

# History And Culture Of The Buddhist Monuments Of Bactria-Tokharistan

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**Abstract:** In the history of the Ancient Termez traces of various religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Judaism are observed. Since the reign of the Great Kushan Ruler Kanishka Termez was the ideological center and the mainstay of the Buddhist doctrine in Central Asia. In Ancient Termez the preachers of the Buddhist religion contributed the spreading of Buddhism throughout the world, as well as to China and Tibet. Karatepa, Fayaztepa, Zurmola in the south of Uzbekistan served as ancient religious monuments and ideological centers. Surkhandarya where Termez is located was also an important part of this historical process. In this area, the first Buddhist monument in Uzbekistan was erected. Today many scientific publications and articles about Buddhist monuments in Uzbekistan and spreading of the Buddhist teachings were published. Archaeological excavations, artifacts, numismatics and epigraphic materials help us to clarify the history of Buddhism in Uzbekistan

**Keywords:** Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism, Karatepa, Fayaztepa, Zurmola, Buddhism, Tarmit – Termez, Buddhist monuments, China, Tibet, Bactria.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to many scientific literatures during the reign of the famous King Ashoka of India, Buddhism became the state religion in the 3rd century BC. The third Buddhist cathedral took place in Pataliputra in that period and were decided to preach Buddhist teachings outside of India. In the result, Buddhism became the world religion. According to T. K. Mkrtychyev, on westward Buddhism was widely extended in the territory of historical and cultural regions of Central Asia. Buddhism reached some certain successes on westward and the Buddhist pilgrims departed back from China to India. In the result of these processes, the study of the history of Central Asian's Buddhism is the most important link in the research of the whole doctrine. This region was the main channel for the penetration of Buddhism into China. Through this channel was made a connection between the Buddhist communities of China and India. There are many literatures are devoted to the history of Central Asian's Buddhism. In these literatures are given three main regional directions [1].

1. **Afghan-Pakistan direction.** It is associated with the study of the monuments of Buddhism, part of them are located outside of Central Asia-to the east of the Hindukush mountain range. In the territory of the historical and cultural area of Gandhara was formed a sculptural school of Buddhist art during the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. This historical and cultural area served as a bridge between Ancient India and Central Asia for spreading Buddhist teachings to the neighboring territories.
2. **Eastern Turkistan direction.** This direction is related for investigating Buddhist monuments (nowadays belonging to the Chinese territory) that are located in the territory of the historical and cultural oasis of Eastern Turkistan and its cities (Hetian, Miran, Yotkan etc.).
3. **Central Asia direction.** This direction is related to study Buddhist monuments that are located in the territory of Central Asia. Most researchers believe that Central Asia adopted the Buddhist teaching during the Kushan Empire and served as a kind of "retranslator"

for spreading this doctrine from India to Eastern Turkestan and China [1].

The Central Asian region had an important significance in the spreading of the Buddhist doctrine. The main Buddhist monuments are concentrated in the historical and cultural regions of Central Asia, in Bactria-Tokharistan and Semirechye. Besides, two of them are located in Margiana and one is located in Davan - Fergana. Although, the Buddhist monuments in the Sogdian region were not discovered, some samples of the Buddhist art and written sources allow us to describe the history of the Buddhist teachings in this region. To-date, many scientific publications and articles that are devoted to the spreading of Buddhism in Central Asia and Buddhist doctrine have been published. The results of the archaeological excavations, archaeological finds, art samples, numismatical and epigraphical materials provide us an opportunity to clarify the history of Buddhist doctrine in Central Asia. Buddhist monuments of Bactria-Tokharistan, including its Northwestern part (present territory of the Surkhandarya region) occupies a special place in the process of penetration and spreading of Buddhism in the south of Central Asia and neighboring territories. Despite the study of the Buddhist cult monuments of the historical and cultural area of Bactria-Tokharistan, many problems of Buddhism of this region remain unresolved and controversial.

Among the actual problems are the period of penetration of Buddhism to the north part of the Amu Darya and construction of early Buddhist monuments in the territory of Northern Bactria. No less importance also is identification of architectural and planning structure of early Buddhist monuments, tracing of their Ancient Indian prototypes, proximity and an originality of the Northern Bactria Buddhist constructions. Very important problem are also tracing the fate of the Buddhism and the constructions of Northwestern Tokharistan in the early Middle Ages and before Arab expansion.

