

HOW FAR DID BUDDHISM SPREAD WEST ?

—Buddhism in the Middle East in Ancient and Medieval Times—

Warwick BALL*

Introduction

Nowadays in the West, there is a considerable growing interest in Buddhism. This interest is both academic: in the history and art of Buddhism, as well as religious: in the ideas and way of life that Buddhism offers. Although very far from being a “western”¹ religion in the sense that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are, there is nonetheless enough of an awareness of Buddhism in the West to reach a large number of people.

This present western interest in Buddhism however, is by no means new. There is strong evidence that Buddhist ideas reached the West in ancient and medieval times to influence not only many aspects of the arts and sciences, but some fundamental precepts of early Islam and probably Christianity as well. Indeed, it is important to realize that Buddhism spread *westwards* before it spread east: from its origins in eastern India, it spread into what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the area rapidly became a great centre and stronghold of Buddhism. From there, Buddhism spread northwards into Central Asia, and then eastwards to China, to eventually reach Japan and South-east Asia. The fact that Buddhism is today largely an “eastern” religion therefore, is due more to historical circumstances than to its initial place of origin.

I wish now to examine some of the Buddhist ideas that influenced the West in ancient and medieval times, and then discuss the various points of contact between the West and Buddhism through which these ideas might have travelled. I will then examine some ancient remains in the Middle East that might mark the westernmost extent of Buddhist communities in antiquity, thus assessing the extent and relative strength of this western diffusion to show that Buddhism might have played a more integral part in western cultural heritage than previously thought.

The Influences

1. Religious

Many religious practices in the ancient Near East—especially those related to asceticism and mysticism—may have had their origins in Indian ideas in general and Buddhist ideas in particular. These influences may have started as early as the 2nd century BC, as some scholars have recognized Buddhist influence in the ascetic Essene sect of the Dead Sea, which then continued to influence early Christianity². But it is in early Islam—particularly its monastic branch, Sufism—that we recognize positive signs of these types of religious influences coming westwards. The life and associated legends of one of the earliest Sufis for example, Ibrāhim ibn Ādham, shows definite Buddhist origins: Ibrāhim ibn Ādham was born in about 730 AD in Balkh, one of the most famous centres of Buddhist learning in Central Asia. He later became an important Islamic mystic, but of an ascetic leaning more typical of Buddhism than of Islam at this time. Indeed, an early 12th century legend of his conversion to Islam follows the story of Prince *Gautama*’s

* Iffley Cottage, Redpath, nr Earlston, Berwickshire TD4 6AD, BRITAIN

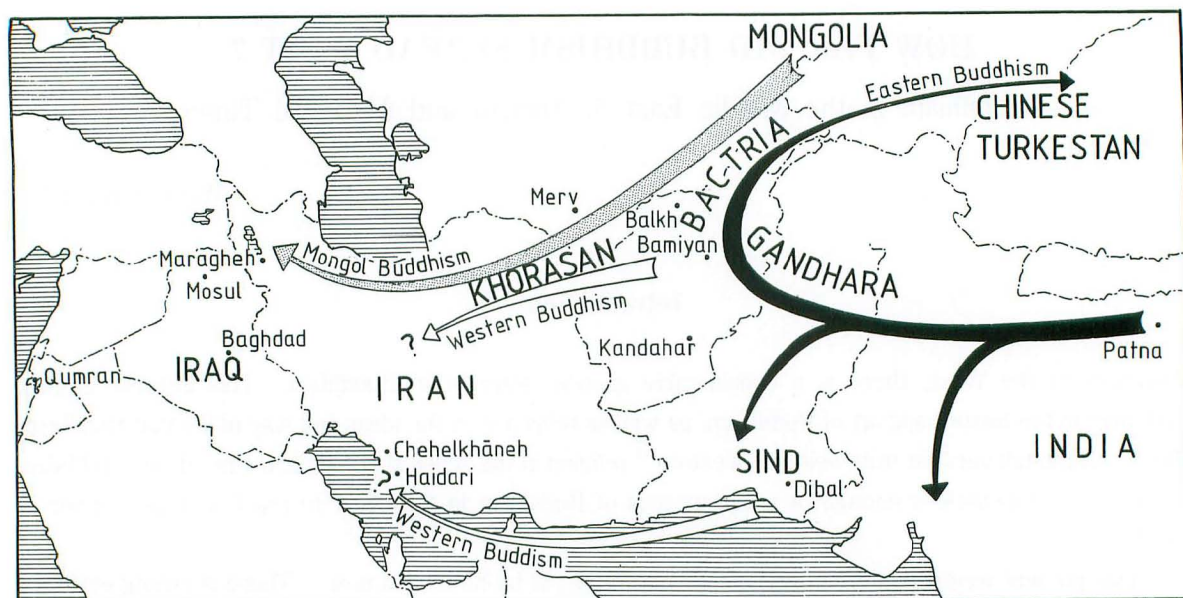


Fig. 1 Map showing location of places mentioned in the text.

conversion to Buddhism almost exactly³. Further Buddhist influence on Sufism is seen in the concepts of unity of being and unity with God in the Naqshbandi order of Sufis, which appear traceable to the Buddhist concept of Nirvana. Again, the Naqshbandi movement originated in Buddhist Central Asia⁴.

