



A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE INFILTRATION AND SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Central Asia, Buddhism, Buddhist statues, religion, belief.

Abstract: The article discusses the views on a brief analysis of the entry and spread of Buddhism in Central Asia.

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МАРКАЗИЙ ОСИЁДА БУДДИЗМНИНГ КИРИБ КЕЛИШИ ВА ТАРҚАЛИШИНING ҚИСҚАЧА ТАҲЛИЛИ

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МАҚОЛА ҲАҚИДА

Калит сўзлар: Марказий Осиё, буддизм, будда ҳайкаллари, дин, эътиқод.

Аннотация: Мақолада Марказий Осиёга буддизмнинг кириб келиши ва тарқалишининг қисқача таҳлиллари ҳақида фикр-мулоҳазалар муҳокама қилинган.

КРАТКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ПРОНИКНОВЕНИЯ И РАСПРОСТРАНЕНИЯ БУДДИЗМА В СРЕДНЕЙ АЗИИ

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О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: Средняя Азия, буддизм, буддийские статуи, религия, вера.

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются взгляды на краткий анализ проникновения и распространения буддизма в Средней Азии.

INTRODUCTION

The Buddha's teachings spread over the centuries, first to Southeast Asia, then through Central Asia to China and the rest of East Asia, and then to Tibet and more distant parts of Central Asia. Often in these regions Buddhism developed naturally as the locals became interested in the Buddhist beliefs of foreign traders. Sometimes the rulers of countries adopted Buddhism in order to make their people more ethical, but no one was forced to change their faith. The teachings of the Buddha were made available to society, and people were free to choose what was useful to them.

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The spread of Buddhism throughout most of Asia was peaceful and took place in several ways. An example was given by the Buddha Shakyamuni. Primarily a teacher, he traveled to neighboring realms to share his insights with those who were receptive and interested. Moreover, he instructed his monks to go into the world and expound its teachings. The Buddha did not ask people to condemn their own religion, to reject it and move to a new one, because he did not seek to establish his own religion. He was only trying to help people overcome the unhappiness and suffering that they themselves have created due to their lack of understanding. Then generations of followers of the Buddha were inspired by his example and shared with others those methods from his teaching that they themselves found useful. So his teaching, which is now called Buddhism, spread everywhere.

Sometimes this process came naturally. For example, when Buddhist traders settled in new places or simply visited them, some of the locals showed a natural interest in the beliefs of foreigners. In the same way, Islam entered Indonesia and Malaysia. Also during the period from the II century BC. e. to the 2nd century AD e. Buddhism spread in the oasis countries of Central Asia along the Silk Road. Learning more about this Indian religion, the local rulers and the population began to invite monks as advisers and teachers from those regions from where the traders came from, and thus eventually adopted the Buddhist faith. Another natural process was the slow cultural absorption of the victorious peoples after they conquered new territories. This happened to the Greeks, who for centuries after the 2nd century BC. e. assimilated into the Buddhist community of Gandhara, located in what is now central Pakistan.

However, most often the spread was primarily due to the influence of a powerful ruler who personally adopted and supported Buddhism. For example, in the middle of the III century BC. e. Buddhism spread throughout northern India through the personal support of King Ashoka. This great founder of an empire did not force his subjects to accept the Buddhist faith. However, he placed throughout the country iron pillars on which his decrees were carved, encouraging people to lead an ethical life, and he himself followed these principles. Thus, he inspired people to accept the teachings of the Buddha.

In addition, King Ashoka actively contributed to the spread of Buddhism outside his kingdom by sending messengers to distant lands. In some cases, he did this in response to invitations from foreign rulers, such as King Tishya of Sri Lanka. On other occasions, on his own initiative, he sent monks as diplomatic representatives. Whatever the case, these monks did not pressure others to convert to Buddhism, but simply made the Buddha's teachings available, allowing people to choose for themselves. This is supported by the fact that Buddhism soon took root in areas such as southern India and southern Burma, while there is no evidence of its direct influence in other areas, such as the Greek colonies in Central Asia.

Other religious rulers, such as Altan Khan, the Mongol ruler of the 16th century, invited Buddhist teachers to their domains and proclaimed Buddhism the state religion in order to unite the people and strengthen their power. At the same time, they could prohibit some practices of local non-Buddhist religions and even persecute those who follow them. However, behind such arbitrary measures were mainly political motives. Such ambitious rulers never forced their subjects to adopt Buddhist forms of faith or worship, because such an approach is not characteristic of the Buddhist religion.

