



## DELBARJĪN

**DELBARJĪN**, urban site 40 km northwest of [Balk](#), on the northern limit of an oasis irrigated by the [Balkāb](#), near a defensive wall built during the Greek period (ca 329-130 B.C.E.) to protect the oasis. It was probably founded in the 5th century B.C.E. and flourished up to about the 6th century C.E. Study of the fortifications excavated by a Soviet-Afghan mission in 1348-56 Š./1969-77 suggests that the earliest stage of the citadel may date from the Achaemenid period, as the closest parallels to the construction methods and ceramic finds are of that period (Dolgorukov, pp. 75-77, 85). It was, however, only in the final phase of Greek hegemony (ca. 150 B.C.E.), when the city may have been known as Eucratideia (Strabo, 11.11.2; Ptolemy, 6.11.8), or at the beginning of the Kushan period (ca. the beginning of the common era) that the site assumed its final configuration: a city protected by a quadrangular rampart (383-93 m<sup>2</sup>), with a circular citadel in the center. The northeast corner of the walled enclosure was occupied by a temple precinct ([Figure 11/I, II](#)), and suburbs of considerable size lay south and east of the city (Dolgorukov; Puga-chenkova, 1984). The earliest city wall consisted of a rather thin curtain of *paḵsa* (tamped earth mixed with water) and unbaked brick, built on a glacis of *paḵsa* and pierced with arrow slits, with hollow quadrangular towers at intervals. At the beginning of the Kushan period a second wall, also with towers, was constructed outside the original rampart, forming an interior gallery typical of Central Asian fortifications. The main gate was originally located between two bastions several stories high in the middle of the southern wall in the direction of [Balk](#) ([Figure 11/VIII](#)); when subsequently the entrance was shifted farther to the east these bastions were enlarged and joined in a single flanking tower



(Pugachenkova, 1984). It was also during the Kushan period that the citadel was surrounded by a rampart, circular in plan and again with an internal gallery. This rampart was eventually destroyed and replaced by a solid wall, which was further strengthened with round towers during the last phase (Figure 11/CVII, CVIII). The fortifications ultimately lost their military function and were adapted for dwellings. The date of final abandonment of the rampart can be determined from a tomb situated on the ruins of the southern wall, in which a Hephthalite coin of the 5th century C.E. was found (Vainberg and Kruglikova, 1984, p. 126 no. 124)

Excavations at the main temple in the northeast corner of the wall (Figure 11/I) revealed six construction phases, evidence for the complex architectural and religious history of this sanctuary over the centuries of its existence (Kruglikova, 1986; Bernard, 1990). It may have been established at the end of the Greek period, though, like the temples at nearby *Āy Kānom* and *Takt-e Sangīn*, it had few Greek features. In plan it was originally wider than deep, 22 x 16 m, with a cella surrounded by narrow chambers. The entrance consisted of a deep recess between two projecting rooms. In the Kushan period the temple was lengthened toward the back (22 x 44 m), but the facade and entrance reproduced the original disposition, with new rows of columns and pilasters on stone bases of Attic type (Pugachenkova, 1976, pp. 134-37). From decorative wall paintings it is clear that the temple was dedicated first to the Greek Dioscuroi (or their father, Zeus) and in the 2nd century C.E. to the Indian god Shiva, who was depicted seated with his wife Parvati on the bull Nandi (Kruglikova, 1976-84, I, pp. 87-96; Bernard, 1987). Other paintings were found in a series of humbler sanctuaries built against the northern rampart during the Kushan period (Figure 11/II; Kruglikova, 1976-84, I, pp. 96-110, II, pp. 120-45). In addition to representations of worshipers in local dress (full trousers tucked into boots, tunics of rich materials, coats with single lapels, daggers suspended in horizontal position), there are a dancing Shiva, a god mounted on a giant bird, and a helmeted Athena holding a mirror, the last a hellenized synthesis of the two Iranian goddesses *Arštāt* (see *AŠTĀD*), goddess of justice, and *Ardoxšo/Aši*, protectress of women (Grenet). The unbaked clay head of a goddess wearing a diadem was discovered in the earliest, perhaps Greco-Bactrian phase of a sanctuary in the western part of the city (Figure 11/X; Sokolovskii). During the last period a small chapel was built in honor of Hercules/Vahrām in one of the bastions flanking the southern gate (Figure 11/VIII); it contained an unbaked clay statue of the god represented in the nude in the Greek style (Pugachenkova, 1977; idem, 1984, pp. 106-07). Toward