It is tempting also to see many aspects of the Druze religion in the Levant as originating in Buddhism. The Druze believe in an hierarchical ascent to perfection through reincarnation, with each incarnation being a moral testing ground for the next ascent. This belief, though not necessarily exclusive or fundamental to Buddhism, is nonetheless found in Buddhist practice almost everywhere. The similarity is not surprising in view of the origins of the Druze religion: it received its definitive form from Hamza ibn 'Ali, who was born in Sūzān in the early 11th century. Sūzān, now in north-east Iran close to the Afghan border, was certainly close enough to Buddhist Central Asia to be receptive to ideas from there. A tradition that relates of another Druze community in China is perhaps a further indication of eastern connections⁵.

Another well-known Buddhist fragment in the West is the legend known by the Moslems as the "Kitāb al-Bilawhar wa Būdāṣ af", known in the Christian world as the story of Barlaam and Josaphat. The word *būdāṣ af* derives from the Sanscrit "bodhisattva"; the story, originating probably in pre-10th century Central Asia, derives from the traditional biography of Gautama Buddha⁶.

Speculation has also existed on the origins of some of the early Christian practices, such as monasticism and relic worship. Whilst there is no direct evidence that these practices can be traced to Buddhism, the similarities are nonetheless striking and cannot be ignored in the present context.

2. Cultural

Religion was by no means the only way in which Buddhism—and India generally—influenced the West. Early Islamic science and mathematics was to a very large extent indebted to India, and can be seen in such things as the numerical system, which the Arabs in turn passed on to Europe. Not only was India a source for new ideas, it also acted as a custodian of earlier Greek scientific thought, lost in the West in the "Dark Ages" but preserved in Buddhist learning by its contacts with Hellenistic Central Asia and north-western India. We are thus indebted to the Buddhists for preserving many parts of our own culture, as well as passing on theirs⁷. Buddhist influence on Islamic—particularly Persian—miniature painting was also extensive and has long been recognized. These artistic influences came largely with the Mongol and

Turkish conquests of the Islamic West in the 13th and 14th centuries⁹. Many of the Buddhist artistic ideas too were largely drawn from earlier Greek ideas which reached Central Asia and north-western India in the wake of Alexander the Great's conquests⁹. We can see therefore, a constant interaction of ideas between East and West that always existed despite the vicissitudes of these early periods.

In literature, apart from various writings associated with the religious influences mentioned above, Buddhism has contributed many ideas to the Middle East. These can be particularly seen in Persian literature, which derives much of its literary imagery from Buddhism¹⁰. The literary connections with and fascination for India dates back very early, and can be seen in Classical writers such as Strabo and Ptolemy, continuing into the Islamic period with writers such as al-Bīrūnī, Idrīsī and Ibn Baṭṭūta¹¹.

Points of contact

Many more examples of Buddhist ideas spreading westwards can be cited. The above very brief survey however, is enough to show that this influence was not only deep-rooted but also continued over a long time. It is important therefore, to outline the various points of contact between the West and Buddhism to see how these influences may have actually spread.

1. Proselytization

Buddhism first spread through direct proselytization. In the 3rd century BC in Mauryan India, Buddhism was enthusiastically espoused by the Emperor Ashoka, who had just embraced the emerging religion. He summoned a general Buddhist Council at Pataliputra (modern Patna), where it was decided that missionaries should be sent out to all the known world. Accordingly, missionaries went forth and edicts proclaiming the Buddhist message were set up all over the empire. That at Bhabra in India even specifies the countries of the West that were claimed to have been converted: "...conquests by the law of Piety [Buddhism]...won by his Sacred Majesty in his own dominions and in all the neighbouring realms as far as 6000 leagues where the Greek king named Antiyaka [Antiochus II] dwells, and the north of that Antiyaka, where dwell the four kings severally named Turamay [Ptolemy], Antiyaka [Gonatus], Magas [Magas of Cyrene], Sikandar [Alexander of Epirus?], and in the south Cholas and Pandyas, with Ceylon also"¹². As confirmation—at least in part—of this claim, Ceylon was indeed converted soon after the Council and has since remained so, but the claims for conversions in the Hellenistic world are presumably mere statements of intent. We do know from western sources however, that Indian—presumably Buddhist—missions were received in the West at least as early as Roman times¹³. The earlier Hellenistic rulers mentioned in the edict therefore, presumably received such missions as well. Indeed, they were probably received with some interest, knowing the Greek tolerance of and receptiveness to new philosophical ideas. A possible Buddhist gravestone found at Alexandria in Egypt may be seen as archaeological evidence of one such mission¹⁴. Certainly speculation on Mauryan missionary activities in Greek speaking communities received graphic confirmation in 1958 with the discovery of an Ashokan Buddhist edict proclaiming the "Law of Piety" in Greek at Kandahar in Afghanistan. Buddhism then continued at Kandahar until well into Islamic times¹⁵ (Pl. Ia).

