

ON RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON THE DEFENSIVE WALL OF DALVARZINTEPA (II. Markaziy Osiyoda arxeologik tadqiqotlar)

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ABSTRACT

Beginning in September 2025, during the autumn field season, researchers from the Institute of Art Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in cooperation with Rissho University of Japan, commenced excavations of the tower located at the northern corner of the defensive wall surrounding the citadel of Dalvarzintepa. Prior to this, archaeological excavations had also been conducted in this part of the defensive wall. In particular, in 2014, B. Turgunov excavated an area measuring 10×10 m, exposing the upper mud-brick layer of the wall [1, 1–3]. In addition, at that time, a 1.5-m-wide section was opened along the outer façade of the western wall, through which the eroded outer side of the defensive wall, as well as a 7-m-wide section of the wall from its inner façade, were exposed and examined. These investigations were continued by B. Turgunov in 2015 [1, 4–5].

Keywords: Dalvarzintepa, DT-33, defensive wall, tower, Northern Bactria, Kushan period, loophole, mudbrick, pakhsa, stratigraphy.



Figure 1. Dalvarzintepa (general view and the location of the DT-33 area within it)

Subsequently, when archaeological investigations at Dalvarzintepa were resumed in 2021, excavations were initiated to expose the inner and outer façades of the defensive wall [2, 55]. However, the tower in this part of the monument had not previously been exposed and studied. Therefore, this location was selected with the aim of investigating the structure, form, dimensions, construction phases, and building materials of the tower situated at the northwestern corner of the western wall of the DT-33 area, as well as conducting a comparative

analysis of these features with the towers of other Kushan-period monuments of Bactria. Naturally, it is not possible to study all these aspects thoroughly within one or two field seasons. Therefore, the above-mentioned tasks will be carried out gradually according to a phased research plan. During the current season, the primary objective was to determine the precise boundaries of the surviving part of the tower and to remove the upper soil deposits that had accumulated over the course of centuries.



Figure 2. Northern side of the western defensive wall

The field investigations at the DT-33 area were conducted from September to November of the current year. During this field season, the northern side and the eastern side of the tower, facing the interior of the city, were excavated from the top of the tower downward and cleared of the overlying soil deposits. In total, an area of approximately 40 square metres ($7 \text{ m} \times 4 \text{ m} \times 9.60 \text{ m} \times 5.50 \text{ m}$) of the tower was exposed and examined during the current autumn field season.

Once the ditch serving to reinforce the city's defensive system ended, the platform of the defensive wall began. It was established that the elevation at the beginning of this platform was 456 m above sea level, while the highest preserved part of the tower was at an elevation of 464.5 m above sea level. Thus, the currently preserved height of the tower is 8.5 m. During the excavations, the highest preserved part of the tower was designated as the 0 datum point (reper) in order to record the architectural features of the tower's overall appearance. From this datum point downward, the tower was divided into four sections:

Upper section – 0.92–0.93 m below the datum point;

Middle section – 2.19–2.20 m below the datum point;

Lower section – 3.25–3.20 m below the datum point;

Lowest section – from 3.5 to 8.5 m below the datum point, extending down to the platform.

Excavations were conducted primarily on the northern and eastern sides of the tower, the latter constituting the inner façade facing the shahristan, to a depth of 3.20–3.25 m below the datum point. In addition, a 1.5-m-thick stratigraphic section wall (Russian: “brovka”) was left between the northern and outer façades of the tower in order to identify and document the stratigraphic layers revealed during the excavations.

Initially, the uppermost part of the northern side of the tower was cleared to a depth of 1.00–1.05 m. At this level, a recess 15–20 cm wide and 50 cm high was identified. A fragment of the rim of a light-coloured ceramic vessel was also discovered precisely at this location, approximately 1.10–1.20 m below the upper surface of the tower. In addition, at a depth of 2.15–2.20 m below the upper part of the tower, another recess measuring 20–25 cm in width

and 50 cm in height was recorded. Both recesses resemble an arrow-shaped form. These recesses may have served as arrow slits intended for the defence of the tower. On this side of the tower, at a depth of 2.0–2.5 m below the top of the wall, non-standard-shaped mud bricks (triangular in form) were identified. It is possible that they acquired this shape either as a result of the excavation process during the exposure of the tower or due to the erosion of the wall surface.



Figure 3. Mud bricks of non-standard shape



Figure 4. Recesses resembling arrow slits on the northern side of the tower

Similar arrow slits have previously been identified at a number of archaeological sites in Northern Bactria. At Dalvarzintepa, they were also recorded during excavations conducted in different years under the direction of L. I. Albaum and J. Ya. Ilyasov [3, 47–65; 4, 79–84]. However, in both studies, such recesses were considered only as possible arrow slits, and this interpretation subsequently remained an unverified scientific hypothesis. The discovery of similar recesses during the current field season further increases the likelihood of this interpretation and calls for its verification through future investigations.

At a depth of 1.0–1.5 m below the datum point, a feature that may represent an inner chamber of the tower was identified. The soil within this area is likewise enclosed by a surface layer of mud brick (pakhsa). Additional investigations are required to determine the exact nature and function of this feature.

On the eastern-facing side of the northern corner of the tower, at a depth of 2.5–2.8 m below the datum point, a mud brick measuring $37\text{--}38 \times 37\text{--}38 \times 10\text{--}15$ cm was recorded. At a depth of 3 m below the datum point, a layer consisting of eight courses of mud bricks measuring $45\text{--}46 \times 45\text{--}46 \times 13\text{--}14$ cm was identified. Mud bricks measuring $45\text{--}46 \times 45\text{--}46 \times 13\text{--}14$ cm had also been found on top of the wall during investigations conducted in previous years.

