

# RESEARCH TRENDS IN JAPAN ON BUDDHIST SITES IN SOUTHERN CENTRAL ASIA: FOCUSING ON THE STUDY OF BACTRIA FROM 1990 TO 2020

## INTRODUCTION

Buddhism originated in India, developed uniquely in Gandhara, split east and west across the Pamir Plateau, reached Central Asia, was absorbed by Chinese dynasties and spread to the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago. Clarifying how Buddhism spread in Central Asia is important not only for Buddhist history but also for Eurasian history.

One of the best-known Japanese excavations in West and Central Asia was conducted by the Kyoto University research team, which began work in the late 1950s and covered several sites in Afghanistan and western Pakistan, including the Bamiyan caves. Their activities were halted in 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, but in 1983, the Kyoto University team moved their research sites to Pakistan and resumed their activities. In Afghanistan, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the civil war and the 2001 demolition of the Great Buddha in Bamiyan by the Taliban regime made it impossible to continue the field research. In 2002, after the fall of the Taliban, the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo, and other institutions resumed research at the Bamiyan site, and the 2016 exhibition on Afghan archaeology held in Japan showed the con-

tribution that Japan has made to the preservation of Afghan cultural heritage [Kyūshū Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, and Sankei Shinbunsha 2016]. However, with the return of the Taliban regime on August 15, 2021, the future of research and protection activities for cultural properties again became uncertain.

Meanwhile, to the north, in 1989, Katō Kyūzō 加藤九祚, on behalf of Soka University, signed an agreement with the Hamza Memorial Institute of Arts in Uzbekistan to excavate the site of Dalverzin-tepe in southern Uzbekistan. This was the first case of Japanese excavation and research activities in any of the five Central Asian republics (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which all gained independence in 1991).

This paper focuses on the history of research on Buddhist sites and artifacts in southern Central Asia (Uzbekistan, southern Tajikistan, northern Afghanistan, and western Turkmenistan), also known as the Bactria region, from 1990 to around 2020, mainly by Japanese. However, the influence of Gandhara's Buddhist culture on Central Asia cannot be ignored. This paper covers Buddhist monuments in southern Central Asia but also mentions their relationship with the surrounding areas. The focus in this paper is on Japanese-language studies.

## 1. RESEARCH ON BUDDHIST SITES IN BACTRIA

“Bactria” is a name that refers to the region around Bactra (Balkh), where the Greco-Bactrian capital was located in the third century BCE. The great river the Amu Darya flows from the east to the west of the center of this region. To the east rises the Pamir Plateau, with its 5000-meter-high mountain. To the north, the Hissar (Gissar) Mountains, which are connected to the Pamirs, extend east to west, and beyond that, the Bison Tau and Kugitang Mountains form the boundary with Sogdiana. To the south, the southern banks of the Amu Darya look toward the Hindu Kush Mountains. Greco-Bactria, the origin of the name “Bactria,” is said to have been destroyed by the invasion of Tokhara (also known as Daxia 大夏), and thus this area is sometimes called Tokharistan.

### 1.1. Research in Afghanistan and Buddhist Sites in Bactria until the 1970s

The major archaeological surveys on the southern banks of the Amu Darya and in Afghanistan were conducted by a French survey team. The French team was granted a monopoly on the survey of archaeological sites in Af-

ghanistan from 1932 to 1952 and excavated many sites of the Greco-Bactrian and Kushan periods, such as Ai-Khanoum, Surkh Kotal, and Begram. The French team also conducted a survey in Balkh, where they confirmed the remains of, among other things, a stupa, Tepe-i Rustam. They also started a survey of the Bamiyan caves.

In 1959, the Kyoto University team, led by Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一, began excavations at several sites in Iran, eastern Afghanistan, and western Pakistan. The Kyoto University team focused on surveying Buddhist sites and eventually included the Bamiyan caves in its survey. At the same time, teams from Nagoya University and Seijo University also conducted research activities in Bamiyan. However, these activities were halted in 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The Kyoto University team has published a number of excavation reports, the most recent of which is a report on the Ranigat site in Gandhara [Nishikawa 2011]. An overview of the early activities and findings can be found in Mizuno [1962b], and an overview of the later activities and findings can be found in Higuchi [2003] and Inaba [2007].