Further west than Afghanistan however, direct documentary evidence for Buddhist proselytization is very fragmentary. The 3rd century AD inscription of the Zoroastrian High Priest of the Sasanian Empire, Kartir, carved in the cliffs at Naqsh-e Rostam near Persepolis, actually refers to Buddhists in Iran at the time, albeit in a rather negative way: "And the Jews and Buddhists and Brahmans and Nazarites and Christians and 'Maktag' and Manichaeans in the kingdom are being smitten. And their idols were destroyed"¹⁶. Since eastern Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan probably formed a part of the "kingdom" at

this time, this statement may not mean as much as it first appears. We read later on however, in the early 11th century writings of al-Bīrūnī, one of the greatest of all medieval Islamic scholars, that “In former times, Khurasan, Persis, Irak, Mosul, and the country up to the frontier of Syria, was Buddhistic, but then Zarathustra went forth from Adharbaijan and preached Magism in Balkh (Baktra)... In consequence, the Buddhists were banished from those countries, and had to emigrate to the countries east of Balkh”¹⁷. This statement can perhaps be taken as an indirect reference to Kartir’s persecution of the Buddhists. Whilst al-Bīrūnī’s claim for such extensive westward penetration of Buddhism must surely be exaggerated, it is worth noting that the pre-Islamic name for Mosul one of the cities he names as Buddhist—was “Budh Ardashir”¹⁸.

2. Trade

More active than Indian missionary activity would have been Indian trading activity with the West—indeed, it is usually religion that follows trade rather than the other way round. Western—Hellenistic, Roman, Sasanian and Arab—trading missions to and colonies in India are well known and hardly need reiterating here¹⁹, but Indian trading missions to the West, though smaller in scale, are less well known. Accordingly, we read in the anonymous 2nd century BC work, *Peryplus of the Erythraean Sea*, of traders from western and southern India coming to Aden, Socotra, Salala in Arabia and Apologou (Arab Ubullan) near Baṣra at the head of the Gulf²⁰. The island of Socotra off the coast of Arabia even had a colony of Indians living there in the early 2nd century BC. Indeed, the name of Socotra itself is derived from the Sanscrit: *Sukhatara-dvīpa*, meaning “the most pleasant land”²¹. Later on, we read in Islamic sources of cargo ships from India continuing to put in at Gulf and Arabian ports. That these traders were Buddhists rather than Hindu is highly likely, as caste restrictions discouraged Hindus from travelling abroad—a factor that has always confined Hinduism mainly to the Indian subcontinent whilst Buddhism spread all over Asia.

Evidence for late Buddhist trading activities are seen elsewhere in the Indian Ocean. The Maldiv Islands were converted to Buddhism in the 6th century by missionaries arriving with the traders from Ceylon²², while on the Gulf the unusually high occurrence of Indian and Buddhist place names seems to indicate the presence of extensive trading activities there as well. These place-names contain roots such as *hind*, meaning “Indian”, *but*, meaning “Buddha” (though sometimes simply “idol”) and *bahār*, meaning “Buddhist monastery” (from the Sanscrit *vihāra*) and *bahār*, meaning “Buddhist monastery” (from the Sanscrit *vihāra*). It is significant that all of these places without exception are associated with ancient and medieval trading entrepôts, most of them having strong connections further east. For example, two places called *Bahāristān* and *Batkhāneh* (“Place of the Buddhist monastery” and “Buddhist idol-house”?) lie near Sīraf, one of the greatest of all Gulf ports for the eastern trade. Many other such occurrences of Buddhist or Indian place-names associated with trade entrepôts can be cited. Taken in isolation, they may of course, mean nothing, but taken together and supported by other evidence, such occurrences can hardly all be coincidental. Especially when one considers that all of them, without any exception, are associated with trade entrepôts²³. We know that many such trading centres contained foreign colonies, particularly of those foreigners engaged in trade. For example, archaeological evidence suggests a Palmyrene Syrian trading community on Kharg Island²⁴, while documentary evidence shows that a Chinese colony existed in 10th century Baghdad²⁵. In this context therefore, colonies of Buddhist Indians seem very likely and, taken with the toponymic evidence, even probable.

Relations between the Sasanian Empire and the Buddhist world were brought closer in the 5th century with the alleged marriage between Bahram V and an Indian princess. As part of her dowry, the port of Dibal at the head of the Indus River was ceded to the Persians²⁶. Dibal was important not only as a major trading entrepôt, but also as a centre for Buddhism in Sind (see below). Further evidence for the

continuation of this close relationship can be seen with the final domination of Islam in Iran, when the surviving Zoroastrian communities chose to migrate to Buddhist and Hindu India rather than the Christian West, and survive there to this day as the Parsees.

3. Manichaeism

Although a dead religion today, Manichaeism, at its height in the 1st millennium AD, was a world religion stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As such, it absorbed an immensely wide range of different cultures, and—not least—religious ideas. Manichaeism therefore, was an ideal vehicle for the diffusion of religious ideas both eastwards and westwards, particularly, in the context of the present paper, of Buddhism to the West.