How is Buddhism related to Uzbekistan? Some of the first monuments of Buddhism were found in Uzbekistan, which are now included in the UNESCO heritage list. In total, there are about 20 Buddhist monuments in the country, most of which are located near Termez in Kara-tepe, Fayaz-tepe and Dalverzin-tepe. Near Termez is the Zurmala stupa, the first Buddhist building discovered in Central Asia, a cult Buddhist building of the Kushan era.

Buddhism in Termez. Buddhism played a significant role in the ideology of Ancient Termez for seven centuries: from the 1st to the 7th centuries. AD There are several scientific versions about when, where and how Buddhism spread in the Central Asian region.

As you know, Buddhism, as a religion and philosophical doctrine, originated in Northern India in the 6th BC. For several centuries, the followers of the Buddha preached Buddhism in Hindustan. Then Buddhism began to spread outside of India around the world, becoming a world religion.

Among the lands that attracted missionaries in the first place was Central Asia. Presumably, the spread of Buddhism in this region began with the Kingdom of Bactria, but until now, scientists have not established exactly when this happened.

Thus, Indian researchers note the beginning of the spread of Buddhism from the III (third) Buddhist Council. It took place during the reign of Ashoka (Mauryan dynasty - 261-222 BC), known as the protector of Buddhism. At the council, it was decided to preach Buddhism and spread it around the world.

According to the well-known historian E. V. Rtveladze, Buddhism came to Central Asia a little later, during the existence of the Greco-Bactrian Empire. At that time, Buddhism had already taken a strong position in Bactria and the West Indies (Yandhara). Rtveladze's theory is confirmed by numerous archaeological finds on the territory of the ancient Greco-Bactrian kingdom. In particular, here were found coins of the Greco-Bactrian king Agathocles (approx. 185-170 BC) with the image of a Buddhist "stupa" on them.

The famous researcher of Central Asia B. Litvinsky believes that the influence of Buddhism in Bactria can be traced from the pre-Kushan and the beginning of the Kushan period. His point of view is based on historical sources from the first century BC to the first century AD.

Based on archaeological data from excavations of Buddhist monuments in Northern Bactria, another authoritative historian, B. Stavinsky, suggests that Buddhism was found in Bactria during the reign of the famous Kushan ruler Kanishka (end of the 1st and beginning of the 2nd century AD).

A critical analysis of all materials on this issue, including evidence of the penetration of Buddhism into China, was carried out by B. Mukherjee. He concluded that Buddhism began to spread in Central Asia, in particular in Bactria, from the middle of the 1st century BC. His conclusion is confirmed by the coins of the Kushan king Sotep Metas-Vim, Kanishka's predecessor. These coins were found in reliable stratigraphic layers in a number of locations of Buddhist monuments in Northern Bactria - Aitram, Fayaztepe, Karatepe.

All this evidence helps us to reproduce the process of the spread of Buddhism in Central Asia in the following way. Buddhist missionaries may have begun preaching Buddhism in Bactria in the 2nd century BC. But the construction of religious Buddhist monuments in Northern Bactria and the preaching of this teaching in the region became widespread only from the second half of the first century AD. Therefore, Buddhism was the first religion of Ancient Bactria, which at that time formed a single state with North-Western India.

Archaeological data show that Ancient Termez was one of the largest centers of Buddhism in the region. The first finds on the territory of Old Termez, fragments of Buddhist stone sculptures, were discovered by the expedition of the Museum of Oriental Cultures, led by B. Denike in 1928.

At that time, one of the participants of this expedition, A. Strelkov, examined several caves in the northwestern part of the ancient settlement on the Karatepa hill. He interpreted them as the rooms of a Buddhist cave monastery. Further, he suggested that the hill in the southeast of the fortress of Old Termez - the Zurnal Towers - could be the ruins of a giant Buddhist stupa.

In 1961, a joint expedition led by B. Stavinsky began exploring Karatepa. This research has been going on for years. Among the researchers were groups from the Hermitage (T. Zeimal), the State Museum of Oriental Cultures (N. Sitcheva, A. Berdnikov, T. Mkrtichev), the Samarkand

Historical Museum-Reserve (Yu. Davidyan), a group of restorers from the State Institute of Restoration (M. Shemakhanskaya, N. Kovaleva, L. Burkova, G. Versotskaya).

