

## Religious Tolerance in Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** The article examines the issues of the emergence and spread of Buddhism in Central Asia, in particular on the territory of Modern Uzbekistan. The task is to study Buddhism, its emergence and spread of its original schools on the basis of the studied Buddhist monuments in the Central Asian region. The issues of mutual influence of religious traditions through cultural transformations of Buddhism are considered.

**Key words:** buddhism, cultural monuments, tolerance, archaeological monuments, sculpture, ancient settlements.



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### Introduction:

Uzbekistan is a multi-confessional state. There are 16 religious denominations in the Republic. Religious tolerance existing in the Republic testifies to the country's achievements in establishing peace and stability, is an example for many countries in solving problems of interethnic and civil harmony. In Uzbekistan, over the years of independence, legal foundations have been created for the implementation of freedom of conscience and religion, promoting respect for national languages, traditions, religious views of all nationalities living in the Republic. One of the most important priorities of the state policy of Uzbekistan is the development of a culture of tolerance and humanism, strengthening interethnic, interfaith and civil harmony in society. In religious relations of independent Uzbekistan, disdainful attitude of one religion over another is not allowed. The article examines the issues of religious tolerance in the historical aspect. Religious tolerance has deep historical roots. Since ancient times, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism coexisted here. In the history of the peoples of Central Asia, the coexistence of various religions contributed to the formation of a tolerant attitude among the peoples.

### Methods and level of study:

The article is considered on the basis of general methods-objectivism of historicism, comparative logical analysis. The work uses a comprehensive approach, including the analysis of historical phenomena and modern approaches to the formation of spiritual and moral values of students in higher educational institutions of Uzbekistan. The main research methods include analysis and synthesis, historical and comparative method, content analysis, case stage and social methods.

In the article, the problems of religious tolerance are considered in the historical aspect, analyzed on the basis of accumulated knowledge in this area in Uzbekistan, which today contributes to the formation of knowledge among the younger generation and the population as a whole in the formation of feelings and attitudes of religious tolerance. In Uzbekistan, the history of Buddhism and Christianity was studied by scientists such as V.V.Bartold, L.I.Albaum, A.N.Bernshtam, T.V.Grek, T.I.Zeymal, G.A.Koshenko, V.A.Livshchits, G.A. Pugachenkova, E.V. Rtveladze, B.Ya.Stavitsky, V.Sh.Shishkina, V.A.Kozlovsky, E.V.Abdullaev, A.B.Nikiten, I.A.Anboev.

### **Research results:**

The history of the spread of various religions in the territory of Central Asia in ancient times is multifaceted and is of great interest for research. In the territory of Uzbekistan, along with the religion of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism was also widespread in ancient times. As is known, this religious and philosophical teaching arose in the 6th century BC in India. Later, Buddhism spread beyond India, becoming a world religion. In ancient times, the territory of Central Asia, in particular Ancient Bactria, became a region visited by Buddhist missionaries. According to scientists, the beginning of the spread of Buddhism to other countries is associated with the decision of the 3rd Buddhist Council during the reign of Emperor Ashoka. Academician E. Rtveladze connects the spread of Buddhism in Central Asia with the times of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, which is confirmed by the coins of Greek and Bactrian kings found, in particular the coins of the Bactrian king Agathocles who lived in 185-170 BC. The coins depict a "stupa" and an architectural and sculptural cult structure. Other researchers, based on their studies, find traces of Buddhism throughout Bactria during the reign of the Kushan king Kanishka. Numerous archaeological studies conducted in our country indicate that Buddhism was widespread in Bactria in the middle of the 1st century BC. Coins of the Kushan king Sotel Metas-Vima were found on the territory of Northern Bactria in the settlements of Kara-tepa, Airtam and Fayaz-tepa. During the former Soviet Union, archaeological research was conducted in the area of old Termez on the territory of Modern Uzbekistan by the expedition of archaeologist B. Denike in 1928. Stone sculptures of Buddha were found. The next expedition under the leadership of B. Stavisky explored the Karatepa settlement of religious significance. In Uzbekistan, in recent years, Japanese-Uzbek studies of Buddhist monuments have been conducted under the leadership of scientists K. Kato (Japan) and Sh. Pidaev in 1996. The conducted studies indicate that old Termez was the place where four structures of Buddha of religious significance were discovered, decorated statues of Buddha and stone architectural details for them were found. The next sources for studying the history of Buddhism are the artifacts of Buddha statues found on the territory of Old Termez. In the north-eastern part of Termez, Fayaz Tepa and Kara Tepa, buildings of religious monuments of Buddha were discovered. In particular, the cult center of Karatepa was located on a hill occupying 7 hectares. One of the reasons for the decline of Buddhism in Central Asia is considered to be the spread of Islam. Apparently, this was the reason for the cessation of Buddhism, it is believed that many religious figures of Buddhism from the Buddhist monasteries of Termez moved to blessed Kashmir, where the Karkat dynasty professed this religion.