The religion was founded in the 3rd century BC in Mesopotamia and Iran by the prophet Mani. In the religious fervour prevailing in the Parthian Empire at the time, Mani was able to borrow elements from many different sources to found a syncretic religion of universal appeal: Christianity and Gnosticism from the West, Zoroastrianism from Iran, and Buddhism from India and Central Asia. Mani probably travelled to India, so it is hardly surprising that many fundamental Buddhism elements, such as the doctrine of transmigration of souls or the practice of monasticism can be found in Manichaeism as well²⁷.

Manichaeism was ruthlessly suppressed in Sasanian Iran, largely by the efforts of the high priest Kartir mentioned above. It survived most however, in the—significantly—Buddhist environment of Central Asia, where it flourished for a further thousand years. It survived also, albeit in different forms, in cults that spread westwards into the Roman world. Many of the possible Buddhist elements in early Christianity mentioned above therefore, may well have arrived in Europe by this means.

4. Afghanistan

Contacts through trade and religious fervour are not the only routes by which Buddhist influence may have reached the West. There are other, better known points of contact. Eastern and northern Afghanistan—ancient Bactria and Gandhara—was one of the most thriving centres of Buddhism in the ancient East between about the 2nd century BC and the 10th or even 11th century AD. The Greek conquest in the 4th century BC had already opened up the area to western contacts, and indeed laid much of the political and philosophical groundwork for the eventual growth of Buddhism there, just as the Greeks prepared the ground for the eventual spread of Christianity further west. The subsequent penetration of the Hellenistic successor states down into north-western India, followed by the conquests of the Sasanians in the 3rd century AD, maintained these contacts with the West, making this area an ideal melting-pot for occidental and oriental ideas. Because of this great religious activity, these years in this area were perhaps the most formative in the early history of Buddhism, when many of its philosophical, ritual and iconographical ideas first evolved. The concept of the Buddha image, for example, before only represented by a symbol such as a footprint, was first formulated here from the contacts with Greek figural art; great monasteries grew up and flourished; the idea of the stupa evolved into a symbolic focal point for Buddhist worship²⁸. It was from here, rather than eastern India where Buddha lived, that Buddhism spread northwards and eastwards to become the universal religion it is today.

With “Afghan” Buddhism being so dynamic and having such far reaching influences, there was naturally some diffusion westwards as well. The western presence in the area was reinforced with the arrival of the Arabs in the 8th century. Although Islam eventually predominated there (albeit over a long period: Islam did not reach some parts of Afghanistan until the end of the 19th century), Buddhism survived several more centuries co-existing with Islam to exert the influence on Islam that we have already seen.

Today, the countryside of Afghanistan is littered with the remains of its Buddhist past, testifying to its

former importance: stupas, monasteries, shrines, paintings, etc. There are far too many to list here, but one cannot pass on without mentioning Afghanistan's most famous Buddhist monument: the colossal statues at Bamiyan. To my mind, these extraordinary statues and the vast rock-cut monastic complexes associated with them are not only perhaps the greatest of all Buddhist monuments, but as a sheer, positive statement of religious belief and self-confidence, rank with the greatest religious monuments of mankind (Pl. Ib).

5. The Barmakids

A fascinating and tantalizing footnote to Buddhism in Bactria and its possible western influence is seen in the history of the Barmakid family. The Barmakids were a family of powerful viziers at the court of the early Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad in the 8th and 9th centuries. Originally however, they were a family of powerful Buddhist priests at one of the most famous centres of Buddhist learning in Central Asia: the monastery of Nau Bahār at Balkh in northern Afghanistan²⁹. (We have already encountered the word *bahār* on the Gulf; *nau bahār* means "New Buddhist Monastery". The name *Barmak* itself derives from the Sanscrit *Pramukha*, meaning "chief"³⁰). This has led to speculations that they continued to unofficially encourage the spread of Buddhist ideas at the Caliph's court in Baghdad, and even to patronise a sect of Buddhism associated with the name *nau bahār* that was specifically new (as the name *nau* implies) and western-orientated. Evidence for this is seen in the unusually high occurrence of the name Nau Bahār in a series of place names stretching in a rough line westwards along the trade route towards Baghdad³¹. In support of this hypothesis, there is on the Gulf, in addition to the place names containing *bahār* mentioned above, a village just a few kilometres away from a site of possible Buddhist associations (Chehelkhāneh, discussed below), named in fact, Barmak. Furthermore, we read that one of the Barmakids, Khālid ibn Barmak, was governor of this part of the Caliphate for two periods in the 8th century³². If indeed they were unofficial patrons of Buddhism, the existence of a village named after the family next to a monument of almost certain Buddhist connections can hardly be a coincidence. Other members of the family certainly acted as particularly able governors in areas of the Caliphate with Buddhist populations, such as Central Asia, Afghanistan and Sind.

6. Sind

Sind in fact, was another place where the West came into close contact with Buddhism, first when the prophet Mani travelled through there in the 3rd century, converting the Buddhist king of Turan to Manichaeism³³, and then when the Arabs conquered it in the early 8th century. Buddhism at this time was the dominant religion of Sind, and Hitti thus observes that "contact between Semitic Islam and Indian Buddhism was permanently established"³⁴. In Sind we have, on the one hand, Buddhism surviving relatively late but still close to its Indian origins, unlike Bactrian Buddhism, and on the other hand, we have Islam in the very first years of its conception and dramatic outward expansion gaining a permanent hold. In the present discussion therefore, the importance of the contact between the two major religions is paramount.

