we had shared the hypothesis based upon ancient Greek written sources, especially Arrianus and Curtius Rifus, saying that Alexander the Great and his army crossed the mountainous area between Bactria and Sogdiana by way of the Baysun region in general and its western Darband micro-region in particular, we decided to test it. Not relying only on mere field walking, we had computed a model of an effective communication system, i.e. a network of passable

routes through the mountains using GIS.[1] Thus, while choosing the traces to walk and survey in the mountainous area, we had taken into account this theoretical GIS based model, as well as the sites proposed by scholars mostly in the recent past. The field walking, as part of the extensive archaeological surface survey, followed either the proposed roads or mountain paths, or significant strategically located points both on the summits of the mountain plateaus and in the adjacent valleys. Since the mountainous terrain is not suitable for a methodologically consistent intensive surface survey, we decided from the very beginning not to use this otherwise preferable and efficient approach, except for places that were exceptionally suitable in this respect. These were represented by the fields situated up on the plateaus / summits of both the Sarymas and Susiztag Mountains, offering a rare opportunity to survey a larger area not covered with any vegetation. These fields were walked systematically by groups of 2–4 people, and if no details are dealt with hereafter, it is only because the results of these surveys were in the limit close to zero. During the extensive survey, all surface pottery was collected, spatially documented, and further analysed, topographic anomalies were documented, and in selected places/areas the metal detector survey was employed. The pottery processing, carried out by Anna Augustinová and Jakub Havlík, was supervised by Shapulat Shaydullaev. The metal detector survey including further documentation was entrusted to Tomáš Smělý, while Vlastimil Novák has taken on the task of preliminary coin identification.

RESEARCH AREA

For the first season work of the two-year project we had selected a specific area in southern Uzbekistan that most scholars dealing with the Alexander eastern campaign issue agree upon in terms of the 'crime scene', i.e. the territory where some part of the story took place. It is the mountainous region around the present-day village and police check-post of Darband, which inherited its customs function from the historical border control point called the Iron Gate and represents without a doubt a strategical point situated on the easiest way through the Baysun Mountains (**Pl. 3/1**). The fortification of the Darband wall once stood just several hundred meters to the west of the current position of the post, being better situated in terms of protection and visual control of the corridor. Even if the local landscape has been changed substantially quite recently due to the building of a new principal road connecting Samarkand and Termez, as well as the railroad connecting Darband with both of these destinations, the remaining parts of the original Kushan (and Hellenistic, too) border wall are still visible stretching across the valley, especially from far above, i.e. from the summit of Sarymas (**Fig. 1**).

This place forms a hub of roads as it no doubt did in the past, connecting not only the main centres of historical Bactria (Tokharistan) in the south and Sogd in the north, but also lesser towns and villages situated around the present-day Baysun to the east, in the valley of Machay to the north and beyond, and in and around the Alamli Mountains to the south-west. The key communication corridors are formed by river-valleys, among them most prominently the many-named stream known as the Machay Darya / Darband Darya in this area, while further south it becomes the Sherabad Darya and Kara Su respectively. This south–north axis cuts through the mountains north of Darband eroding a picturesque gorge 600 m deep in places, dramatically separating two formidable mountain massifs: that of Sarymas (almost 2000 m.a.s.l.) to the west and the Ketman Chapty to the east, the latter reaching as much

1 This model and its verification are not described here in detail, since they will be the subject of a separate, and more theoretically oriented, study, see Stančo – Pažout 2019. Basically, we have used algorithms of the Cumulative Focal Mobility Network.

as 3160 m.a.s.l. We divided the researched region (the western part of the Baysun District) centred in Darband into several principal sub-regions according to the specific geographical conditions: Area 1: Sarymas; Area 2: Machay Darya Valley; Area 3: Susiztag (including the vicinity of Uzundara fort); Area 4: Alamli; Area 5: Darband village.

Fig. 1: View of the Darband wall and Susiztag from Sarymas, photo L. Stančo.

As shown by the following overview of the work progress and results, these sub-regions were by no means surveyed equally: some of them, especially those clearly delimited, were subject to an extensive survey lasting for a few days (Area 1 and 3), while Area 4, for instance, was visited only once, thus providing only a sample of the archaeological record otherwise obtainable.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The Baysun District as a whole has been subject to archaeological investigation of a rather haphazard nature ensuing in brief lists of sites. At the beginning of the 1930s, Parfyonov, while searching for Palaeolithic sites of the Sherabad and Baysun Districts, described several settlements of various historical periods sometimes with the (erroneous) conviction that the given site could be a Neolithic settlement. Thus, in the Baysun piedmonts he mentioned three particular sites located near Baysun and Kofrun, and one site in the present-day Dekhkanabad District (Parfyonov 1950, 163–164). Instigated by Parfyonov's reports and invited by Masson, Okladnikov undertook – still in the 1930s – a difficult journey to the Machay Valley and investigated caves and rock-shelters, including the famous Teshik-Tash grotto with a Neanderthal

burial (Okladnikov 1939; 1949). The Paleolithic remained for several decades the most intensely researched prehistoric period (Islamov 1975). Half a century later, 17 sites of the medieval period were briefly described by E. V. Rtveladze (in Arshavskaya *et al*. 1982, 116–117). The list, however, contained also some sites of the Bandikhan Oasis located outside of the piedmonts in the Kizirik (formerly Bandikhan) District (nos. 10 and 11), as well as sites located in the Sherabad District (no. 17 – Loylagan burial ground). Later on, 18 sites were known in the piedmont steppe and mountains in 1990 (Bobokhojaev *et al*. 1990), while in 2003, there were mentioned 24 sites already, that time however including Palaeolithic cave sites of the region (*TBE* I, 84–90; author not mentioned). The same volume contained also a rare attempt to draw up a general picture of the settlement development in the Baysun District by T. Annaev, who became one of the few archaeologists working in the Baysun District systematically (Annaev – Annaev 2003). S. Stride, who wrote the first geo-archaeological work, uses for the Baysun Region the data available in the above-mentioned sources, thus only 21 sites[2] are listed and exploited for the analyses by him (Stride 2004, vol. 3). The author, however, did not verify the spatial data in the field, for the coordinates of most of the Baysun District sites remain only approximate, while in the chronological aspect, he is fully dependent on the previous research with all its inaccuracies and mistakes. The last list so far has been published by L. Sverchkov, who by way of an extensive survey taking place in 2003 added a considerable number of sites (30 according to his claims) bringing the number to 52 overall (Sverchkov 2005b; 2008, 124, fig. 1 – map). Besides this, Sverchkov also sketches a general development of the settlement in the Baysun District and its closer neighbourhood (Sverchkov 2005c).

Among the sites of the region, several have been subject to more or less regular archaeological excavations, especially quite recent ones, as is the case of the Hellenistic fortresses of Kurganzol (Mokroborodov 2005; Sverchkov 2005a; 2007; 2008; 2013), and Uzundara (Rtveladze – Dvurechenskaya 2015; Dvurechenskaya *et al*. 2016), as well as the so-called Darband wall, dated traditionally to the Hellenistic / Kushan period (Rakhmanov – Rapin 2003; Rtveladze 1986; 2001; 2002; 2003; Rapin *et al*. 2006). The results of these digs have been properly and regularly published, unlike the research at the important Late Hellenistic / Early Kushan settlement of Payon Kurgan (Abdullaev 1999; 2001; 2002), the material of which remains almost unpublished, despite the fact that the excavations were finished more than 15 years ago. There has also been a nomadic (reportedly Yue-zhi) necropolis called Rabat 1, excavated in the village of Tuman (or Payon) Kurgan, located close and perhaps related to the above-mentioned settlement site of Payon Kurgan. Again, the materials and results of the excavations remain in a very preliminary stage (Abdullaev – Annaev 2001). The excavations at the necropolis Rabat 1, along with that of Rabat 2, were resumed by the Uzbek–Chinese team in Spring 2017 and continued in 2018 as well. A Kushan and Medieval settlement was partly excavated in 2002[3] at the site of Munchak Tepa in the village of the same name (Sheyko 2011), while the trial excavations of the settlement of Dunya Tepa in the Alamli mountains, belonging to the Late Antique period, has not yet been properly published. Even if the High Medieval sites prevail in the settlement pattern of the Baysun piedmonts, the only site of this period closely investigated so far is Bazar Tepa in Khoja Bulgan village (Bobokhojaev 1990), which, moreover, no longer exists.

2 In Stride's catalogue, cat. nos. Uz-SD-001, 002, 003, 004, 007, 008, 012, 013, 014, 015, 016, 300, 301, 305, 306, 307, 352, 352a, 353, 354, 608 belong to the Baysun District.

3 The first excavations at the site took place in 1987, but the results have not been published at all (Sheyko 2011, 228).

