

Assessment of

Bactria / Tokharistan in the 3rd–4th c. AD

Selected problems of settlement patterns and material culture

submitted by

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by

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The submitted manuscript has been prepared by the author as part of the Habilitation process at the University of Prague. It is intended as a cumulative work to give the reviewer an overview about the candidate's scientific achievements and capabilities, but it has not prepared for publication. This is important to be kept in mind since the work as certain incoherencies among its different parts and considerable weaknesses concerning the English language.

The work focuses on the northern part of ancient Bactria, the southern part of present-day Uzbekistan. This is the region where the author had conducted intensive archaeological fieldwork implementing various techniques. Dr. Stančo is one of the very few European scholars conducting fieldwork in Central Asia. By doing so he makes a most important contribution to the field by opening until now a virtually unknown region and especially a very little known time period – e.g. the Late Antique ear – to the western scholarly public. From my point of view this is the most important achievement of his scientific career so far. This goes much beyond any individual result reached during his fieldwork and of those which are partly laid out in the submitted manuscripts.

The present manuscript clearly reflects the main interests of the candidate being the time of classical antiquity in the region of the southern Surkhandarya. His submitted work focuses on three major aspects, all discussed with case studies from the very region: the relationship between landscape and human settlements, the development

of selected groups of material culture and the question of the impact of the Roman Empire as far east as Central Asia.

The first two chapters apply rather new methods of geographical research and aerial photography to the region in Central Asia. This is an approach new to the region and not much applied yet. By implementing these research tools the development of the settlement history in combination to the variations of the irrigation system becomes visible. He could have strengthened his arguments by not only describing selected aspects of Jandavlattepe but by taking into account that this site is one of the every few in the region which was settled uninterruptedly from the Achaemenid period to the end of the Kushan era. This is of importance since there seem to be certain reasons (may they be geographical, strategical or others) which lead to the fact that the site was used continuously, a situation which is not attested at other sites in this micro-region. Nevertheless the author presents a detailed study of the settlement structure and development of a given micro-region which is a point of view neglected in the archaeology of Central Asia where research is mainly focusing on the individual site excavated. A more detailed comparison with other regions of the Kushan Empire would have opened the opportunity to reach more general conclusions on the settlement organization in the political entity and the particular position of the southern Surkhandarya within the empire.

The second part of the manuscript is dedicated to the discussion of three groups of material culture: fine ware pottery, certain figurines and ground-stone tools.

Unfortunately the reasons for the selection are not explained. Nevertheless the author succeeds in discussing interesting details of the chronological development, remarkable aspects of art history¹ as well as supra-regional contracts and otherwise rarely gained insights into everyday-life. Most parts of the discussions are focusing on the excavated material at Jandavlattepe which in case of the pottery mainly derives from the later levels of the site. Some of the conclusions might have been strengthened if the on-site lack of chronological depth would have been compensated by using an at least partly longer published stratigraphical unit². As in the first chapter a combination of the author's detailed knowledge of the

¹ In this respect an also »unusual type of terracotta figurine« from Dzandavlattepe could have even stimulated the discussion: D. Huff, An unusual type of terracotta figurine from North Bactria, in: A. Invernizzi (ed.), *In the Land of the Gryphons* (Firenze 1995) 269–275.

² A. Schachner, *Die Keramik der Grabungen 1993 am Dzandavlattepe, Süd-Uzbekistan*, AMIT 33-34, 2003-2004, 335-373.

Surkhandarya area with the results of other regions and sites in Central Asia could have even strengthened his reasoning.

In his final part the authors discuss the impact of Roman culture on Central Asia. He convincingly points out that in comparison to the southern sea route the much more laborious over-land connections were much less used and less influential. This chapter offers some interesting observations concerning the westward relations of the region but it would have been an asset to also further investigate the southward and eastward connections. By doing so the importance of the region at the crossroad of various lines of cultural communications and exchanges would have been visible in more detail.

Taking the extensive bibliography of Dr Stančo and his team into account it becomes clear that teaching young scholars is one of the major efforts of his projects in Central Asia. By doing so he fosters the institutionalization of his research fields which is a unique step in the European scientific world and will hopefully further develop the study of archaeology in Central Asia – by the way a unique feature of Charles University, Prag.

The above mentioned points should not be understood as major critique but show the general potential of Dr Stančo's work. The submitted manuscripts prove the innovative conclusions Dr Stančo reached already. His contribution certainly deserves to be accepted as a habilitation-dissertation as it meets all relevant criteria. Therefore I advise the bodies involved in Dr. Stančo's habilitation process to accept this work as habilitation-dissertation and continue the process of Dr. Stančo's habilitation.

Istanbul, January 11th, 2018

Prof. Dr. Andreas Schachner