The last Buddhist dynasty to rule Sind was from the mid-6th to the mid-7th century. The rulership was then usurped by Brahmins, but Buddhism still continued to be widely practised and even encouraged, in some cases by the Brahmin rulers themselves. Much of the administration and provincial government (especially in the province of Tūān, where Mani received much of his Buddhist ideas) remained in the hands of the Buddhist priesthood, known as *Samanis* (a word meaning "Buddhist priest", from the same Sanscrit root that English gets its word "Shaman"). Early Islamic accounts of the conquest of Sind also refer to temples again called Nau Bahār, while one of the provinces of Sind, next to Tūrān, was called Budhiya or

Budhpūr after the Buddhists. In many cases, the Arab invaders were met with peaceful overtures and requests for terms on religious grounds, with opposition mainly from the more warlike Brahmins. The governor of Budhiya even claimed that Islamic victory was inevitable and had been predicted in the “books of the Buddh”. The Arabs themselves reciprocated by honouring the Buddhist priesthood and reinstating them in their traditional positions³⁵. Buddhism thus continued and coexisted after the Islamic conquest, with the contact between the two religions becoming well established.

There is also evidence that the Buddhism of Sind was very outgoing: it had strong mercantile connections all over western and south-western Asia, both before and after the Arab conquest. Many of these trade connections were with the Gulf, which tie in very well with the possible Buddhist communities there reviewed above. The Arab conquests would have reinforced such western contacts. In Buddhist Sind therefore, we have one of the most likely routes by which Buddhist influences travelled west, for only in this case do we have the combination of prominent Buddhism, direct and permanent western contact, and major trade connections not subject to the political vicissitudes of land routes.

7. The Mongols

The only time that Buddhism actually spread west in the political sense was with the Mongol conquest in the 13th century. Iran was conquered in 1218–20 by Chinghiz Khan, and in 1256 his grandson Hülagü Khān founded a Mongol dynasty in the Middle East known as the Īlkhāns. Hülagü was almost certainly a Buddhist when he founded this dynasty, centred on north-western Iran, as was his successor Arghūn Khān, during whose reign Buddhism was actively encouraged in the Middle East. It was repressed however, in 1295 when Arghūn's successor, Ghazan Khān, converted from Buddhism to Islam, and eventually disappeared altogether from the Ilkhanid Empire³⁶. This gives a total of almost forty years for Buddhism in the Middle East, which although relatively brief, was at least the official court religion enjoying the privileged imperial patronage—enthusiastically under Arghūn—of a particularly powerful dynasty. Accordingly, contemporary accounts mention many Buddhist temples (the word used is *butkhāneh*, which we have already encountered on the Gulf) being built in Iran: Hülagü's temples at Khoy and Maragheh, Arghūn's temple at Tabriz, and Ghazan's temples in Khorasan³⁷, while other accounts mention the presence of Buddhist teachers and learned men in Turkey³⁸. With Ghazan's conversion however, all temples and monasteries were ordered to be either destroyed or converted into mosques.

Buddhist remains in the Middle East

We have seen therefore, that the theoretical requirements for Buddhist remains exist in Middle East. Against this background, there are a number of rather enigmatic monuments in Iran that deserve examination. The first two lie on or near the Gulf, and are associated with the eastern trade network discussed above. The other two lie near Maragheh in Azerbaijan, the first capital of the Ulkhanid Empire.

1. Chehelkhāneh and Haidari

Not far from each other on the Gulf are two very unusual rock-cut complexes: the caves of Chehelkhaneh (Pl. IIa), about 70 km inland from Bushehr, and the caves of Haidari (Pl. IIb), a short way inland further south of Bushehr. The tendency for Buddhists everywhere in antiquity—from Ajanta to Bamiyan to Tun Huang—to cut their places of worship from the rock is well known, and has almost become as much a definitive feature of Buddhist architecture as the ubiquitous stupa. Thus, in both cave complexes here, there are many features, such as the shapes, layout and arrangements of the rooms, that resemble known Buddhist cave complexes elsewhere. The large elliptical niches cut into the cliff faces at both

Chehelkhaneh and Haidari for example, are another such feature that occurs frequently in Buddhist cave architecture, where they traditionally frame a seated statue of Buddha. Haidari in addition contains a ritual circumambulatory in its main chamber, which is an essential feature of Buddhist monastic complexes elsewhere, usually surrounding a stupa but also a Buddha image or similar object of worship³⁹.

That both sets of caves were religious—and furthermore, monastic—there can be little doubt in the absence of alternative domestic, industrial or military explanations for them. With the absence of any direct epigraphical or iconographical evidence in the caves themselves, identifying them with the Buddhists in a traditionally non-Buddhist part of the world must of course be very tentative. But a Buddhist identification is nonetheless very attractive, and best fits both the architectural features of the caves themselves and the theoretical requirements of the background of Buddhist trading connections reviewed above. Chehelkhaneh in fact lies adjacent to the remains of the important medieval trading entrepôt of Tawwaz, that reached its peak between the 7th and 10th centuries⁴⁰. It is additionally associated with a village of the name of Barmak, as we have seen above when discussing the Barmakids. These puzzling cave complexes therefore, may well mark small Buddhist monastic communities that grew up to serve the Indian traders along the Gulf.