No less important for our project is the immense scholarship and literature of a rather historical nature, whose authors claim that it is possible to identify various places in the researched region with particular spots mentioned by Classical authors dealing with Alexander the Great's campaign, especially Arrian and Curtius Rufus (von Schwartz 1906, 76–81; Rtveladze 2002; Sverchkov 2008, 165–185; Sverchkov 2013, 136–139; Rapin 2013; 2014; Lerner 2016). The full discussion on individual arguments and claims of the scholars is beyond the scope of this report, it is planned, however, for the final report of the project.

SURFACE SURVEY PROCESS / PROGRESS

The main research base was established in April 2017 in the village of Darband itself, while temporary expedition camps were pitched for a couple of days – in order to make the work as effective as possible – on the summits of two of the researched ridges, that of Sarymas and Susiztag respectively, since these places are very difficult to reach for a single-day field work. The following overview of the 30 survey traces / routes took place in the aforementioned sub-regions of the Baysun District, labelled as Areas 1–6. With a few exceptions, every trace / route represents one-day's, or several hours', work.[4] Altogether, we walked a route 186 km long, not counting any parallel walking of two or more people in a group, which was often the case, but only the central line (**Tab. 1**).

Trace / Route no.	Area	Description of the itinerary	Length (kms)	Finds / Sites found	Date (2017)
1	5	Steppe to the east of Darband	5.97		28 April
2	2	Along the left bank of Machay Darya gorge north of Darband (to the turn of the river to the east)	3.22	Pottery scatter SA_187 – an outpost?	29 April
3			9.07	Architecture, pottery, coins, slag (MA_093), two caves	29 April
14			12.67	Kurgans; stone structures; coins	4 May
4	5	In the village of Darband	5.45	Several pottery scatters	29 April
5 10 13	1	From Darband up to / down from Sarymas	4.6 5 5.19	Part of this path surveyed by metal detector (Smělý): Coins, arrow heads	30 April 2 May 3 May
6	1	Along the southern edge of Sarymas (close to the TV transmitter and to the east of it)	5.8	Stone structures, kurgan-like features (Sar_001, 002)	30 April
7			7.74		1 May
8	1	Around an abandoned village – western Sarymas	2.0	Extensive ruins of a village made of red sandstone blocks	1 May
12			1.9	Ruins of a Medieval village?	3 May
9	1	Along the eastern edge of Sarymas (above the Machay Darya gorge)	14.22	Little pottery (including 1 Achaemenid frg.), some stone structures	2 May

4 The trace no. 21 took ca. 30 minutes to accomplish with two sites discovered in the process.

Trace / Route no.	Area	Description of the itinerary	Length (kms)	Finds / Sites found	Date (2017)
11	1	Along the southern edge of Sarymas (close to the TV transmitter and to the west of it) and to the north as far as abandoned village	11		3 May
15	3	Along the dust road and gorge up to Uzundara and beyond	6.89	Coins; pottery	5 may
16 17 18 19	3	Across the summit of Susiztag	9.91 7.82 8.9 (??)	Kurgans; stone structures coins	5 May 6 May 6 May 6 May
20	3	Across the summit of Susiztag – northern tip	3.45		6 May
21	3	Along a gorge from the Susiztag summit down to the east (Sairob)	8.26	Pottery; coins; a rock-shelter	7 May
22	3	From the summit of Susiztag down to the west and then north to Shurob	8.97	cave	7 May
23	2	Through a gorge linking the main Machay River gorge and Kaynar Buloq	3.2	Kurgans	8 may
24	6	Along the edge of a ravine of Kurganzol, from railroad southwards to the village of Üch Kol	7.95	Medieval cemetery with stone grave stelae / slabs	9 May
25 26	2	Along the upper Machay Darya, in the villages of Past Machay and Yukari Machay	3.17 1	Hellenistic and Medieval settlement	10 May
27	3	Along eastern slopes of Susiztag	1.99	Kurgans; stone structures	10 May
28	4	Across the summit of Alamli Mountains	10.5	Early and High Medieval settlements (Dunya Tepa, Munchak Tepa); mining / smelting activities; slag	11 May
29	1	Through Buzgalakhana gorge	6.32	pottery	12 May
30	6	Along the Ak Tau ridge east of Sairob	11	Kurgans; pottery	15 May

Tab. 1: Overview of survey traces / routes.

SURVEY RESULTS

In the following we provide a brief description of the principal investigated or newly uncovered sites sorted according to the survey areas.

Survey Area 1: Sarymas

The mountains of Sarymas became the first and foremost target of the survey (**Pl. 3/2**), because this area best matches the descriptions of one of the 'rocks' of Sogdiana and Bactria (refuges

of the local population during Alexander the Great's campaign) as given by the ancient written sources. The survey here lasted for three days and clearly attested that on the plateau there was not only no substantial settlement of the late 4th c. BC, but also no earlier one or any other Antique site. We detected a single pottery fragment, which could be dated back to the Achaemenid period. Our survey covered all the southern and eastern edges of the plateau that by the magnificent panorama view hold control of the Iron Gate area on the one hand, and the Machay gorge on the other. Besides this, we undertook several intensive surface surveys on the above located fields with negative results (**Fig. 2**). At several points close to the edge of the mountain, we were able to discover stone structures, both oblong ones with stone walls, and circular, reminiscent of kurgans. Most of these features did not yield archaeological material significant enough to date them, if only approximately.

Fig. 2: Intensive surface survey on the plateau of Sarymas, photo A. Augustinová.

Sarymas is accessible by three principal ways: two of them are steep and difficult unpaved roads, one leading from the south-west and the other from the north-east. Once on the plateau, travelling by car is quite easy. We, however, reached the plateau also by the most difficult footpath that forms the only access from the south and east, more precisely from the village of Darband directly to the top. The pottery finds were quite rare in this zone, but we succeeded in detecting many small finds directly on or very close to the path itself by a metal-detector, including several fragments resembling parts of arms and armour, including arrow heads of Antiquity (408/1023; 902/3021). Their thorough analysis is currently being prepared. If any army came from the south-east (from the Surkhan Darya, Termez, Bactra), this way would have been their first choice to access the mountain defended by the locals. Most of the sites detected by the survey with more than three pottery fragments (in this brief overview we

decided to omit the individual pottery finds as less relevant) are dated to the Late Medieval (SA_029, SA_053; SA_187), or even Pre-Modern period (SA_062), some of them may have been from the High Medieval phase (SA_009; SA_065; SA_218). The site no. SA_065 yielded slight evidence for the earliest systematic occupation of the plateau in the Early Medieval period. It should be noted, that the sites SA_029, 065 and 0218 together form a cluster grouped around a rare water source – abundant water springs at the western margin of the plateau, which is actually close to another mountain massif called Karamas, typical for more tree cover. The remains of structures – a Late Medieval / Early Modern village or large farm consist of robust red-stone walls, water channels and enclosures for livestock (**Fig. 3**).

Fig. 3: Site SA_029, remains of a Pre-Modern farm / village at the foot of Karamas Mountain. Photo L. Stančo.

Since also the gorge of Buzgalakhana, which is considered by scholars one of the possible ways through the mountains (Rtveladze 2002, 111–114), forms the south-western part of Sarymas we decided to survey it at least preliminarily. There was detected one site situated on a terrace above the bottom of the valley (BU_001) dated by the collected pottery to the High Medieval Period, matching the trend observed on the plateau of Sarymas itself. It should be noted that despite our efforts, only one coin has been detected on the plateau of Sarymas so far – close to the High Medieval site of SA_009 –, which is dated to the Pre-Modern period (1001).

Survey Area 2: Machay Darya Valley

The second task of our team in the area to the north of Darband was to investigate the deep gorge of the Machay Darya and its river valley beyond to the north and east as far as the Past Machay and Yukari Machay villages (**Pl. 3/3**). We did so in several days, surveying the footpath

leading not on the bottom of the valley, but climbing high up to the slopes of Ketman Chapty Mountain with the highest point located in the mountain pass high above the Machay River (Sary Shato pass according to the Soviet maps of the 1980s). The footpath, used by the local population so far, was until quite recently the only way to Machay and other villages situated in the remote valleys of north-western Baysun Tau: even the 1970s–1980s maps show only this tiny way and not the currently used asphalt road copying the river bed at the bottom all the way and leading through a very narrow and deep gorge that is definitely not easy to go through in early spring.