Research of Buddhist pilgrims to Uzbekistan, in particular in the vicinity of Termez, speaks of the role of the ancient city in the development of Buddhism in Central Asia. The conducted archaeological studies of religious buildings of Buddhism are becoming an achievement of the public today, the artifacts found here fill the expositions of museums in Uzbekistan.

All researchers of Buddhism reveal the history of Buddhism in Central Asia on the basis of historical and architectural monuments.

Some researchers believe that Buddhism penetrated into Central Asia during the Kushan kings, namely during the reign of Kanishka in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Another part of researchers, in particular Litvinskaya B.A., associates the beginning of this process with the 3rd century BC, when Buddhism penetrated from the North-West regions of India and the territories of Southern

Afghanistan to Bactria. There are also other opinions about the penetration of Buddhism into Central Asia. Thus, the researcher R.Ch. Bagchi connects Buddhism, its penetration with the activities of Emperor Ashoka, but the insufficiency of archaeological materials does not confirm this idea. There is a widespread opinion that Buddhism penetrated the territory of Central Asia during the reign of the Kushan kings. In particular, B.Ya. Stavisky confirms this idea by the fact that in the Kushan kingdom the Mahayana direction was declared the state religion under the emperors Kanishka, Vima and Katfiz, who created conditions for the spread of Buddhism. For the development of Buddhism in such cities as Merv, Balkh, Bolosogun and Kashgar, temples and sanctuaries were built, and conditions were created for the translation and commentary of sacred books and sutras of Buddhism. In the southern regions of Central Asia, the teachings of Vaibhashika and Sarvastivada found in old Termez and Karatepa were widespread.

Kharoshti inscriptions on ceramics indicate the existence of the Mahayana teaching at that time. This school played a major role in the spread of Buddhism in Central Asia. And the Brahmi script found in Karatepa indicates the spread of the Sarvastivada school here during the reign of Emperor Kanishka.

Fayaz-tepa is considered a major historical site of Buddhism in Central Asia. The relics found here Hieroglyphic writings, statues, monasteries, occupy a large area. Here were found 3 large buildings - a monastery, a temple, and also a courtyard with utility rooms, the walls of which were covered with drawings from the life of Buddha preserved to this day, and a sculpture of Buddha carved from limestone and covered with gilding, sitting under the sacred tree Botkhi, today they are exhibits of the Museum of History of Uzbekistan. In recent years, the ruins of the ancient settlement of Kampirtepa have been studied, it has been proven that the residence of Alexander the Great was located here. The Buddhist stupa Zurmala, discovered in 1926 by A.S. Strelkov to the east of Old Termez, is one of the first buildings of Buddhism. The stupa was built of brick and was coated with clay. An entrance was discovered that led to a niche where the statue of Buddha was kept. The Buddhist complex with buildings on the surface and an underground monastery, palace and cells for monks found in the old Termez in the town of Karatepa are of great interest to researchers. The next major expedition led by G.A. Pugachenkova and B.A. Turgunov explored the Dalverzii-tepa complex in 1967-68 near the Termez settlement. These studies indicate the spread of Buddhism in the Kushan Empire in the 1st century AD. The ruins of Buddhist temples in Ajina-tepa, Kampir-kala, the Airtam complex, and the Gyaaur-kala complex located 30 km from Merv, and the Buddhist temple in Kuva found as a result of archaeological excavations in the southern regions of Uzbekistan, testify to the history of the spread of Buddhism in the region. The cities of Central Asia Merv, Balkh, Termez, the regions of Sogdiana, Kuva, Kasan, Samarkand, Bukhara were the centers where the teachings of Buddhism and the ritual rites associated with them were developed.

The cities were the centers of the teachings of Buddhism and the promotion of this teaching to other countries. The regions of Sogdiana played a significant role in trade with China, the Sogdians contributed to the spread of Buddhism in this country, although the question of the widespread distribution of Buddhism in Sogd remains unresolved among researchers.

In the period from 1968 to 1976, archaeologist L.I. Albaum studied a Buddhist temple complex dating back to the 1st-3rd centuries. AD. In 2004-2006, this work was continued by archaeologist Tukhtash Annaev. The excavations were carried out jointly by the Uzbek-Japanese expedition headed by E. Rtvelade. In Uzbekistan, the first monuments of Buddhism included in the UNESCO heritage list have been studied. There are 20 Buddhist monuments in Uzbekistan, these are the monuments of Karatepa near Termez, Fayaz-tepa and Dalverzin-tepa.