2. Rasatkhaneh and Varjuvi

The first capital of the Mongols in the Middle East was at Maragheh, in north-western Iran not far from the present Turkish border. It is here, if anywhere, that one would most expect to find Mongol Buddhist remains. Today, there is little left in Maragheh itself of the old Mongol capital, but nearby there are two very puzzling monuments, probably of the Mongol period, that bear examination. The first is the cave complex of Rasatkhaneh (Pl. IIIa) in the side of a hill overlooking Maragheh; the second is another set of caves at Varjuvi (Pl. IIIb), a small village 6 km further south. Both are cut entirely from the rock, but neither fit into any known pattern of Islamic architectural history. These caves do however, bear a close resemblance to many Buddhist rock-cut monuments in Central Asia, from whence the Mongols came. The tendency for Buddhists to cut their religious monuments from the rock has been noted above, and nowhere was this more prevalent than in Central Asia. It would hardly be surprising therefore, for the Mongols to bring such traditions with them to Azerbaijan. Accordingly, both sets of caves have ritual circumambulatories which we have already recognized as essential features of Buddhist worship, while the Varjuvi caves have some illegible remains of frescos, which again is consistent with Buddhist cave architecture. Other features confirm this, but these are the main ones. Ghazan's conversion to Islam and his subsequent order for the destruction of all temples is very much in evidence at both sets of caves: both have *mih.rabs* roughly inserted into them as secondary features. In addition, at Varjuvi several Koranic inscriptions were carved onto the walls, and the frescos—inconsistent with Islam—were carefully chiselled away. Both features were done at the same time that the *mih.rab* was inserted. The caves therefore, must surely have been some of the Buddhist temples that Ghazan ordered to be converted⁴¹.

Once again, direct epigraphical or iconographical evidence for Buddhism eludes us in these caves. But against the background of Mongol Buddhism, similarities with known Buddhist architecture, and the secondary nature of the Islamic features, Buddhism is by far the most plausible explanation. As such, these caves represent the westernmost monuments of Buddhism in antiquity.

Conclusion

Speculation has always existed on the possibility of Buddhism spreading westwards in antiquity. On the one hand, we have many very tantalizing tidbits of information: an unusual placename here, an unexplained

monument there, evidence for unusual religious occurrences elsewhere. But on the other hand, we have no concrete, irrefutable evidence on the ground further west than Afghanistan: no inscriptions, no stupas, no Buddha statues. It is important however, to remember that the initial outward drive of Buddhism was towards the *west*, not the east. It can only surely be a matter of time therefore, before archaeological remains are discovered in the Near East to give us the definite evidence we need for this westward drive of Buddhism.

NOTES

1. The term "western" is here used in its broadest sense, from an "eastern" standpoint, to include the Middle East and Hellenistic world, as well as Europe.
2. Dupont-Sommer, 1970, discusses a possible connection between the Essenes and a Buddhist inscription discovered in eastern Afghanistan.
3. See O'Leary, 1949: p. 130, Hitti, 1970: pp. 433–4 and Jones, 1978, for discussions on the Buddhist connections with the life of Ibrāhīm ibn Ādham.
4. See Ahmad, 1969: pp. 40–42 for a discussion of the Naqshbandis.
5. See Hodgson *et alii*, 1965, for a history of the Druze.
6. The story is discussed in Lang 1965 and Gimaret, 1970: pp. 282–7. On the derivation of *budasal* from *bodhisattva*, see Bailey, 1931.
7. This is discussed more fully by O'Leary, 1949: 96–130.
8. The Buddhist influence on Persian and Arab art and architecture is discussed by Gimaret, 1970: pp. 274–82 and Melikian-Chirvani 1975.
9. This is discussed by Bussagli, 1953. Such influences are widely recognized by Japanese scholars; see Motamedi, 1975 and 1976 for summaries in English of recent Japanese work on the Buddhist art of Central Asia.
10. This is discussed in full by Melikian-Chirvani, 1974.
11. Translations of their works are published by Sachau, 1888, Jaubert, 1836–40 and Defremery & Sanguientti, 1853–8.
12. Translation by O'Leary, 1949: p. 123. See also Bloch, 1950: p. 130.
13. These are summarized by Warmington, 1928: pp. 35–40, and Wheeler, 1955: pp. 161–2.
14. Fraser, 1972: p. 81, n. 391 discusses this gravestone and other evidence for Indians at Alexandria.
15. See Schlumberger *et al.*, 1958. The Buddhist associations and origins of the name "Kandahar" are fully discussed in Ball, 1988.
16. Translated by Brunner, 1974: pp. 105–6.
17. Translated by Sachau, 1888: vol. 2, p. 21.
18. See Le Strange, 1905: p. 87.
19. Such activities are discussed by Warmington, 1928, Wheeler, 1955, Whitehouse & Williamson, 1973 and Hourani, 1951.
20. Huntingford, 1980: pp. 33, 38 & 40.
21. Hourani, 1951: p. 22.
22. They remained so until the conversion to Islam in 1135. See Reynolds, 1975.
23. This toponymic evidence is discussed more fully in Ball, 1986: pp. 106–7.
24. Ghirshman, 1959.
25. Pelliot, 1929.
26. Tabari, tr. Noldeke, 1879: p. 108, n. 1. See also Herrmann, 1976, p. 122.
27. The diffusion of Manichaeism is discussed by Sundermann, 1986.
28. The Afghan origin and diffusion of such Buddhist ideas are discussed by Combaz, 1935, Coomaraswamy, 1926–27, Gaulier *et alii*, 1976, Hallade, 1968 and Motamedi, 1977.
29. The Buddhist origins of the Barmakid family are discussed by Bouvat, 1912, Sourdel, 1960, and Bulliet, 1976.
30. Bailey, 1943: p. 2.
31. See Bulliet, 1976.
32. Sourdel, 1965.
33. Sundermann, 1986: p. 13.
34. Hitti, 1970: p. 212.
35. The story of the Arab conquest of Sind and the contact with Buddhism survives in an early document, the *Chachnama*, translated by Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, 1900. See also Lambrick, 1973.
36. Bausani, 1968.
37. Wilber, 1938: p. 15.
38. See Esin, 1972: p. 67.