The pass of Sary Shato is very well situated, overlooking all the Machay Darya gorge and having a splendid view of the Sarymas plateau across the gorge at the same time. The survey of this strategic point (MA_093) provided us with abundant archaeological evidence of traffic especially in the Early Medieval Period. As much as 100 pottery fragments have been collected at the site (**Fig. 5**). Besides these, the metal-detector survey added 12 coins (nos. 2001–2012; 3005), including imitations of the Kushan king Vasudeva dated to the 3rd–4th c. AD (2002 and 2003). The Medieval period was represented by the 10th c. Samanid coin (2011), as well as a Shaybanid coin of the first half of the 15th c. (2010). In the centre of the meadow once stood an oblong structure made of stone, of which now only the fundaments remain (**Fig. 4**).

Above the Sary Shato pass, there is a narrow gorge at the altitude of 1800–1900 m.a.s.l. with two natural caves situated in the steep slopes of the gorge opposite each other. Locals call them (both) Kara Kamar. Only a few insignificant pottery sherds have been found there.

Fig. 4: Stone walls of a building at Sary Shato pass (MA_093), photo L. Stančo.

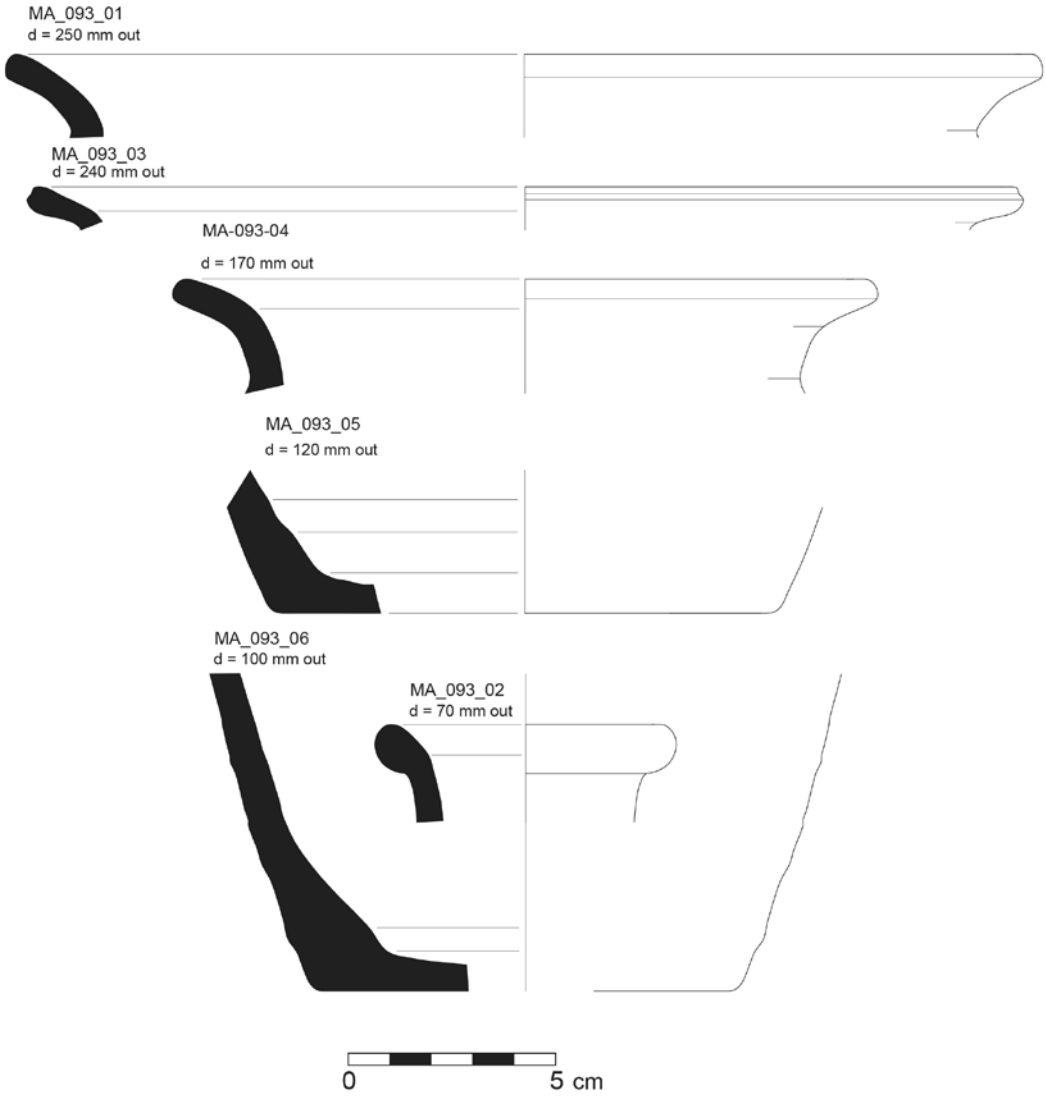

Fig. 5: Pottery of MA_093, Sary Shato, drawing by J. Havlík and V. Doležálková.

To the left of the path descending from the pass northwards to Machay, there are traces of smelting on the slopes, especially lots of slag and occasionally also pottery (MA_151). Such accumulations of slag are especially numerous along the road from the pass to the south, towards the former tourist base camp of Charvak. On the terraces and meadows called Urochische Gamuz, there is one larger area dotted with kurgan-like features and skirted with long stone walls (**Fig. 6**). In the centre of the meadow, there is a large accumulation of slag pieces. One last archaeological site (MA_121), dated again to the Early Middle Ages, has been detected just above the junction of the dust roads linking Machay, Darband, Sarymas and Bagzagon on a hill close to the modern cemetery of Past Machay.

Fig. 6: Meadow at Gamuz with remains of walls and kurgan-like features, photo L. Stančo.

Concerning the upper Machay Valley, one archaeological site of the Hellenistic period was already mentioned in scientific literature (Sverchkov 2005b, 10, no. 4; Sverchkov 2013, 143–144, рис. 111) and again, pointed out recently to us by Tokhtash Annaev.[5] Our survey confirmed the existence of a Hellenistic outpost on the summit of a rocky outcrop in the centre of Yukari Machay (MA_105). The site was settled again in the Kushan period (**Fig. 7**) and in the High Middle Ages. Since a mobile phone transmitter had been recently built upon the hill, possibilities of further research of this site have grown very limited. The survey of the closest neighbourhood has shown that also the area of the modern cemetery of Khojaroshnoy Ota (MA_094) was settled from the Late Kushan period (**Fig. 8**) at least until the Pre-Modern period (and to the present time, indeed).

5 Personal communication 07/2017.

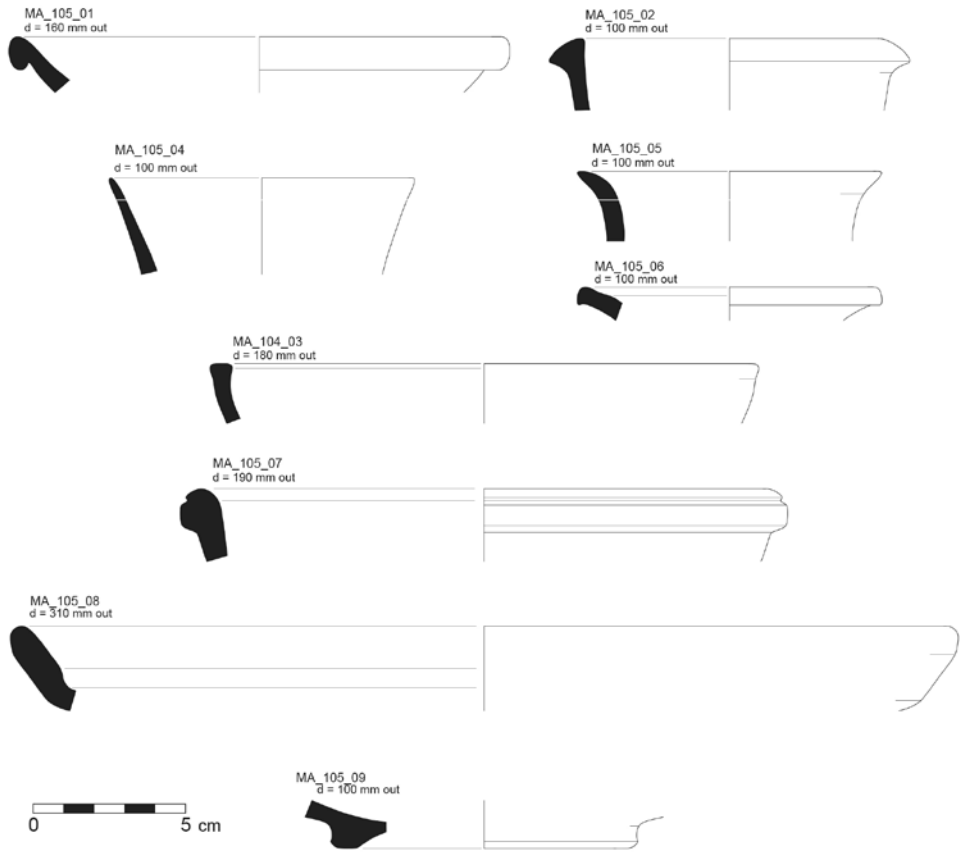

Fig. 7: Pottery of MA_105, Machay Kurgan, 1, 3, 8 = Greco-Bactrian pottery; 2, 7, 9 = High Medieval pottery; 4–6 = Kushan pottery, drawing by J. Havlík and V. Doležálková.