## 2 HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Initial investigations of Buddhist monuments of Northwestern Bactria-Tokharistan were connected with the activity of the Moscow Museum of East Cultures that worked in Ancient Termez during 1926 and 1928s.

"Zurmala Tower" was defined as a Buddhist stupa [2] and another Buddhist construction was found in Karatepa district in the process of the archaeological excavations [3].

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A Buddhist complex in Ayrtaam [4] was researched by Termez Archaeological Expedition under the guidance M.E.Masson in 1933 and 1937s. This expedition is famous for its discovery of Ayrtaam's beautiful relief sculptures that are exhibited in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg [5]. A stupa that is located to the east from Ayrtaam Buddhist complex was explored by this expedition in 1964 - 1965s. "Zurmala Tower" was explored under the guidance of G.A.Pugachenkova with the assistance of Z.A.Khakimov in 1964 and established that Zurmala was a unique Buddhist stupa that attracted many pilgrims from across the region and outside [6].

G. V. Parfyonov cleared Karatepa's three caves in 1934 – 1936s, that were found earlier by A.S. Strelkov, who was the employee of the Museum of East Cultures [7]. The employees of the Termez Archaeological Complex Expedition under the guidance E. G. Pchelina conducted researching at Karatepa in 1936 – 1937. A group of the State Hermitage Museum under the leadership of B. Ya. Stavisky with the support of Institute History and Archeology of Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan renewed and continued researching of the Buddhist cult center Karatepa in Ancient Termez from 1961 to 1996s [8]. Due to the importance of the Buddhist cult center of Karatepa in the researching of penetration and spreading of Buddhism in Central Asia, archaeological exploration of this monument were resumed by Uzbek-Japanese expedition (headed by Pidayev Sh. and Kato Kyudzo) in 1998. This expedition explored and discovered many interesting artifacts on the western and northern hills of Karatepa from 1998 to present [9]. The next Buddhist monument Fayaztepa is located in distance of 1 km to the northwest from Karatepa and was researched by L.I.Albaum during 1968-1976 [10]. A small Buddhist sanctuary was discovered during the archeological excavations at Zartepa in 1973. The remains of a small Buddhist stupa is located near the ancient settlement Zartepa was explored by Sh. R. Pidaev in 1982 [11]. Two Buddhist monuments in Dalvarzintepa were found by the employees of the Uzbekistan Art Expedition under the guidance G.A. Pugachenkova [12]. Archaeological study of the cave constructions at the mausoleum of al Hakim al – Tirmidhi was carried out by Uzbek-French Bactrian expedition under the guidance of T. Annaev and P. Lerich with participation of the Surkhandarya department of the Archaeological Institute of Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Termez State University from 1994 to 1996. Within three seasons, five cave constructions were discovered. Similar explorations were resumed in the northern part from the mausoleum by this expedition under the guidance of Sh. Pidaev and P. Leriche in 2001. Here, three cave constructions were explored. The mausoleum and its vicinity have been investigated by the archaeological group of Termez State University under the guidance of T. Annaev since 2006 [13]. A Buddhist stupa was explored near the mausoleum al Hakim al-Tirmidhi by the Uzbek-French expedition at the end of 1990s [14]. Due to the preservation and restoration of the Buddhist monastery of Fayaztepa, it was explored during 2004-2006. Massive amounts of archaeological, numismatic and epigraphical materials were found during archaeological exploration. They had a great significance to specify the main stages of construction and functioning of the Buddhist monastery of Fayaztepa [15].

