



## The Dakhmas Of Central Asia And Some Considerations

Kakhramon Toshaliyev

Termez State University, Termez, Uzbekistan

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### ABSTRACT

In this article we can read many information about dakhmas (the tower of silence) and interpretation of the dakhmas (the tower of silence) in material culture. In this article we can know a new textological translation the word of “dakhma” (the tower of silence) by scientists. Then article gives a new archeological information about dakhmas they were compared of Zarabag which is situated in northern Bactria.

### KEYWORDS

“Dakhma”, Zoroastrianism, Nous, “The Tower of Silence”, Zarabag, Erkurgan.

### INTRODUCTION

In Mary Boyce’s terms, the word dakhma occurs in Indo-European languages as “dafma” or “dhmbh” and means to bury, to forget and words like a grave (Boyce, 1988, p. 18). The first information about dakhmas is given in the works of Avesta, Herodotus (Herodotus, 1972. 54 p. Avesta, 2007. p. 52). According to Mary Boyce’s information, the construction of the Dakhmas in the form of minarets dates back to the ninth century (Boyce, 1979, pp. 56-162).

Dakhma is a place where corpses, brought by Zoroastrians, are kept. It was usually made of stone or natural stone cliffs. There are still tower-shaped tombs of Zoroastrians, who live in Kerman province of Iran and Bombay (National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan, №3, p. 216).

In medieval historiography, the word “dakhma” can also be found, mainly

understood as tombs or cemeteries, "for example, kings' dakhmas" (Mirzo Sodiq Munshi -1785, Shodmon Vohidov - 2014)

As far as we know, dakhmas were Zoroastrian structures, which were used to decompose corpses. We can find remarkable information about the dakhmas in the sources, including in the Videvdat section of the Avesta (Avesta, "Law serving to keep demons away", 2008. p. 25; Meitarchiyan, 1999. p. 27-28), in the works of Herodotus (Herodotus "The Histories", 1972. p. "56-553, I-140), in the diaries of Strabo (Strabo " Geography "XI, II, 3).

Preliminary written works about dakhmas can be found in researches which were written by K. Иностранцев (Иностранцев, 1907; 1909; 1917), С.П. Толстов (Толстов, 1948), Ю.А. Рапопорт (Рапопорт, 1950; 1971), Б.А. Литвинский, А.В. Седов (Литвинский, Седов, 1983), М. Бойс (Боусе, 1975), Ф. Грене (Grenet, 1984).

In Zoroastrianism, four elements are sanctified; These are fire, earth, water and air. When a death occurs, demon (daeva) Nasu inhabits the corpse. (M. Ishakov, E. Rtveladze "Avesta" part of Videvdat.) Therefore, the corpse was considered impure and it wasn't allowed to put on the elements (fire, earth, water and air) (Toshaliyev K. - 2020.). As a result, it was necessary to build certain facilities for the decomposition of the dead.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

At first, Mazda worshipers used to carry corpses to the mountains. The constant transport of corpses to the mountains was a

problem, and at the same time the spread of religion among the settled population began to require the construction of dakhma structures.

Даҳмаларни қурилиши ижтимоий ҳолатдан келиб чиқиб ўзгариб борган.

The construction of the dams has changed due to the social situation.

There were several types of Dakhmas:

- Personal
- Family
- Dynastic and collective. (Jackson, 1906. P. 398).

Of course, Archaeological materials are the basis for the study of the Dakhmas. Inostrantsev (Inostrantsev, 1907; 1909; 1917) mentioned about dakhmas which are located in the Central Asia. Later archaeologists in their excavations observed them.

According to E.V. Rtveladze, three types of burial structures mentioned in Videvdat - kata, dakhma and uzdana - were found in Kampirtepa (Rtveladze, 1988. p. 23; Rtveladze, 2001. pp. 99-102).