Area 3: Susiztag

Even though this area, or at least its significant part – the Uzundara fort and its vicinity – has been well studied by the Russian archaeological team in the last few years (Rtveladze – Dvurechenskaya 2015), we decided to conduct a survey of the fertile plateau above the fort itself, as well as of the courses of predicted roads leading over the mountain (**Pl. 3/4**). Several walking traces of our survey covered the eastern and western edges of the plateau, i.e. 'road' linking the Sairob – Darband main road with the plateau (that passes the Uzundara fort itself), the road descending from the summit down to the west (ultimately leading to the north towards Shurob village), as well as the western slopes generally. This area did not reveal any significant archaeological site, find spot or pottery scatter. We were able to detect only small groups of kurgan-like features both on the plateau and at the foot of the mountain. The other insignificant stone structures were unfortunately not accompanied by pottery finds diagnostic enough to classify them chronologically. The results of our metal-detector survey gave, on the other hand, interesting results. One group of coins was detected around a structure situated at the road descending from the plateau to the west. Among them there are two Pre-Modern coins (4001, 4002) and one belonging to the Timurid period (4003). The latter attests to the using of this road in the Late Medieval period, which further corroborates a coin minted in Bukhara found at another find spot situated at the highest point of the road – in the pass (3001),

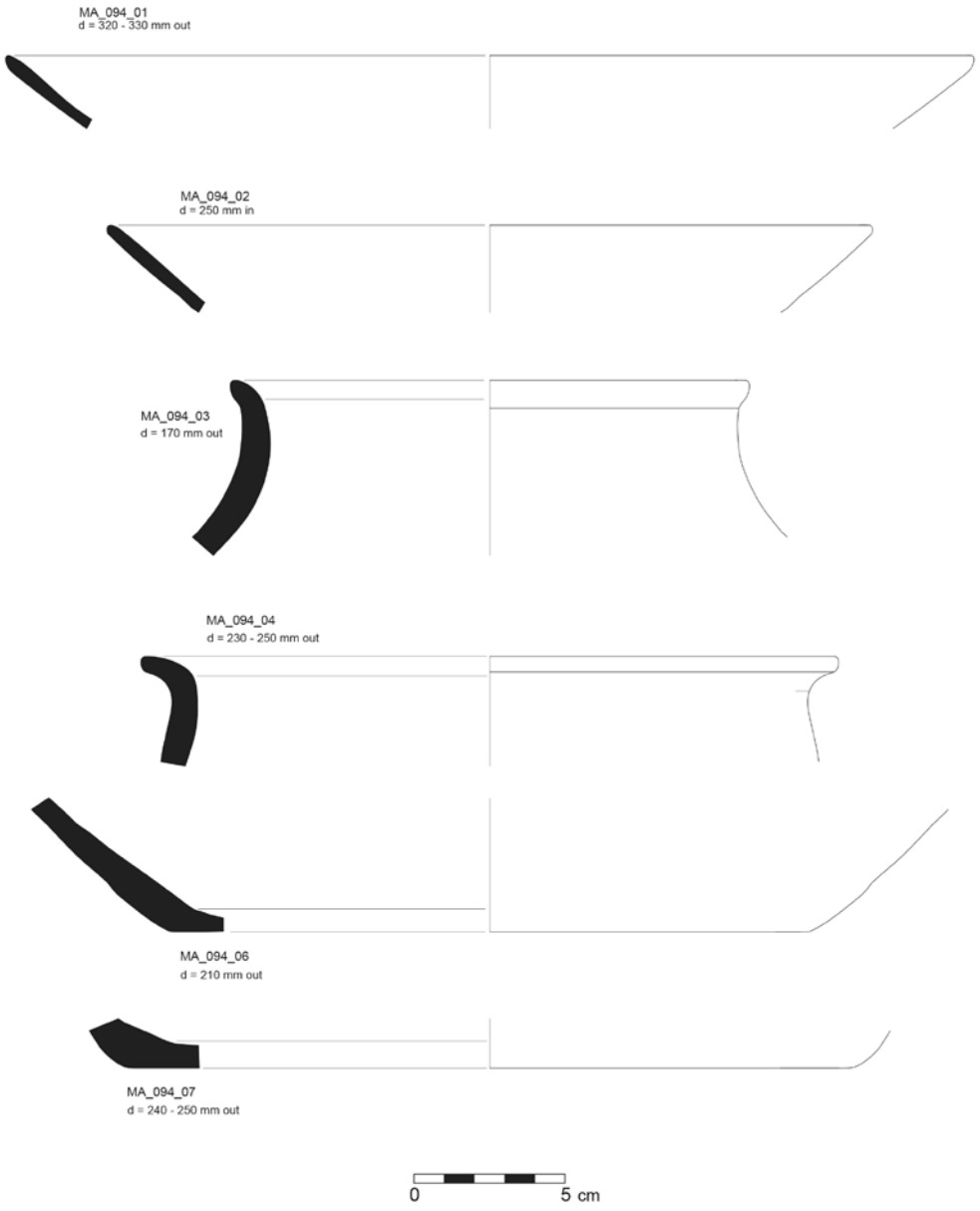

Fig. 8: Late Kushan pottery of MA_094, Khojaroshnoyota in Machay, drawing by J. Havlík and V. Doležálková.

where the Soviet topographic maps indicate the ruins of Abdulakhan Rabat.[6] A small hoard of Pre-Modern coins minted perhaps in Bukhara (19th–20th c.) was detected beneath a rock-shelter in a remote gorge descending from the plateau eastwards in the direction of Sairob (3012.1–8). The last coin group (3002–3011) that was detected on the road leading to the fort of Uzundara only confirms the numismatic data gained by the team of N. Dvurechenskaya at the site itself (Dvurechenskya *et al.* 2016). Two Greco-Bactrian coins of Euthydemus of the 'Heracles head and a horse' type are the earliest pieces that we have found (3005, 3011), while

6 See Sverchkov 2005b, 11–12, no. 22, it is also marked on the map of archaeological sites made by Sverchkov (Sverchkov 2008, 124, fig. 1, no. 23).

the imitation of Heliocles' bronze (3006) represents the transitional period between the Greek rule and the Kushan Empire. Comparatively frequently represented is the Post-Mongol or Late Medieval Period with three Timurid coins (3003, 3009, 3010). Combined with the fourth find of this period from the other side of the mountain, but on the same road, we may assume this way was commonly used in the 15th c. AD, i.e. in the Late Medieval period. The rest of the coins belongs to the Pre-Modern period (3002, 3004, 3007, 3008).

Area 4: Alamli

The Area 4 (**Pl. 3/5**) was covered with only one survey trace (no. 28 on 11 May). The principal aim here was to check the information that was known about the site of Dunya Tepa, which was reportedly excavated to a certain degree some time ago. We reached the Kesuk Pass[7] by car and the site was shown to us by a local herder. The site of Dunya Tepa (AL_002) is situated on an elevated platform forming a promontory with steep north, west and east slopes. The only access leads from the south. Traces of trenches belonging perhaps to the earlier small--scale excavations have been observed. The results of these digs have, however, – as far as we know –, never been published. The amount of pottery fragments on the surface is very limited. Those sherds we collected (see pottery selection below), however, point to the Early Medieval Period, which agrees with the only publication of the excavation results we know of so far (Bobokhojaev *et al*. 1990, 25–28), as well as with the observations of Sverchkov (Sverchkov 2005b, 11, no. 18). The site makes sense only as a control point, or outpost, overlooking a deep gorge below. Its existence may have been connected with copper mining activities in the neighbourhood and its protection.

Having no other hint as to anthropogenic features in this area, we let a local herder lead us after some hesitation on his part to yet another 'ancient place' (AL_007, AL_004) which turned out to be not far off and proved to be identical to the site mentioned in publication as Munchak Tepa (Bobokhojaev *et al*. 1990, 25–27; Sverchkov 2005b, 11, no. 19; Sverchkov 2008, 124, fig. 1, no. 22). Our informant offered the name of Munchak Ota for the Medieval/ Pre-Modern(?) cemetery scattered over the surface of the site's citadel as an alternative or variant of the former. The authors of the first mentioned publication provided no detail of the topography of the sites, not to mention other peculiarities, failed to recognize the importance of this remarkable archaeological site, or rather complex area. Sverchkov, on the other hand, in his thorough description of the site, differs substantially from our own observations (Sverchkov 2005b, 11). Within 300×150 m (at least 4 ha), there are situated three principal mounds with obvious remains of stone architecture (**Figs. 9** and **10**). The southern one (Al_007), overlooking a deep stream valley with a water spring, seems to be most pronounced and elevated, thus we consider it to be the citadel. This one is covered with stone barrows of an unknown, but perhaps Late Medieval or Pre-Modern period. The graves have various shapes, oval or rectangular, some of them are only enclosed by stones, other ones fully covered with them.

