



Age Determination Of Buddhist Cult Complexes Of Northwestern Bactria-Tokharistan

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ABSTRACT

In the Twenty-First Century, in the context of globalization processes, special attention is paid to the study of the contribution of religions to the development of world civilization, spirituality and enlightenment, because spiritual culture determined the progress of society and, since ancient periods, has been closely associated with religious views and beliefs. This definition is fully applying to Buddhism, that existed for many centuries in the south of Central Asia, including in the historical and cultural region of Bactria, along with Zoroastrianism and other religions.

Central Asia is considered as a territory of distribution of various religious views, religions and teachings by the world's leading research institutions since ancient times. In this regard, special studies have been conducted and their results were published in many scientific publications. In particular, Uzbek and foreign scientists carried out fundamentally important archaeological work with the aim of studying the Buddhist monuments of Tarmidh-Termez, as well as identifying the features of the spread of Buddhism through this region to Margiana, Sogdiana and East Turkistan. From this point of view and out of the need to analyze other topical issues (spiritual and material culture, fine arts, numismatics and epigraphy, reconstruction of the functions of Buddhist centers), additional research based on new approaches is an urgent scientific task.

KEYWORDS

Central Asia, Buddhism, Margiana, Sogd, East Turkistan, Buddhist centers, Bactria-Tokharistan, Ancient Termez, Tarmidh-Termez, Karatepa, Fayaztepa, Ushtur mullo, Chingiztepa.

INTRODUCTION

The initial information about the Buddhist monuments of Ancient Termez is given in the publications of A.A. Stael-Holstein [58, PP. 9–22; 2, PP. 1–8] and V.V. Bartold [22, P. 469] that were based on summarizing Hiuen Tsiang 's information [10, P. 38].

Expedition of the Museum of Oriental Cultures (Moscow), led by B.P. Denyke, conducted scientific research at the monuments of Zurmala and Karatepa of Ancient Termez in 1926-1928. Expedition member A.S. Strelkov investigated the Zurmala monument [59, PP. 27–30; 60, PP. 216–224] and discovered cave buildings on Karatepa [57, PP. 70–76]. In 1934, Karatepa was studied by G.V. Parfenov [57, PP. 70–76; 30, PP. 83–84; 34, PP. 83–84], and in 1936-1939, archaeological research on Karatepa and Chingiztepa was carried out by the staff of TACE (A.A.Strelkov, V.A.Shishkin, BB Piotrovsky, E.G. Pchelina) under the leadership of M.E. Masson [61, – 215 p; 62, – 226 p.].

This period is characterized by the starting of the investigating of archaeological materials, as well as the history of the material culture of the Buddhist monuments of Ancient Termez.

During 60s and 80s of the 20th centuries, a joint expedition (the Department of the East of the State Hermitage and the Museum of Oriental Art) led by B.Ya. Stavisky studied the lay out structure of buildings that were discovered in the southern and partly in the northern hills of the cult center of Karatepa, where important scientific materials on Buddhist architecture, art, epigraphy and material culture were obtained. The results of archaeological research were published in 6 collections [34, – 111 p; 26, – 185 p; 27, – 177 p; 25, – 199 p; 24, – 341 p.].

Along with the identification of the architectural-planning structure and stages of the functioning of Karatepa, data on its chronology have been introduced into scientific circulation.

In 1964–1965, G.A. Pugachenkova and Z.A. Khakimov continued their studies of the Zurmala stupa, as a result of which the reconstruction of the monument was proposed in the form of a 16-meter-high monumental structure, with a hemispherical dome [53, PP. 257–263]. In 1968-1976, L.I. Albaum and V.A. Kozlovsky carried out extensive archaeological excavations in Fayaztepa, which made it possible to reveal a monumental Buddhist monastery, study Buddhist culture, architecture, fine arts, writing, rare archaeological finds and obtain important scientific data [17, P. 54].

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Buddhist art, material culture, architecture, coin findings, samples of ancient Indian, Bactrian and "unknown" writing of Northern Bactria, including Tarmidh-Termez, as well as the spreading of Buddhist teachings to the territory of Central Asia, were reflected in the studies of G.A. Pugachenkova [8, PP. 23–41; 31, 342 p.], B.Ya. Stavisky [11, PP. 219–232; 56, PP. 209 p.], L.I. Albaum [16, PP. 18–28], E.V. Rtveladze [54, PP. 72–77], B.A. Litvinsky [35, PP. 188–199], V.V. Vertogradova [28, PP. 28–33], T. K. Mkrttychev [36, PP. 27–56; 37, 286 p.], K. Abdullaev [1, PP. 157–189], Sh. Pidaev [44, PP. 11–27; 42. PP. 38–43; 40, PP. 33–42; 39, PP. 82–83; 41, 117 p; 7. 95 p.], G. Fussman [6. PP. 3–280], T. Annaev [18, PP. 53–66], M. Bolganova [23, 40 p.], V.S. Solovyev [55, 129 p.], R. Salomon [28, PP. 139–170], A. Iwamoto [3, PP. 151–178].

As a result of new research in the years of independence, the Uzbek-Japanese

expedition to Karatepa revealed the location of monastery in the northern part of this monument and obtained important scientific data on the history of Buddhism in Tarmidh-Termez [47, PP. 82–84; 48, 56 p; 45, PP. 114–122; 46, PP. 147–158].

A joint expedition of the Institute of Art Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Korea revealed buildings similar to what had been excavated earlier in the same part of the complex on the southern hill of the Buddhist center Karatepa [12, 219 p.].