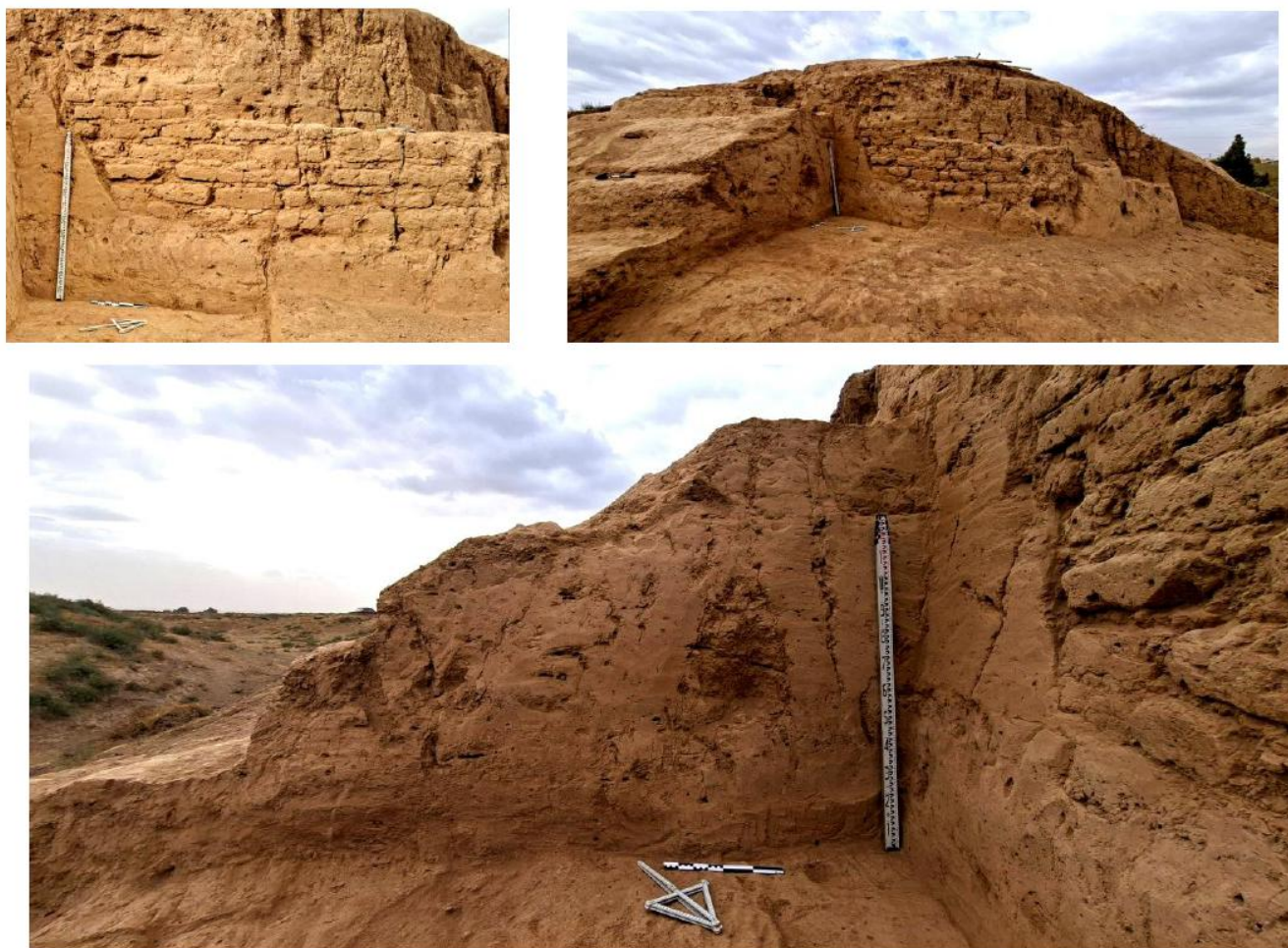


Figure 5. Mud brick and pakhsa identified at the northern corner of the tower

This layer of mud bricks of this size extends southward and joins a pakhsa layer in the south. Below the layer of mud bricks measuring $45\text{--}46 \times 45\text{--}46 \times 13\text{--}14$ cm, it is assumed that the pakhsa-built section of the tower continues. It is important to note that the presence of a sandy layer was observed in this part of the tower.

Taking the above-mentioned observations into account, the wall was constructed using a combination of mud brick and pakhsa. Initially, the tower was constructed of large mud bricks measuring $45\text{--}46 \times 45\text{--}46 \times 13\text{--}14$ cm, and it was subsequently reinforced with additional mud bricks measuring $37\text{--}38 \times 37\text{--}38 \times 10\text{--}15$ cm. This can also be observed in the southern corner of the side of the tower facing the shahrستان. Although it is still somewhat early to draw a

definitive conclusion regarding the overall form of the tower, based on the results obtained during the current field season, its general shape appears to have been rectangular. During the current field season, sections were primarily made through the upper parts of the tower, extending down to 3.5 m below the datum point. The portion below this level, extending down to the platform, is planned to be exposed and investigated during subsequent research.



Figure 6. General view of the DT-40, DT-33, and DT-41 areas



Figure 7. Condition of the northern tower prior to excavation



Figure 8. Condition of the northern tower following excavation

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