7 Thus, called in the map NJ 42-5 series N502, with the scale of 1:250 000, compiled in 1952.

Fig. 9: Munchak Tepa, the citadel and second mound (AL_007 and AL_004), photo L. Stančo.

Fig. 10: Munchak Tepa (AL_007), stone constructions, photo L. Stančo.

The explanation of the existence of such a settlement in this remote and elevated area may lie in peculiar features situated in close proximity to the site. These are especially large fields of metal slag accumulated on the slopes of a stream valley immediately to the north. One of them has been documented by our team under the number AL_003.[8] These finds provide evidence of ancient smelting – and mining – activities on a large scale in this area. The fields of slag of AL_003 are accompanied by several stone piles, or 'kurgan-like features'. More places with fields of slag around the settlement are clearly detectable in the satellite imagery.

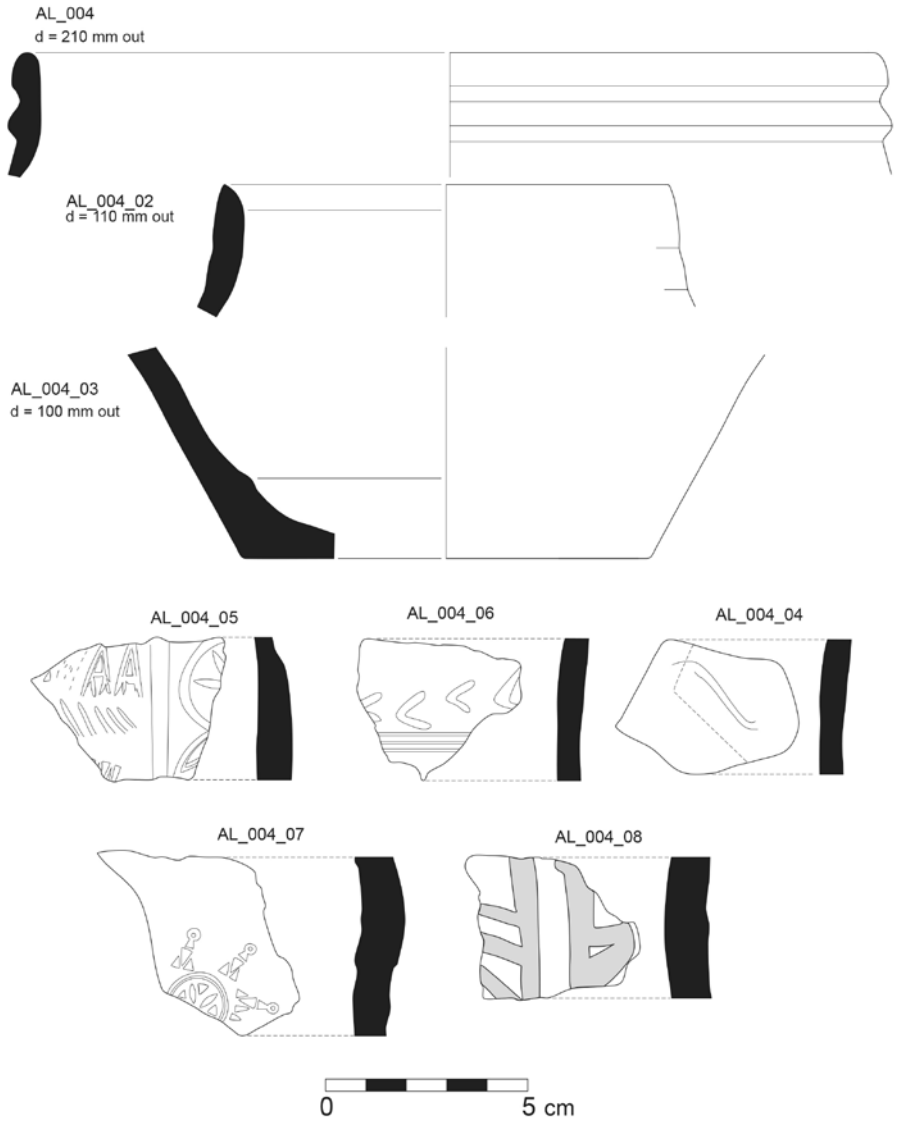

Fig. 11: Kushan pottery of AL_004, Munchak Tepa, drawing by J. Havlík and V. Doležálková.

8 This is perhaps identical to the site no. 20 in Sverchkov 2005b, 11, named Chuyan Say.

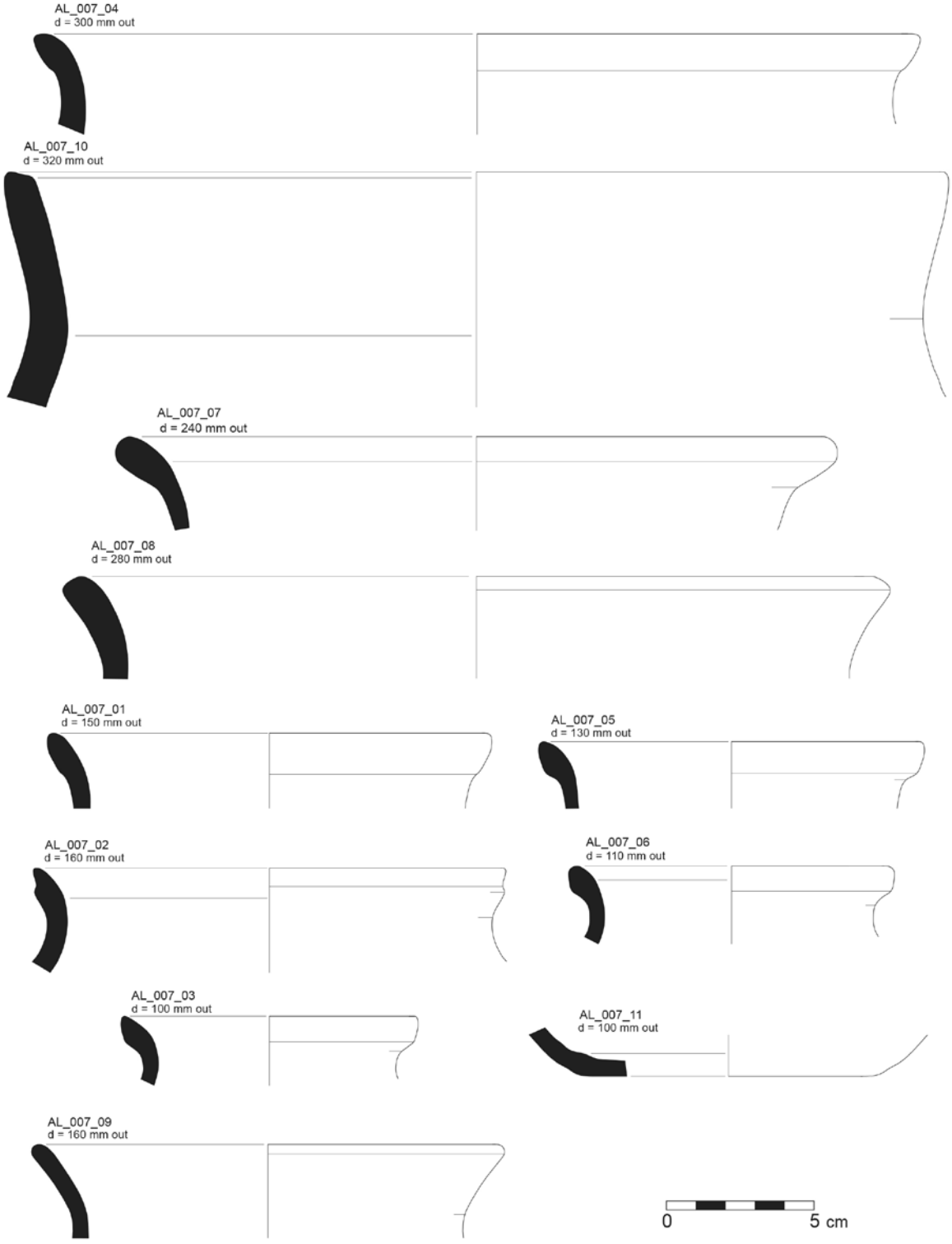

Fig. 12: Late Kushan pottery of AL_007, Munchak Tepa, drawing by J. Havlík and V. Doležálková.