According to legend, the beginning of Christianity in Central Asia is associated with the names of the apostles Thomas and Andrew the First-Called, who are believed to have preached in this territory. Information about this is contained in the lives of these apostles, and indirect

confirmation can be the fact that Christian communities in India until modern times bear the name - "Christians of the Apostle Thomas".

Also, legend has preserved information about the veneration of the grave of the Old Testament Patriarch Job the Long-suffering, which was located in Urgench, by an entire community of Jews since the time of the Babylonian captivity. Until modern times, there are "Job's springs" revered by both Christians and Muslims in Uzbekistan, the most famous of which is located in Bukhara. The legend that it was Khorezm that was the place where the righteous Job the Long-suffering lived is indirectly confirmed by the assumptions of scientists about the unity of ancient Khorezm with the Mesopotamian civilization of Ur (Sumer and Akkad).

After Christianity was adopted by the Roman Emperors and became the official state religion, persecution of Christians began in Persia, which led to their resettlement to the Central Asian region. As early as 334, a Christian bishop was mentioned in Merv.

Beginning in the 5th century, after most Persian Christians adopted Nestorianism and broke off their relations with Constantinople, the Nestorians became the main disseminators of Christianity in Central Asia. The Khorezm (Khvalis) Archbishopric, which was part of the Antiochian Patriarchate, remained Orthodox. Ancient sources give us a number of testimonies about the existence of Christianity in the Samarkand region. In particular, Al-Biruni in his famous work "Information of the Ancient Peoples" indicated that in Samarkand before the Arab period, along with Zoroastrianism, there was an influential Christian episcopate "nasoro", headed by the mobad-dastur Nastori" ("mobad" - priest; "dastur" - spiritual leader; "nasoro" - a derivative of "nasr", in Arabic "scripture": as is known, the Arab-Persian tradition called Christians "people of the Scripture"; "Nastorius" is undoubtedly Nestorius). Another Arabic-language author, a Turk by origin, a serious scientist, historian and linguist Mahmud Kashgari, gives personal evidence that in the southeastern Desht-i-Kipchak (Great Steppe), the Uzgen Kingdom and the Uyghur Khaganate, communities with a center in Sogd (Samarkand) existed and flourished. According to Kashgari, in Isfijab and Taraz, in Kashgar and Uzgend up to Before Quba (Kuva) lived the Sogdak people, who professed the Masih (Jesus Christ) and spoke two languages: Sogdian and Turkic). Kuva is a district center of the Fergana region of Uzbekistan. In Urgut there was a Nestorian monastery. Among the archaeological finds that are full of the Uzbek land, there are often tombstones-kayraks with the image of an equal-armed Nestorian cross, coins minted in Sogd, Chach, Ustrushana and Khorezm in the 4th-8th centuries, with an imprint of a cross and Sogdian inscriptions. In the Samarkand region, on the left bank of the Zarafshan, archaeologists discovered a Nestorian cemetery with burials of the 10th-11th centuries. Near the city of Urgut, the ruins of the Koshtepa settlement of the 5th-7th centuries have been preserved, on the site of which there was a Christian village of Vazgird. The remains of ancient Christian churches are found in the Jizzakh and Tashkent regions.

After the conquest of the Central Asian region by the Arabs, Islam became the most widespread religion in the region starting from the 8th century. The Nestorian Catholicos managed to become a courtier of the Caliph and establish his residence in Baghdad. With the assistance of the authorities, the Nestorians managed to unite with the Jacobites and organize a large church community in the region.

The further spread of Islam and Buddhism in the 14th century and the persecution of Christians in the region led to the gradual cessation of the activities of both the Nestorian and other Christian communities.

### **Conclusion:**

Today, Uzbekistan is an attractive country for tourism, especially pilgrimage tourism. Today, road maps for tourist routes are being developed in Uzbekistan, especially for pilgrim tourists from India, China, Korea, Japan, Thailand, European countries, and America, where Buddhism and

Christianity are officially spread. Modern Uzbekistan is a country with great tourism potential. There is a certain amount of work to do to establish tourism links with countries with a Buddhist-oriented religion, the task of informative language support for tourists, modernization and construction of new hotels near Buddhist monuments, promotion and increase in the number of tours for countries with the ideology of Buddhism to increase the flow of tourists from these countries to Uzbekistan. The task is to create attractive conditions for the further development of tourism in our country.

Studying the history of religion in Uzbekistan contributes to the formation of feelings and attitudes of tolerance in the religious sphere among the local population, respect for the religious feelings of people, national cultures and mutual understanding between representatives of different faiths.

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