Between 1963 and 1966, R.H. Sulaimanov observed the ruins of the ancient city of Nakhshab and studied the Erkurgan dam, located in the northwest of the city. (Suleymanov, 2000. P.115).

During the 1940s, S.P. Tolstov observed the famous Chilpik monument of the 4th-6th centuries BC, located in the territory of ancient Khorezm and confessed it as a Dakhma. (Tolstov, 1948) (Picture -1)

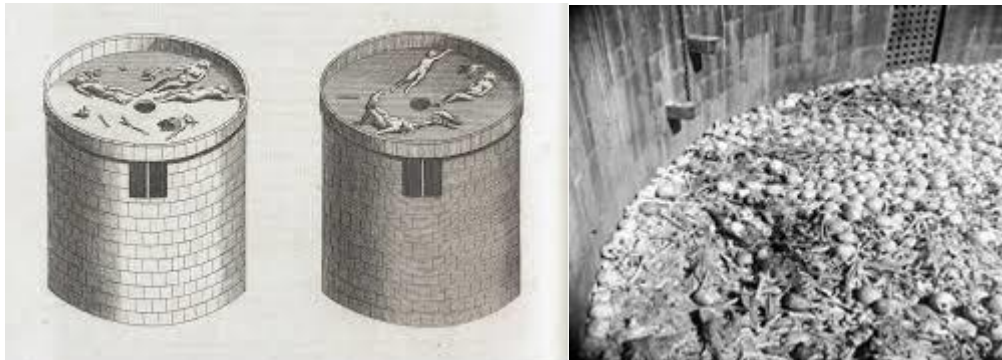


(Picture -1) Chilpik

In 1958, G.A. Pugachenkova conducted research at the Holchayon Monument, Surkhandarya and discovered a dakhma. (Pugachenkova, 1966. p.242).

As is well known, G.A. Pugachenkova, accompanied by architects VA Nielsen and

A.W. Shukurov, made a topographic plan of Dalvarzintepa in the 1960s, and then continued the research in full swing. In Dalvarzintepa, researchers discovered a uzdana (naus). (Picture 2) Excavations showed that the upper part of the uzdana was used as Dahma.



(Picture - 2 Photo. After the Reconstruction)

Nauses were also found in the monuments of Dalvarzintepa, Yalangtushtepa, Kampirtepa and Tepai-Shoh. The corpses were kept in dakhmas, which situated far from the city. After some time the bones were collected and brought back (Pugachenkova, Rtveladze, 1990. p. 82).

There are such monuments as Bittepa (Choganiyon), Munchoktepa (Fergana), Dombrobod, Toshavtomash, Qatortol (Choch), Zhettiosor (along the Aral Sea) (Matboboev, 2009. p. 251). In the early Middle Ages, the Zoroastrians of the Fergana Valley put the dead in reed coffins and kept them in naus-quality cellars. It became known as a result of

Matboboev's research at the famous Pop (Munchoktepa) monument. (Photo - 3)



(Picture 3 Reed coffin view)

B.A. Litvinsky studied the monuments of Ushtur-Mullo, Hisht-tepa and Tepai-Shah, Shahrituz district, Tajikistan. As a result of the excavations, several nauses were observed, most of which, according to researchers, also served as dahmas (Litvinsky, Sedov, 1983. p.113).

(Jakub Havlík – Ladislav Stančo – Hana Havlíková)

As a result of subsequent explorations in the mountainous areas of southern Uzbekistan, stones, which were put like fortress, were

discovered. (Picture - 4) Several of these monuments were excavated and researched by Uzbek and Czech scientists. Initially, they were considered as a fortress, but the studies confirmed that they were dahmas. There are more than 200 of them, which were found in other latitudes. (Jakub Havlík - Ladislav Stančo - Hana Havlíková)

Ceramic fragments, found during the excavations, approves the fact that such kind of dakhmas were belong to this structure date back to the early Iron Age. (Toshaliyev K. 2019)





(Figure 4. D 01\_03-04 General view of the kurgan-like dahmas)

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The questions arise for researchers about the reason of being so many dahmas, at the mean time also being so many dahmas in the mountainous areas like Zarabog, Poshurd, Korabog, Khoja Anka, Khatak and Loilikon. All the questions were answered in the Videvdat section of the Avesta:

Glorify 49. Oh Holy One who created all things!  
After the corpse of a man is placed in a dakhma,

how long does it take for the place of the dakhma to be cleansed?