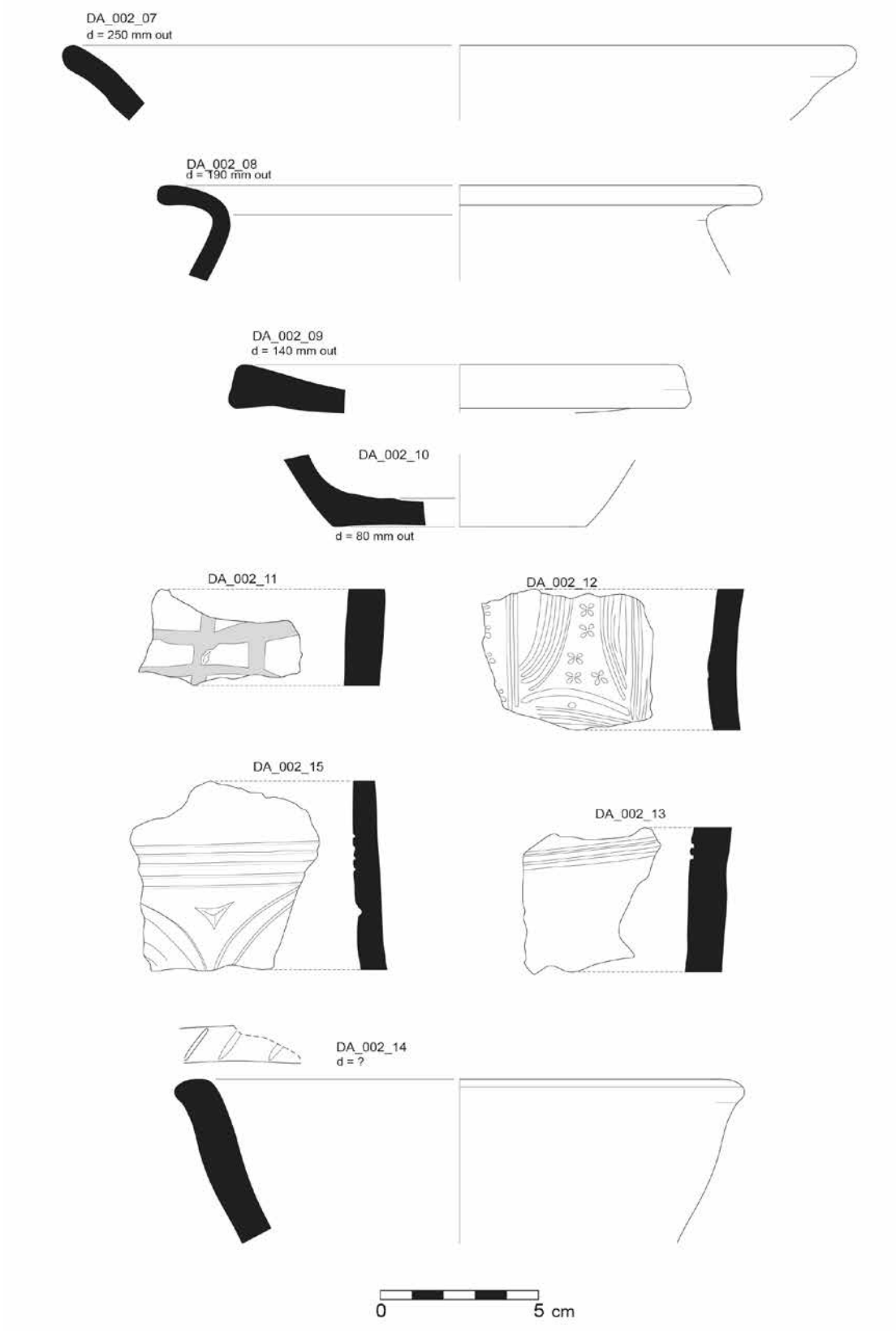

Fig. 13: Pottery of DA_002, Darband (village) drawing by J. Havlík and V. Doležálková.

Our brief description of the Munchak Tepa settlement and the surrounding industrial area shows clearly the high potential of this particular area for the future research of the Medieval metal production on the border of Sogdiana and Tokharistan. Unfortunately, a metal-detector, that could have provided some additional surface data, has not yet been employed at this site.

Area 5: Darband village
Only a part of the village of Darband has been surveyed by Anna Augustinová and Jakub Havlík in order to get a sample of the historic settlement on the spot where several important routes met (**Pl. 3/6**). The methods of the survey were adopted from the project conducted by our team elsewhere – in the Pashkhurt piedmont steppe oases in the last three years. It consists of asking local people, checking topographically significant locations and collecting pottery wherever the terrain and plots with gardens allow for it (Augustinová *et al*. 2016; 2017). Among the finds, those dated to the Late Medieval and Pre-Modern periods clearly predominate (DA_003 and DA_004), while only one find spot yielded also Kushan and Early Medieval pottery material (DA_002).

Area 6: Sairob – Rabat Zone
Only two survey traces at two different spots were carried out by our team in the large piedmont zone in the foothills of Baysun and Susizag, located between the present-day villages of Sairob in the west and Rabat in the east. Since we had not planned a complex surface survey of the given area, we decided to investigate only particular areas, especially the vicinity of the Hellenistic fortress of Kurganzol (trace no. 24). Our aim here was to detect eventual agricultural settlements in the hinterland of the fort itself. As for this objective, our results were negative. Only several rather insignificant pottery scatters have been detected. Immediately to the south of the Baysun train station, a Medieval necropolis furnished with stone decorated stelae has been investigated.

The second survey trace in Area 6 (no. 30) was situated along the Ak Tau ridge east of Sairob. This work brought to light only a few kurgan-like features, while no settlement has been uncovered.

CONCLUSIONS

The first season of the archaeological surface survey of the Czech-Uzbek expedition in the Baysun District of the Surkhan Darya province, south Uzbekistan, confirmed the high potential of this so far understudied area for non-destructive archaeological research. The historical landscape in this area is quite well preserved both in the foothills and in the mountain valleys, especially compared to the lowland areas of the province (the Sherabad Oasis studied previously by the same team, for instance) due to the fact that only a minor portion of the land is used for agricultural purposes, while the major part of the lowlands grassland and steppe is exploited as pasture. The diverse and uneven relief of the landscape prevents, however, the easy detection of new archaeological sites using aerial or satellite imagery, at least for the present time. Thus, the principal method represents the traditional field walking and visual detection of anthropogenic features in the terrain, corroborated by a predictive approach, be it an empirical one based on the researcher's experience with the given type of landscape, or GIS-based analysis building on Digital Elevation Model. The latter method helped in this case to trace the historical roads and paths leading through the region of Darband and the so-called Iron Gate.

Site No.	Site name	Area	Longitude	Latitude	m.a.s.l.	Period (count of finds)
AL_002	Dunya Tepa	4	38.123426	66.855250	1709	EMA (2)
AL_003	Kara Tash	4	38.144833	66.841415	1745	LMA (6)
AL_004	Munchak Tepa	4	38.138592	66.839708	1769	Antiquity (8). Pre-Modern (10)
AL_007	Munchak Tepa	4	38.137768	66.840214	1101	LKU (24). Pre-Modern (15)
BU_001	Busgalakhana	1	38.229209	66.898553	1230	HMA (3)
DA_002	Darband (in the village)	5	38.20935279	67.018823	1023	Antiquity (1). EMA (1). HMA (25). LMA (1). Pre-Modern (6)
DA_003		5	38.21852611	67.027965	1052	HMA (2). Pre-Modern (10)
DA_004		5	38.21857749	67.028202	1050	LMA (7)
MA_093	Sary Shato	2	38.285163	67.030333	1611	EMA (101)
MA_094	Khojaroshnoy Ota (Machay)	2	38.32799192	67.076898	1312	EMA (13). HMA (11). LKU (5). LMA (1). ME (26)
MA_105	Machay Kurgan	2	38.330953	67.077169	1343	GB (5). HMA (152). KUS (16)
MA_121		2	38.311431	67.037352	1286	EMA (3)
MA_146		2	38.301431	67.009057	1249	LMA (16)
MA_149		2	38.301283	67.008474	1254	EMA (6)
MA_151		2	38.291628	67.026723	1545	LMA (4)
SA_009		1	38.23352661	66.979646	1731	HMA (9)
SA_029	Sarymas – old farm	1	38.26685	66.94935	1648	LMA (6)
SA_053		1	38.25171694	67.011387	1899	LMA (18)
SA_062		1	38.249421	67.005871	1791	Pre-Modern (11)
SA_065	No name	1	38.26756971	66.945351	1762	EMA (1). HMA (7). Pre-Modern (24)
SA_187		1	38.25548678	67.039959	1438	LMA (5)
SA_218		1	38.266481	66.944058	1755	HMA (4). LMA (2)

Tab. 2: Sites overview with preliminary dating.