On the other hand, the survey of Buddhist sites north of the Amu Darya had been the sole domain of Soviet scholars since the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union started it in the 1920s. In the 1960s, Kayama Yōhei 香山陽坪 energetically introduced the results of Soviet archaeology of Central Asia to Japan, and some of these results were from northern Central Asia [Kayama 1966, 1968]. Higuchi Takayasu 樋口隆康 wrote [1969] of his experiences of excavating Buddhist sites in the north of the Hindu Kush Mountains with the Kyoto University team [Mizuno 1962a, 1970] and visiting Kushan art and Buddhist sites in Tajikistan. Higuchi noted that the carvings and pillar ornaments from the Surkh Kotal, the head of the Buddha statue from the Chaqalaq-tepe, and the relief of the Buddha's biography from Kunduz were made of the same type of limestone and that they had common features that differed from those of Gandhara. He collectively called them the "Oxus School," distinguished them from the characteristics of sculptures and architectural styles around Gandhara, and indicated the importance of exploring the origin of the Oxus School. At this time, Katō Kyūzō was very interested in Siberia, but by the end of the 1960s, his interest shifted to Eurasia as a whole, including Central Asia. Katō's distinctive approach led him not only to translate Soviet scholar's articles but also to visit the Soviet Union and interview the authors in person (see, for example, Katō Kyūzō [1973, 2002] and Rtveladze [2011]).

## 1.2. Survey and Research on the Dalverzin-tepe in Shurchi, Southern Uzbekistan

Katō was a professor at the National Museum of Ethnology from 1975 to 1986, and in 1988, he became a professor at Soka University. In the same year, on the occasion of the Nara Silk Road Exposition, Katō proposed to Bahodir Turgunov of the Hamza Memorial Institute of Arts a joint excavation of the Dalverzin-tepe site in southern Uzbekistan. In 1989, a six-year joint research agreement was signed between Soka University and the Hamza Memorial Institute of Arts. Researchers from the Archaeological Institute of Kashihara also cooperated in this excavation. Before this, the site of Dalverzin-tepe had been excavated by Galina Pugachenkova and others in 1962, 1967, and 1972. In 1967, the site of a Buddhist temple (compartment DT-1) was excavated outside the city walls.

Soka University excavated compartment DT-25 facing the main street of Shahrستان at the Dalverzin-tepe site in Shurchi, southern Uzbekistan. This compartment (called the second Buddhist temple) was excavated by Pugachenkova between 1983 and 1988, and many Buddhist artifacts were excavated. The unearthed statues show a Bactrian style that is somewhat different from that of Gandhara; a color illustration was published in the Soka University report [Pugachenkova, Rtveladze, and Katō K. 1991]. In the final report [Sōka Daigaku Shirukurōdo Gakujutsu Chōsadan 1996], the author, Koyama Mitsuru 小山満, concluded that the Buddhist temple site at DT-1 reached its peak in the third to fifth centuries, and that the second Buddhist temple site at DT-25 reached its peak in the fourth century. However, Pugachenkova, the representative of the Uzbek side, objected, maintaining that DT-1 was built in the second century. Katō Kyūzō [1997] compiled research on Buddhist monuments north of Afghanistan, reflecting the experience of such excavations and the translation of the works of Soviet scholars and even interaction with them.

This excavation of Dalverzin-tepe was followed by the activities of the Ancient Orient Museum and Kanazawa University (1996–2000) led by Tanabe Katsumi 田辺勝美 [Tanabe et al. 1997; Tanabe et al. 2000; Tsumura 2007]. The lowermost layer was from the Greco-Bactrian period, and the uppermost layer was from the sixth to eighth centuries. Reportedly, an official report is being prepared. Kawasaki Kenzō 川崎建三 speculated that the square platform excavated at the site, which was 8 cm high and 13 cm on a side, was a model of a small stupa and discussed it as a legacy of local religious practice [Kawasaki 2007].

Excavations of Soka University resumed in 2006–2007, and the excavation of the second Buddhist temple site at DT-25 continued. An excava-

tion report was compiled [Sōka Daigaku Shirukurōdo Kenkyū Sentā 2012]. This includes a report by Turgunov on the 1983–1988 excavations.