A valuable find of this long-term work was a group of unique Buddhist monuments, entered into the historical annals as the Buddhist cult center of Karatepa. The final documents were published in six editions of the Materials of the Karatepa Expedition. Hundreds of articles, including studies on architecture, iconography, ceramics, epigraphy, numismatics, various technical and technological aspects of monuments, were devoted to the study of Karatepe artifacts. A joint article written by B. Stavinsky and Mkrtichev described the results of an expedition to the so-called Buddhist cult center.

Further research was carried out by a joint Uzbek-Japanese expedition led by K. Kato (Japan) and Sh. Pidaev (Uzbekistan) in 1996. The results of their work were subsequently published in Japan and Uzbekistan.

Another Buddhist monument - the Fayaztepa barrow - located one kilometer northwest of Karatepa, was studied by L. Albaum from 1968 to 1976. A large monastery was discovered at that place. While working on the site of Old Termez, L. Albaum discovered the remains of foundations not far from the northeastern corner of the old settlement. Artifacts found here helped L. Albaum to recognize this place as a Buddhist religious building.

That four Buddhist religious buildings were investigated on the territory of Old Termez. At the excavation sites, a huge number of stone architectural fragments and decorated Buddha statues were found.

Other sources on the history of Buddhism in Old Termez are terracotta Buddha statues, discovered both as a result of archaeological research and in the process of collecting material on the territory of the ancient city.

Summing up the collected architectural evidence, one can draw a picture of the spread of Buddhism in ancient and medieval Termez and some features of the architecture of Termez of the Buddhist period.

In all likelihood, many Buddhist religious monuments were built in the northeastern part of Karatepa and Fayaztepa in the middle of the 1st century AD. At the same time, a canal was built leading to the northeastern part of Old Termez, its remains have survived to this day.

The Buddhist cult center in Karatepe was located on a sandy hill, consisting of three small hills, and occupied an area of 7 hectares. Archaeological studies have shown that the Buddhist center was a complex of separate buildings built at different times. This included caves on the western and southern peaks of Karatepa and ground structures on its northern peak.

Above-ground structures consisted of buildings built of brick on hillsides, and caves were located in sandstone. The found staircase testifies to the presence of upper floors in the buildings.

The variety of design of cave structures in Karatepe has raised many questions regarding their typology and application. However, the reconstruction of the sequence of construction and analysis of the architecture and design of the Karatepe complexes showed that the Karatepe builders used two types of design of ground structures - classical and corridor.

The classical type of design included a square courtyard, with a cave-like corridor around the central room and several niches - cells around the perimeter. This type of construction can be seen in the cave Buddhist structure of the Abbot.

It should be noted that the design of the Karatepe complex differs significantly from its prototypes. Firstly, the main purpose of the architecture of this Buddhist cave was to combine separate temples and monasteries into one structure. Researchers of this architecture date the beginning of this process to the 1st century BC. and the beginning of our era. Secondly, the simplicity of design, which the craftsmen who lived outside India followed in construction, created a corridor that ran around the central structure.

Few of the Buddhist objects have survived to our time. Perhaps some of them were destroyed by the Arabs during the Arab conquest in the VIII-IX centuries.

In the VIII-IX centuries. most of the population of Tokharistan adopted a new religion - Islam, planted by the Arabs. One of the reasons for the spread of Islam was that non-Muslims were forced to pay huge taxes in the territory of the Arab Caliphate. That. converting to Islam helped people cut their taxes.

It is reliably known that, in order to get rid of pagan temples in Central Asia, the Arabs introduced the practice of levying special taxes on non-Muslim places of worship.

All these circumstances put an end to the functioning of Buddhist monuments in Termez and its environs. Most likely, the monks who lived in the Buddhist monasteries of Termez moved to the Kashmir region, where at that time the Karkot dynasty, ardent supporters of Buddhism, ruled.

Despite the fact that Buddhism lost its exclusivity as a religion, it continued to influence the worldview of the population of Termez for a long time. As an example of this, one can take the literary works of the mystic scientist Hakim at-Termezi (IX century), in which the researchers found some elements of the teachings of Buddhism.

CONCLUSION

For Central Asia in the first millennium of our era, Buddhism was not only an introduced religious doctrine, which became widespread along with other cults that existed here. It included a wide range of factors that contributed to the formation of the culture of the Central Asian peoples - and writing (and, accordingly, book culture), and architectural typology, and various types of fine arts. As part of the spread of the teachings, Central Asia was involved in large-scale contacts that connected the great civilizations of India and China. This explains the importance of studying the

history of Buddhism in Central Asia. A small number of written documents makes works of art one of the main sources on the history of Central Asian Buddhism.

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