During three weeks in the field, the Czech-Uzbek team covered an almost 190 km long route on foot, detected several so-far unknown settlements (the pass of Sary Shato, no name site close to Machay, and many other sites, see **Tab. 2**), re-examined some already known, but insufficiently published ones (Machay Kurgan, Dunya Tepa and Munchak Tepa in the Alamli mountains), and verified the course of several historical roads (i.e. Darband – Machay, Darband – Sarymas; Sairob –Uzundara – Shurob). One of the most important results of the 2017 field season is connected with the verification of sites, referred to us as places of refuge of the Alexander the Great period. None of the plateaus yielded significant material of the period in question, be it the Achaemenid, or the Early Hellenistic one. The earliest period that is well represented in the archaeological material from the mountains around Darband so far (not to mention the Palaeolithic) is the Late Antique / Early Medieval.

As the first season of the project focused on the mountain plateaus and valleys, in the second season (2018) we are going to survey especially the piedmont area of the Baysun District (here labelled as Area 6: Sairob – Rabat zone).

No.	Survey No.	Coins determination by Vlastimil Novák (11/2017)
1	2007	AE local mint of Bukhara, 19th / 20th c. AD
2	2001	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
3	2003	AE local imitation of mints of the Kushan king Vasudeva I, ca. 3rd–4th c. AD
4	2006	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
5	2002	AE local imitation of mints of the Kushan king Vasudeva I, ca. 3rd–4th c. AD
6	2004	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
7	2005	AE local mint of Bukhara, 19th / 20th c. AD
8	1001	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
9	1002	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
10	2011	AE Samanids, Nuh II. b. Mansur (976–997 AD), minted in Bukhara?
11	2009	AE local mint Bukhara, 19th / 20th c. AD
12	2008	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
13	2010	AE Shaybanids, Bukhara overstrike by Hissar mint, first half of 15th c. AD
14	2012	AE local mint of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
15	3005	AE Bactria, Euthydemus I (230–200 BC) after Gardner 1886, 5, nos. 15–17.
16	3006	AE north. Bactria, imitation of tetradrachm of Heliocles I (145–130 BC)
17	3004	AE Iran, local mint, 19th c. AD (obverse lion to the left)
18	3002	AE local mint of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
19	3003	AE Timurids, Shah Rukh (1405–1447 AD), Bukhara, overstrike Danki 853 AH (AD 1449)
20	3001	AE local mint Bukhara, 1283 AH/1866 AD
21	4001	AE local mint of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
22	4003	Timurids?, 15th c., secondary perforation (a button?)
23	4004	AE local mint of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
24	4002	AE local mint Bukhara, 19th / 20th c. AD
25	3007	AE local mint Samarqand, 19th / 20th c. AD
26	3008	illegible
27	3010	AE Timurids, Mid 15th c. AD
28	3011	AE Bactria, Euthydemus I. (230–200 BC) after Gardner 1886, 5, nos. 15–17.
29	3009	AE Timurids, Ahmad (1469–1494), Bukhara, 874 AH (AD 1470), double struck
30	5001	AE imitation of AR dirhamu, Samanids, ca. 950 AD
31	3012-1	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
31	3012-2	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
33	3012-3	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
34	3012-4	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
35	3012-5	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
36	3012-6	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD (perhaps Bukhara)
37	3012-7	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD
38	3012-8	AE local mints of Central Asia, 19th / 20th c. AD

Tab. 3: Overview of the coin finds.

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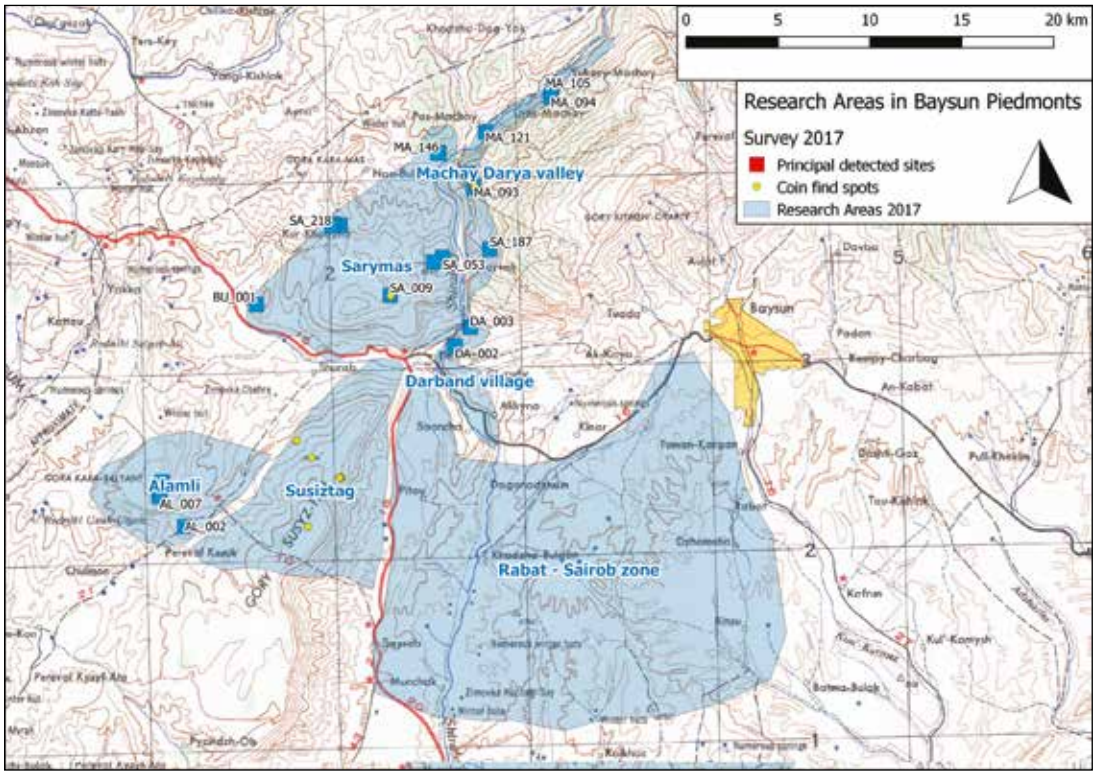
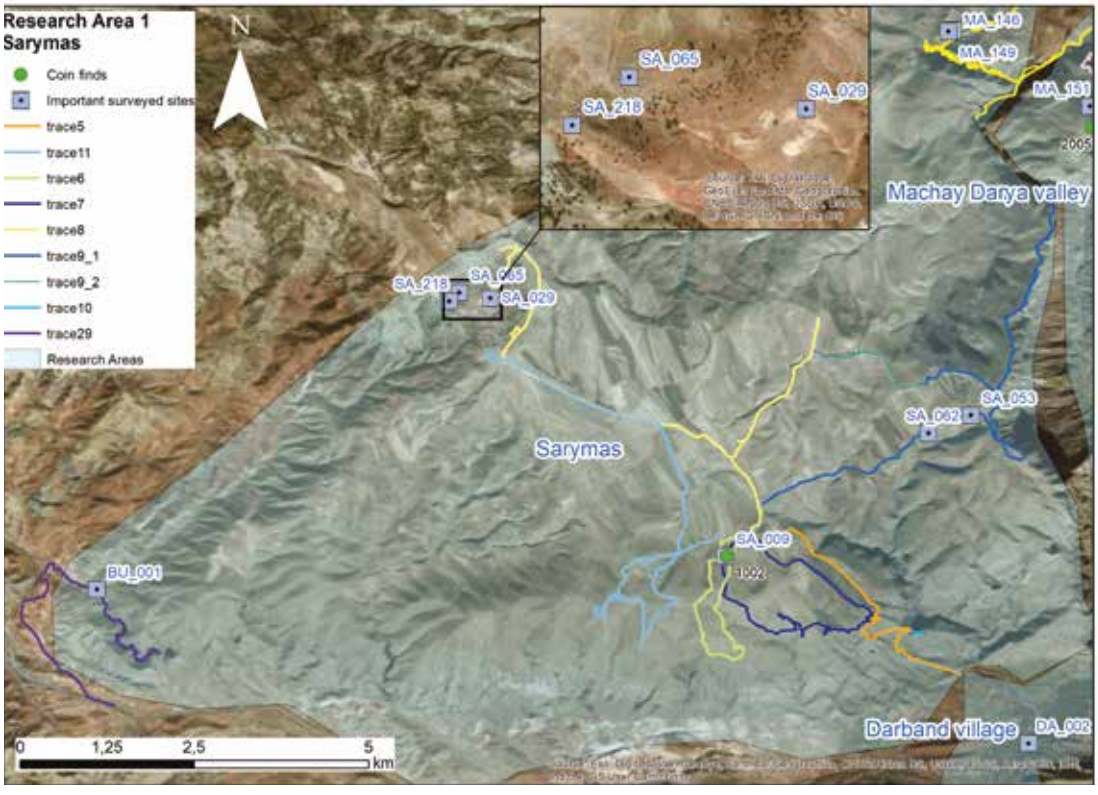
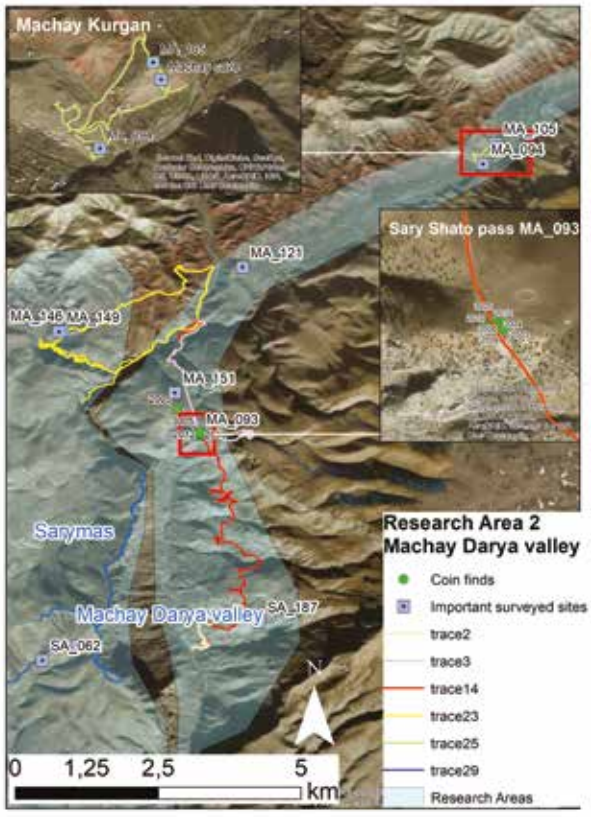