As a result of work with archaeologists of the Japanese University of Rishso, the bypass corridor and the premises connected to it were studied in the southwestern part of the central stupa [4, 242 p.].

In the complex of the Karatepa monastery, the Termez archaeological expedition led by Sh. Pidaev revealed samples of wall painting, which is an important source for restoring the appearance, clothing and jewelry of the Bactrians [43, PP. 45–48]. As part of an international project, research was carried out with the aim of reconstructing and preserving the Zurmala stupa [13, 10 p.].

The Uzbek-French Bactrian expedition excavated a Buddhist stupa [5, PP. 179–211. fig.8.]; and cave cells [39, PP. 82–83] in the southwestern corner of Ancient Termez. As a result of these studies, new materials were obtained on the history of the culture of Buddhism.

An archaeological team led by T. Annaev, with the direct participation of the author of this article, excavated more than a dozen Buddhist cave constructions near the mausoleum of Muhammad Hakim Tirmidhi [64, PP. 67–78] and two Buddhist temples in the Chingiztepa

complex [50, PP. 105–114; 49, PP. 134–143; 20, PP. 63–67].

Within the framework of the international project "Reconstruction and preservation of the ruins of Fayaztepa" under the leadership of Sh. Pidaev, additional studies of Fayaztepa's stupa and the adjacent territory were carried out, as a result of which the period of the construction of the stupa and the monastery part was clarified [40, PP. 33–42].

New excavations at Fayaztepa were also carried out by an archaeological team led by T. Annaev, with the participation of the author of this article [18, PP. 53–66].

Stages of the formation of Buddhist centers in Northwestern Bactria and their periodization

According to the results of the archeological investigations, it has been established that Tarmidh-Termez was the early center of penetration and spreading of Buddhist teachings in the north part of the Oxus-Amu Darya.

At the beginning of the 1st century AD, a monumental Buddhist monastery was erected on the site of an early Buddhist building on Fayaztepa [18, PP. 53–66].

According to the stratigraphy of ancient Indian inscriptions, Karatepa is dated to the first half of the 1st century AD. According to Sh. Pidaev, in the second half of the 1st century AD, a ground Buddhist structure was erected on the northern hill of the future cult center and that was the second Buddhist complex of Tarmidh-Termez of the Kushan period [41, 117 p.].

In Tarmidh-Termez, during the period of the great Kushans, along with the transformation

of the Buddhist cult center Karatepa into "Khadevaka vihara", three more Buddhist complexes were founded. The first of them is a large Buddhist stupa, known as the Zurmala Tower. The second complex of structures was located to the north of the rabad part of medieval Termez, from which an underground room has been preserved [29, PP. 118-119]. The third complex of Buddhist buildings is Chingiztepa [6, PP. 3-280].

At the beginning of the early Middle Ages, with a gradual decrease of the role of the Buddhist cult complexes Karatepa and Fayaztepa, a new Buddhist monastery of the 4th-5th centuries AD was erected on the site of the mausoleum of Muhammad Khakim Tirmidhi, as well as in the northern and eastern parts of it and on the site of Dunyotepa [19, PP. 15-18].

Based on the age determination of the Buddhist monuments of the Surkhan Oasis and the analysis of the chronological data of individual Buddhist findings three main directions of the spreading of Buddhism from Tarmidh-Termez to other regions of Northern Bactria were identified.

The first direction is the right bank of the upper reaches of the Amu Darya. In chronological terms, after the Buddhist complexes of Fayaztepa and Karatepa, Buddhist structures were built in Ayrtam [54, PP. 72-77] and, possibly, in Ushtur-mullo as well [32, PP. 70-86].

The second way of spreading Buddhism from Tarmidh-Termez passed through the basin of the upper reaches of the Surkhandarya. In this direction, Buddhist monuments have been discovered at the Dalvarzintepa settlement [52, P. 197; 51, PP. 90-97; 33, PP. 26-28, 63, PP. 81-95], and in other ancient settlements, individual findings related to Buddhism have been recorded.

The third path of the spread of Buddhism from Tarmidh-Termez led towards the "Iron Gates". Buddhist religious buildings were found within a radius of 30 km from Ancient Termez, and samples of Buddhist art within a radius of up to 70 km. Further to the north, no artifacts of Buddhist art have been found on the monuments located in the "Iron Gate" area, Payankurgan and others (mainly fortress-type structures) [21, 40 p; 14, PP. 18-30; 15, PP. 25-30].

CONCLUSION

New archaeological discoveries made it possible to determine that the Buddhist teaching in Northwestern Bactria originally spread in Tarmidh-Termez from Kabul-Balkh and the main ways of spreading Buddhist teachings from Tarmidh-Termez to Northern Bactria were identified.

Fayaztepa was one of the early Buddhist centers of Tarmidh-Termez. In the early Middle Ages, with a gradual decrease of the role of the cult complexes of Karatepa and Fayaztepa, other Buddhist monasteries were formed (on the site of the mausoleum of Muhammad Hakim Tirmidhi, in the territory to the north and east of it and on Dunyotepa).

According to the archaeological results in Tarmidh-Termez, as well as in Bamiyan and East Turkestan, there was a development of the traditions of Buddhist underground architecture.

The layout structure of Buddhist monuments, the analysis of epigraphical findings and the activities of Buddhist preachers indicate that Tarmidh-Termez served as a kind of "bridge" for the spreading of Buddhist teachings in Central Asia and the Far East.

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