Glorify 50. Ahura Mazda answered, “This place cannot be clean until the corpse is mixed with the dust of the earth. Because of this, in this light world, every believer is responsible for destroying the dakhmas.”

Glorify 51. Whoever destroys the dakhma equal to his height, his sins, committed in his thoughts, words, and deeds will be forgiven, as

if the prayer of forgiveness (forgiveness) has been accepted.

Glorify 58. Evil forces jollify in the dakhmas, especially at sunset.

Glorify 59. Ignorant people increase the incidence of diseases by one third by leaving the dakhmas undestroyed. (M. Ishakov, E. Rtveladze "Avesta" Videvdat part.)

The customs associated with the period in which Zoroastrianism was first formed provide a solution to the problems associated with building and destroying the dakhmas (A. Kammenhuber 1958, p. 300). The first dakhmas, like stone fortress, were built mainly at hills near the rivers or in rocky areas (Jakub Havlík - Ladislav Stančo - Hana Havlíková) and were along the windward direction from the settlement. (Jakub Havlík - Ladislav Stančo - Hana Havlíková)

The construction of dakhmas by forging stones in the form of a fortress also facilitated its demolition (E.V. Rtveladze, A.Kh. Saidova, E.V. Abdullaeva), or it was also convenient for the dust to penetrate between the stones and mix with the wind. The Zoroastrians, who lived mainly in this area, may have built castle-like stone dakhmas for each dead person or dog.

Herodotus said: "The Bactrians take the corpses, the sick and the elderly to the mountains". This testifies to the fact that in the mountains and foothills were built many stone dakhmas. (Herodotus - 1972)

The monuments of Kayrit, Burgut Tepa, Gazakotan and others studied in the Kuhitang mountainous areas show that, from the point of view of social history, the population of these areas were Zoroastrians. (Augustinova A., Stanco L., Shaydullaev Sh., Mrva M.) this view was proved by researches on Zoroastrian archeological monuments – Kata and Dahmas.

Nauses, Mazdo worshippers' another religious building, were not found in the area. In our opinion, there were no Nauses at the time when Zoroastrianism was first formed. Because the corpse bone, which was clean of flesh, was not considered impure, therefore the bones were scattered on the ground.

According to ancient Greek historian Strabo: "Bactria is beautiful on the outside, and on the inside there are human bones scattered all over the region" (Strabo "Geography" XI, II, 3). For this reason, there are no graveyards belong to the inhabitants of the Early Iron Age. (Shaydullaev Sh. 2004. 3-12 b) Thus, the formation of naus (ostadon, ossuari, uzdana) was associated with the development of religion. At the beginning, there was no need naus (ostadon, ossuari, uzdana). First ostadons of Central Asia date back to the IV-III centuries BC. We can see it in the example of the Kuykirilgan fortress (Rapoport, 1971, p.57-58).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the settled, cattle-breeding peoples living in the foothills of the Kohitang Mountains contributed greatly to the evolutionary beginning of the formation and spread of the first Zoroastrian religion. All the archeological findings from the excavations in Kayrittepa, Burguttepa and Gazakuton are fully consistent with the Zoroastrian way of life. (Shaydullaev Sh., Khamidov O. - 2018, Khamidov O. - 2019.) The discovery of the first dakhmas, especially in the castle-like stone dakhmas, fully clarifies the problem of the territory associated with the formation of the early Zoroastrian religion.

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