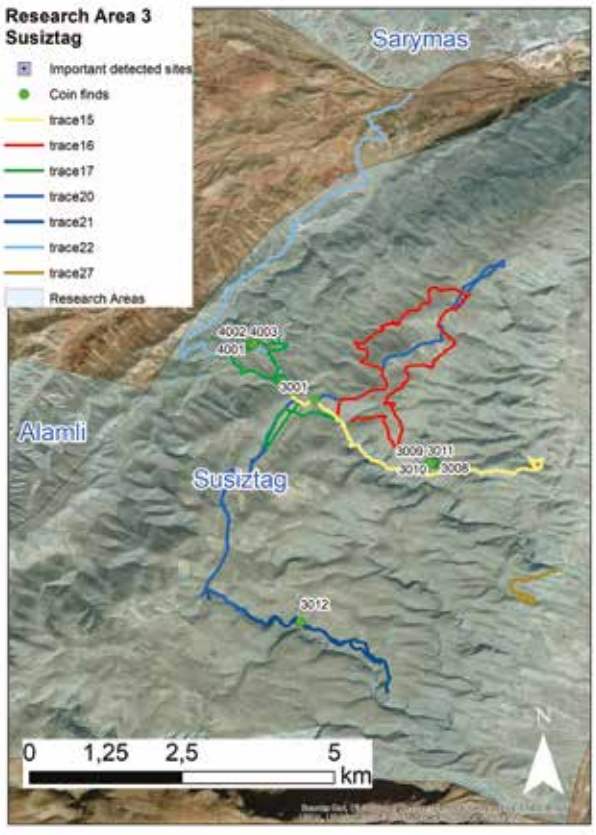
Pl. 3/1: Map showing research areas and principal sites surveyed in 2017.



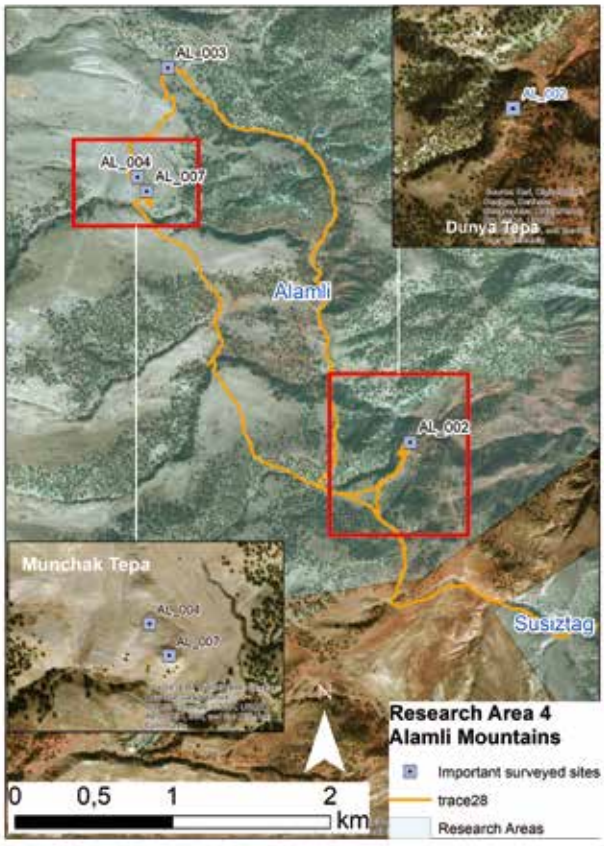
Pl. 3/2: Map showing principal sites surveyed in 2017 in the Survey Area 1, Sarymas.



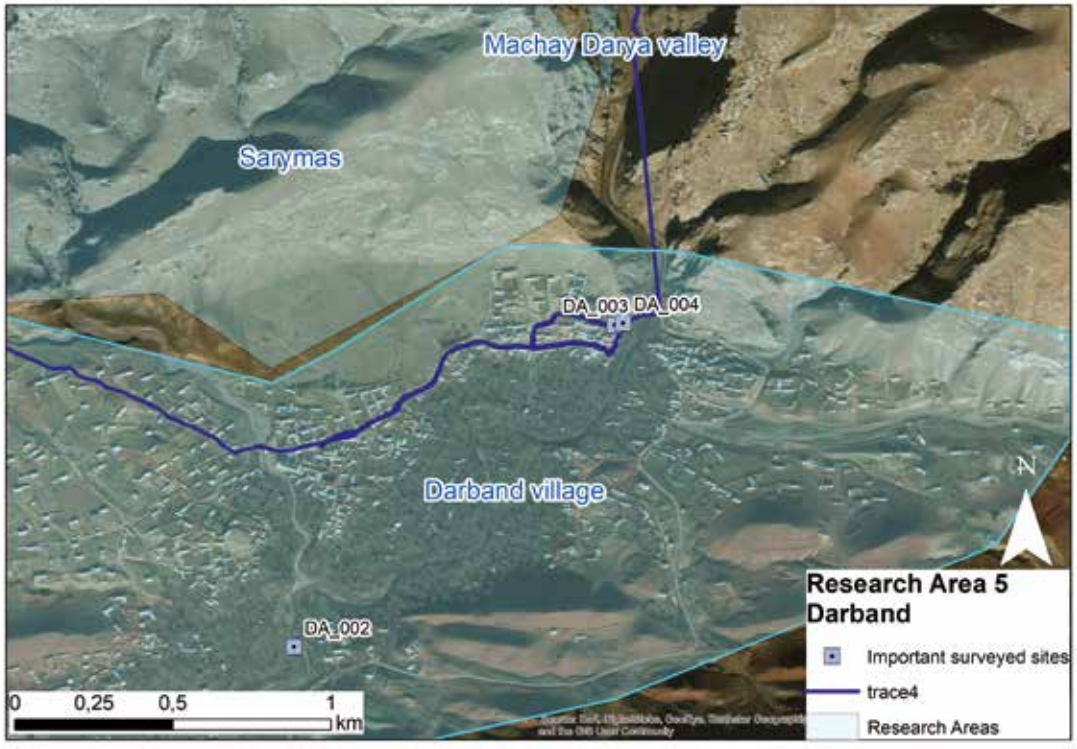
Pl. 3/3: Map showing principal sites surveyed in 2017 in the Survey Area 2, Machay Darya Valley.



Pl. 3/4: Map showing principal sites surveyed in 2017 in the Survey Area 3, Susiztag.



Pl. 3/5: Map showing principal sites surveyed in 2017 in the Survey Area 4, Alamli.



Pl. 3/6: Map showing principal sites surveyed in 2017 in the Survey Area 5, Darband.