### **A lay-out structure and stages of constructions of the Buddhist monastery Fayaztepa and cave construction near the mausoleum al Hakim al – Tirmidhi on the basis of a system method of researches.**

According to Lazar Izrailevich Albaum's research, the Fayaztepa monument consisted of a central part with a length of 117 m and 34 m in width. In the central part of the Fayaztepa monument is located a religious section, in the northwestern side is located a monastery and in the southeastern part is located municipal part, on the east near the main building is located a stupa [16]. In the result of repeated researches, it was discovered that the length was 118.40 m, and the width was 53 m on the north and 54 m on southeast. This confirms that Fayaztepa is a magnificent Buddhist monastery that was erected as the first existing Buddhist construction [17]. It should be noted that the construction of such magnificent building in the territory of Bactria-Tokharistan was just possible by the economically powerful Buddhist community or the central authority that sponsored the Buddhist doctrine. At the beginning of our era, such factors were existed in Tarmit-Termez of the main center of Bactria-Tokharistan. Archeological excavations at the Buddhist monastery of Fayaztepa, namely as "haya vihara" were featured four construction phases. The entrance as a small pandus consisted of stairs constructed of bricks is located in the southern part of the monument. This location of the entrance demonstrates that the monument was originally intended for the population of Tarmit-Termez. In the period of the second construction phase of the monument and the third construction phase, significant changes in the architectural structure of the monument were made. In the period of the second construction phase of the monument and the third construction phase, significant changes in the architectural structure of the monument were made. During the reign of Huvishka, the life of the monastery continued uninterrupted. During the reign of Vasudeva and the last Kushan rulers, we can observe gradual decline of the monument. For example, the northern half of the monastery section of the monument insensibly started to lose its significance. The Buddhist temple and the Buddhist monastery are described as one type of building in some scientific publications. The Buddhist temples were erected in the inner parts of Kushan cities. Here prayer and religious observances were made. The Buddhist monastery is a complex building that consisted of a number of buildings and had one of the sacred architectural elements such as a stupa. Buddhist monks lived in monasteries, where religious literatures were translated from one language into another, educated the future religious leaders, held religious rites and meetings. Buddhist monuments such as Fayaztepa or Karatepa have the same structures. For example, in the Fayaztepa monument there are elements of the economic part, parts of religious ceremonies or elements such as stoves and sandals. Based on the architectural monument of Fayaztepa, it is possible to determine the number of monks that temporarily or permanently lived in this monument. In the Buddhist monastery of Fayaztepa there were the following numbers of living cells: There is no information about the living cells of the first building phase of the monument. In the second phase of the monument, there were nine cells during the period of the formation of the first two-part monastery. During the reign of Wima Kadfiz, the number of living cells reached 22. During the reign of Kanishka, the number of cells were 24, during the reign of Huvishka reached 25. If there were two

monks in one living cell, then 18 monks lived in the first construction phase and in the great Kushan period the number of monks reached 44, 48 and 50 in the Fayaztepa monastery. This indicates that in the developed period of the monument, Fayaztepa was not inferior to similar monuments of ancient India. In the territory of Fayaztepa monument were discovered some samples of Ancient Indian inscription such as Kharoshthi, Brahmi and ancient Bactrian inscription on the pottery. For example, during the period of 1968-1976, 35 samples of inscription on the pottery were found, 12 in 2003, and 70 samples of inscription on the pottery were found during the archeological excavations conducted in 2004-2006. According to V. V. Vertogradova the term "acera" in the Fayaztepa inscriptions is translated as "teacher" or "educator". In Karatepa's inscriptions, the term "Dharmakathika" is translated as "Preacher of the Teaching", "Mahadharmakathika" - "the great preacher of the doctrine". In her opinion, the Fayaztepa inscriptions are talking about teachers who conducted systematic education of monks.

Existed as large Buddhist centers, Fayaztepa and especially Karatepa had lost their important significance and were transformed to the burial places from the beginning of the 5th Century AD. One of the important task of the Buddhist culture of Tarmit-Termez is investigation of the Buddhist monuments of Termez and its district of the pre-arabic period. According to the facts of Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang (629 c. AD), 10 Buddhist sangarams and 1000 monks [18] existed in the Tami principality. Discovering of the caves near the mausoleum al Hakim al-Tirmidhi and re-excavation of the surface buddhist monastery (vihara) Fayaztepa and other monuments (Kuyevkurgan with stupa, the caves on the locality Utonjar and etc.) prove the existing and considerable role of the Buddhist religion in the northwestern Tokharistan (Surkhandarya region) of the pre-Arabic period. The territory, where began springing up the mausoleum on the tomb of the famous Islamic theologian of the 9th c. A.D., one of the founders of the early Islamic Sufism al Hakim al-Tirmidhi, is the place of the south-western part of the medieval rabat of Termez. Proceeding to the topographical surveys of the 1954-1990, the locality to the north and northeast from the mausoleum consists of the hills, the height of which in some places above 3 m. Near the mausoleum is existed cave with steeped descent, called by visitors as "Chillahona". Since 1994 until the present, on this locality were discovered 10 caves. Caves discovered during the process of the archaeological excavations by their architectural-planned structure forms three types:

- I. Single-chamber cave with a corridor-type, thick, long passage.
- II. Caves with the vaulted corridors on the sides.
- III. Two connected caves.

Seven from ten excavated caves belong to the first type; other caves belong to the second and third type.

The locality, where the caves were erected, consists of the continental quaternary sandstone layer, which is useful to build caves. During the process of building the caves, master-builders observed certain rules of architecture. For instance: entrance part of the most explored caves (especially of the first type) is oriented to the south, monks' rooms (living part) to the north, which is probably connected with their lighting.

The entrance part of the first type caves is in the form of a narrow corridor with the sizes of 80x90 sm. The descent is a

ladder. In some caves, the ladder consists of 16 steeps. The walls of the corridor – passages have niches of different sizes and configurations. There is doorway after the last steep, (the height of the doorways about 2 m.), which connects corridor with the internal premises. The monks rooms, that is living part of the first type caves closer to the square form (2x2,05 m). On the sides of the monks' rooms (living part) there are niches, on the ceiling the holes of beams survived, where devices of illumination and other things were fixed. The second type of construction is the cave connected with the corridor. General entrance looks as a narrow corridor with the steeped descent located on the southwestern side of the cave. Monks room (living part) of these caves have two doorways. Inner sizes of this monks room (living part) 2,55x2,85 m, height above 2 m. Monks room (living part) and other similar constructions have a niche and there are holes of beams on the walls. The third type of the caves is two connected caves, reminding a half of the cross in plan. The entrance has the width of 0,80 m and located on the eastern part was the main for both caves. Caves are located on the south part has two doorways. Proceeding to the existed holes on the walls, the first of them had a wooden gate, the second had arched end on the top and shaped from the sandstone. In the space between doorways, on the both sides of the corridor situated perpendicularly one to another niches with the sizes of 1,50x1,70 m. Monks rooms (living part) has a rectangular form with the sizes of 2,55x2,65 m and height above 2,00 m. In the monks room, on the northwestern corner there is a sofa, deep into the premises is located a niche perpendicularly to the entrance. The second cave spread on axis to the east west. There are 10 steeps of ladder in the corridor. This cave, like a neighbor one, has two doorways and niches on the wall. Monks room (living part) has height above 2 m and closer to the rounded form with three niches of different configurations. By architecture, technique and method of construction (initial cut of sandstone, forms of the niches steeps of the ladder and etc.), the cave complex near the mausoleum al Hakim al-Tirmidhi is similar to the monuments of East Turkestan, especially to the cave constructions of the Buddhist monastery complex of the Kushans Tarmit – Termez (for instance: monks rooms on the "western hill" of Karatepa).

### 3 CONCLUSION

We have following conclusions based on investigations of the cave complex near the mausoleum al Hakim al-Tirmidhi and re-excavation vihara of Fayaztepa:

1. Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang visited Termez and his facts about the Buddhist constructions of Termez are true.

2. One of the listed Buddhist monasteries by Hiuen Tsiang was located near the mausoleum al Hakim al-Tirmidhi and still functioned in 704.

3. In the early Islam, all the investigated caves, that is monks rooms near the mausoleum al Hakim al-Tirmidhi (at the moment excavated ten of them) were used by Sufis and the followers from the intellectual environment of al Hakim al-Tirmidhi.

4. Lived in the period of early Islam that is in the 9th century AD, one of the founders of Sufism in Transoxiana, al Hakim al-Tirmidhi had known the Buddhist religion and Indian literature. In particular, his work "Solnoma" was written based on the works of Indian scholars. All the facts indicate a considerable role of Buddhism in Termez till Arab conquest.

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