Katō was also involved in the excavation of this site in 2016 and 2017 and reported on the excavations at DT-32 and DT-37 in Shahrīstan. An excavated coin (issued by Kushan emperor Vima Kadphises) with grasps excavated is noteworthy for the advances it represents in the minting process [Katō K. and Turgunov 2017].

### 1.3. Survey and Research on Kara-tepe and Zurmala in Termez, Southern Uzbekistan

The site of Kara-tepe, located in the suburbs of Termez City, is believed to be the remains of a Buddhist temple built in the late first to second century during the Kushan dynasty. It consists of three hills: a sandstone hill with several caves that resemble grottoes, a south and west hill with a stupa where visitors can worship, and a north hill consisting of a stupa area with a large stupa and a square monastery area with a courtyard.

Xuanzang 玄奘, who is believed to have left Chang'an 長安 (Xi'an 西安) in 629 and passed through Termez on his way to India, wrote in the article on Termez (呾蜜国) in *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* 大唐西域記: “There are more than ten temples and more than a thousand monks. Many stupas and statues of the Buddha are unique.” However, when Xuanzang passed through the vicinity of Termez, as described below, it is highly likely that Kara-tepe was almost in ruins or only partially operational.

In the 1920s, a survey of the archaeological sites around Termez was conducted, and both Kara-tepe and Zurmala were shown to be possible Buddhist sites of the Kushan period. The excavation of the southern hill, the western hill, and part of the northern hill eventually led to the conclusion that Kara-tepe was abandoned at the end of the fourth century. Six reports and several papers have been published based on that study, and the contents and results of the research from the 1930s to 1989 can be found in them. In particular, Stavisky [1996] and Zeymal [1999] are important as early reports of excavations on the northern hill, and Stavisky [2002, 2007] and Zeymal [2007] are abridged versions of those reports in Japanese.

After Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, Shakirdjan Pidaev of the Institute of Art and Katō, with the help of Japanese volunteers, unearthed a sun-dried brick monastery, and the base of a stupa more than 20 meters on a side, from the northern hill. This was a great discovery, as the monastery was built in accordance with the architecture of Gandhara and adapted to the local conditions. The results can be seen in Katō Kyūzō and

Pidaev [2002] and Pidaev [2007].

G rard Fussman, who was commissioned by Pidaev to analyze various characters on written pottery shards from Kara-tepe and the other Termez sites, provided a diagram of the site and a comprehensive discussion of the site as a whole, along with analysis of the pottery shards [Fussman 2011]. In particular, he suggested that the southern and western hills had lost their function as temples by the end of the fourth century, while the northern hill was inhabited by the monks of the Mah saṅghika until at least the first half of the seventh century. Iwai Shumpei 岩井俊平 concurred with this opinion, based on his own theory as well as his own observations [Iwai 2013]. Iwai [2017] points out that the arrangement of pottery around the stupa at Kara-tepe may reflect the customs of this region.

In 2014, Rissho University formed a research team to investigate Kara-tepe. With Kat  Ky z  as advisor and Yasuda Haruki 安田治樹 as chief, the university signed a five-year contract for joint research with the Institute of Arts of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan and began excavation. Yasuda was a member of the Seijo University team that investigated Bamiyan and was interested in Bactrian art [Yasuda 1988]. Rissho University excavated on the western side of the northern hill. Excavations and radiocarbon dating definitely support the idea that the northern hill had been extended several times by the end of the third century, but there was no clear evidence of how long the Buddhist temple was maintained.

In addition, a mural painting was discovered in Room 56, which was excavated in conjunction with this survey, and part of the painting has been presented to the public in an academic journal [Pidaev 2016]. The way the faces and eyes of the human figures in the murals were drawn showed influences from West Asia and Greece or Rome. Moreover, the mural paintings are more similar to those found at the Temple III and V sites in Miran 米蘭 of Xinjiang 新疆. These stupas at the Miran Buddhist temple site, like the small stupas discovered at Termez, were built before Buddha statue worship became mainstream. They share similarities not only in shape and height but also in material; they are made of mudbricks, unlike the structures at Gandhara. The details are presented in the Rissho University report [Rissh  Daigaku Uzubekisutan Gakujutsu Ch satai 2020]. Pidaev, who was a partner in this excavation, has published separate papers [Pidaev 2019, 2020].