39. These caves have been fully published in Ball & Whitehouse, 1976, Ball, 1976: pp. 104–127 and Ball, 1986.
40. Le Strange, 1905: pp. 259–60.
41. These caves have been fully published in Ball, 1976: pp. 127–143 and Ball, 1979.

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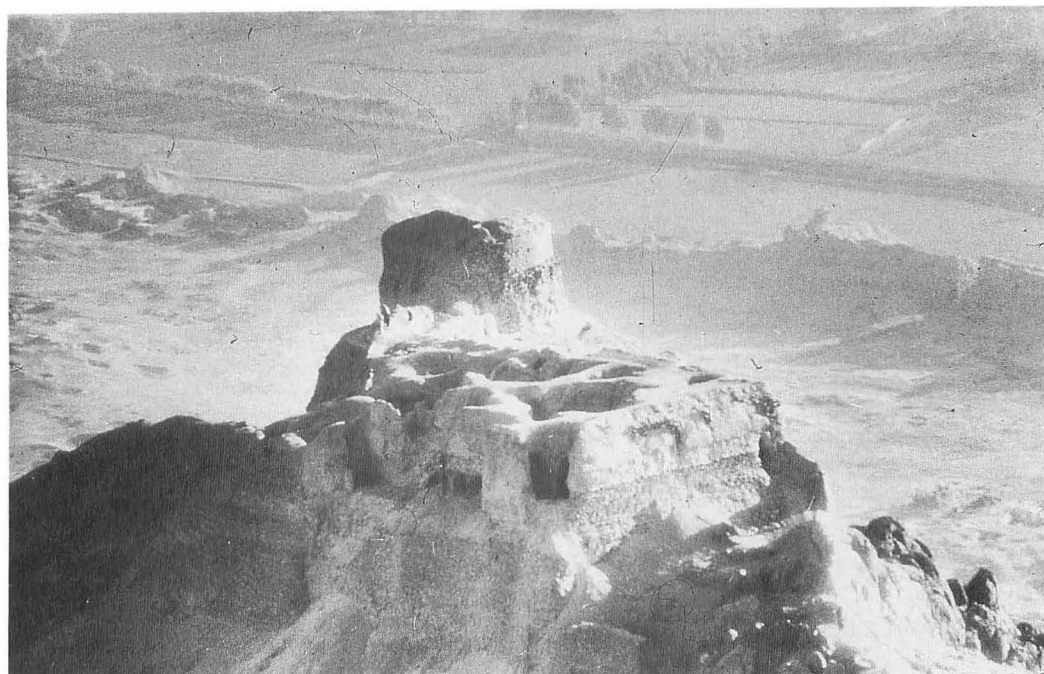
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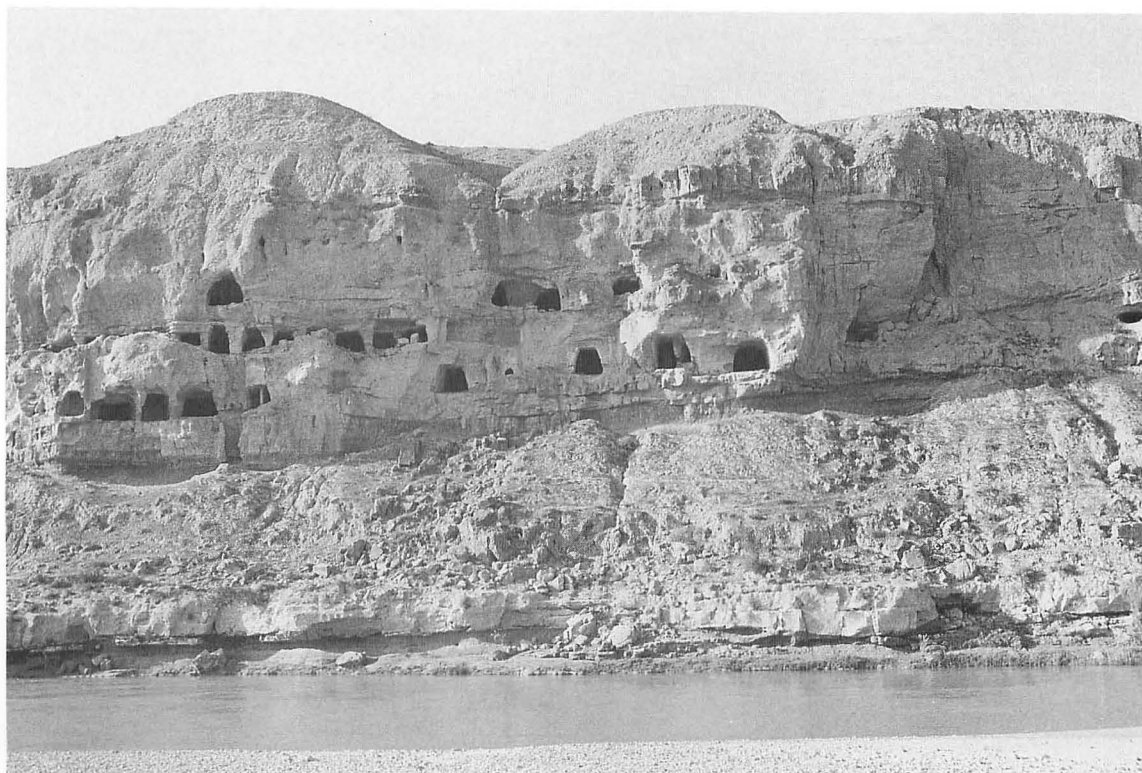
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a. The Buddhist stupa and site at Kandahar