the end of the city's existence a Buddhist sanctuary was built in the southeastern suburb of the town (Figure 11/VI; Kruglikova and Pugachenkova, pp. 61-69).

Two houses were excavated in the southern suburbs of the town (Figure 11/V, VII; Pugachenkova, 1976; Kruglikova and Pugachenkova, pp. 5-47, 91-103). One of them (Figure 11/V), built around 100 B.C.E., recalls, in its orthogonal plan, imposing dimensions (84 x 57.5 m), and axial reception hall preceded by a garden court surrounded on three sides by a corridor, the type of patrician house of the Greco-Bactrian period found at Āy Kānom. The subdivision of the west wing into separate apartments suggests a patriarchal residence housing several branches of the same family. A large water tank, built against the northwest corner and formerly fed from a shallow aquifer, is the oldest known example of a vaulted ceiling of the "Balkī" type developed from four squinches on a square plan (Besenval, pp. 65, 131).

The inscriptions are all in the Bactrian language (Livshits, 1976, pp. 163-69; idem, 1979, pp. 95-97), except for one in Brahmi (Vorob'eva-Desyatovskaya); they were painted on the walls and on ostraca or engraved on vases and on a stone stele (Livshits and Kruglikova, pp. 98-112; Lazard et al.). They are too damaged to yield any significant historical information, however.

The chronology of the site cannot be determined with certainty. It is not clear whether the foundation of the walled city and the first quadrangular rampart around the ancient citadel, as well as the first phases of the great temple, dates from the end of the Greco-Bactrian period (ca. 150 B.C.E.) or the beginning of the Kushan period. Furthermore, the style of the later paintings, which are comparable to those of Balalyk Tepe and to the oldest frescoes at Panjikant, both in Sogdia, indicates a date in the 5th-6th centuries C.E., according to some authorities (Belenitskiĭ and Marshak), whereas others argue from the numismatic finds that the final phase cannot have been later than the end of the 4th or the early 5th century C.E. (Vainberg and Kruglikova, 1976; idem, 1984; Pugachenkova, 1984, p. 105). Despite these uncertainties, however, the mural paintings at Delbarjĭn, which were applied directly to the earthen walls, with or without a preliminary undercoat of whitewash, provide valuable information on local cults and on the origins and development of Bactrian painting, in which an increasingly rich palette and shading were used to suggest depth and volume (Buryĭ, 1976, pp. 11-124; idem, 1979, pp. 146-62).



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**Figure 11.** Plan of Delbarjĭn, showing excavated remains of the Greco-Bactrian and Kushan periods. I. Temple of the Dioscuroi. II. Area of smaller temples. III. Residential quarters. IV. Citadel, not shown on the plan. V. Patrician house. VI. Buddhist temple. VII. Private house. VIII. Main gate to the Balk road. IX. Southeastern suburbs. X. Western temple. XI. Constructions along the road to the northeastern gate. XII. Remains of the northern rampart. XIII. Remains of the southern rampart. XIV. Southeastern corner of the rampart, with projecting tower. XV.-XVII. Remains of the southern enclosure of the main temple. XVIII. Remains of the southwestern rampart, with corner tower. CVII. Remains of the eastern citadel wall. CVIII. Remains of the southern citadel wall. Drawing G. Lecuyot, after Kruglikova, 1986, p. 121.