b. The colossal Buddha statue at Bamiyan



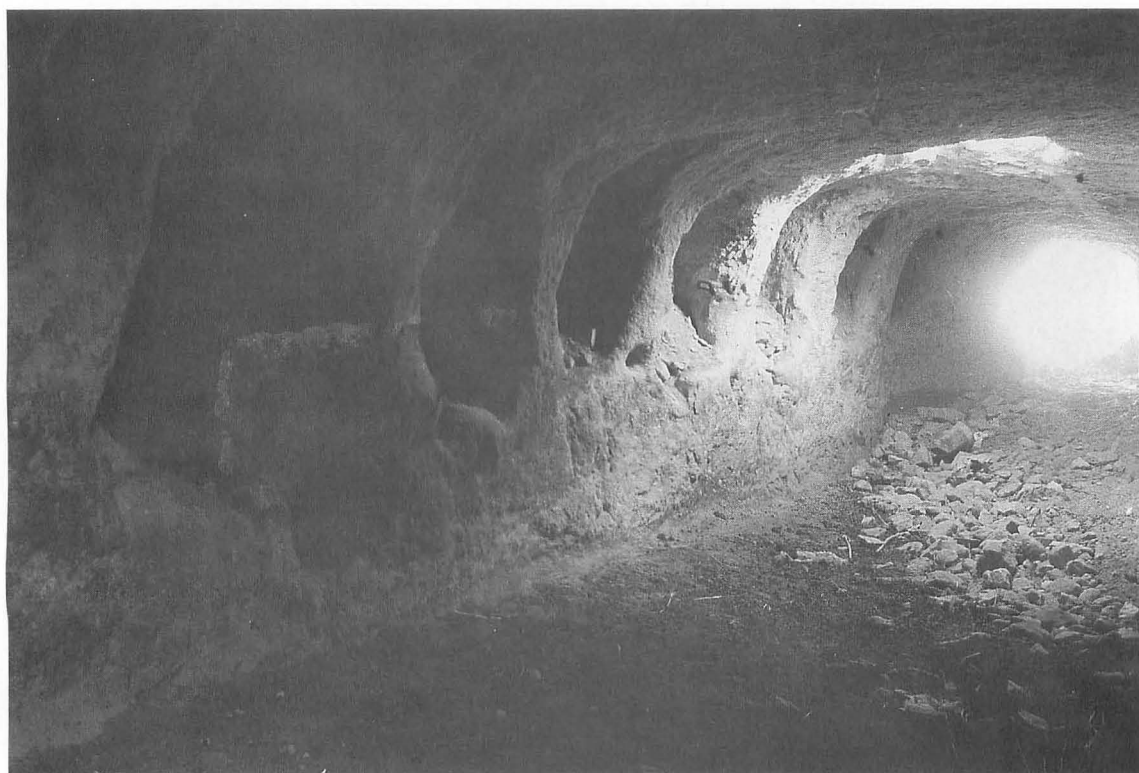
a. The Chehelkhaneh caves near Bushire.
Note the large elliptical cave at the top left, which may have been for a seated Buddha statue.



b. The Haidari caves near Bushire.
Note again the large elliptical niche and platform.



a. An interior of one of the Rasatkhaneh caves of Maragheh.
The platform in the centre may have been for ritual circumambulations. The opening at the lower right leads to further chambers.



b. Interior of one of the caves at Varijovi near Maragheh.
The line of elliptical niches may have been to take images.