Rissho University, together with Termez State University and the Termez Archaeological Museum, also began research on the Zurmala stupa, which is believed to have been built during the Kushan period in 2016. The Zurmala stupa is located about two kilometers away from Kara-tepe, and the Zurmala stupa and Kara-tepe complex surrounded the ancient city of

Termez.

Rissho University investigated the degree of deterioration of the mud-brick towers by comparing current conditions with old photographs and installing weather observation equipment [Risshō Daigaku Uzubekisutan Gakujutsu Chōsatai 2017]. Drone photography also revealed that the towers were irreparably damaged [Iwamoto and Konno 2019]. The excavations conducted in 2018 and 2019 also unearthed dozens of coins, including those of the Kanishka I period, in the exploratory pits around the tower. Additionally, they confirmed that the ground on which the tower was built was two meters below the current ground surface. The excavated coins and the carbides appear to date back to the second century, which suggests that the Zurmala stupa was built around the time of Kanishka I or later. However, the Zurmala stupa is more than 10 meters higher than other stupas of the same period in the vicinity, so it is possible that the stupa was enlarged and reconstructed. Further investigation of the base of the stupa and its surroundings is necessary. Details were published in the interim report [Risshō Daigaku Uzubekisutan Gakujutsu Chōsatai 2021].

#### 1.4. Survey and Research on Fayaz-tepe in Termez, Southern Uzbekistan

Fayaz-tepe is located about 300 meters north of Kara-tepe. The Buddhist site of Termez, and Kara-tepe and Zurmala, were confirmed to exist by the Russian State Museum of Oriental Art in the 1920s. The excavation and survey of Fayaz-tepe was conducted by Lazar Al'baum from 1968 to 1976. It revealed a limestone triad of Buddhas, colored wall paintings, and a stupa with a dharma wheel painted on its surface. Al'baum died without writing a final report, but he attributed the temple's demise to the destruction of Sasanian Persia in the late third century. The ruins were protected and restored by the UNESCO Japan Trust Fund. Katō Kyūzō [1997] introduces this history.

The previously mentioned paper by Fussman [2011] is an analysis of the written pottery shards from Termez, which includes Fayaz-tepe as an archaeological site. Based on the coins found and the latest pottery sherd inscriptions, Fussman deduced that the site was inhabited by Mahāsaṅghika monks from 50 to 400 CE. After summarizing Al'baum's views on Fayaz-tepe, Tigran Mkrtychev, concurring with Fussman's view above [Mkrtychev 2016], places the construction of the early stupas in the late first or early second century. Although the monasteries began to decline after the rule of Kushano Sasan, they were inhabited by monks until the mid-fifth century.

Kageyama Etsuko 影山悦子, Marina Reutova, and Kazim Abdullaev



restored several fragments of wall paintings excavated from Room 8, Section B of Fayaz-tepe and stored in the Archaeological Institute of Samarkand [Kageyama, Reutova, and Abdullaev 2021]. First, after summarizing the previous studies mentioned above, Kageyama described the figures depicted in the murals of Room 8, Section B, particularly their positions and the dates of their production. In doing so, she introduced Kawasaki's [1999] study, which discussed the subject matter of some of the murals, and Ciro Lo Muzio's [2012] study, which examined in detail the contents of the murals, including the headdress of a ram worn by a woman standing behind the Buddha. In addition, she disproved Lo Muzio's assertion that the mural painting has characteristics of the late fourth century. She estimated the date of the mural painting based on Yoshida Yutaka's 吉田豊 view that the characteristics of the Bactrian script on the mural painting bear similarities to those of the late third century.

### 1.5. Survey and Research on Buddhist Sites in Tajikistan

First, I introduce Ajina-tepe, which is located in southern Tajikistan, 12 kilometers southeast of the city of Kurgan-Tyube, in the basin of the Vakhsh River. This site was excavated by Boris Litvinsky and Tamara Zeymal between 1960 and 1975. Based on the analysis of excavated coins and the stupa with a flat cross-shaped platform (said to have appeared in the late sixth century or later), it was estimated to have been founded in the seventh or eighth century. A part of the huge reclining statue of the Buddha preparing to enter nirvana was discovered. The ruins were protected and restored by the UNESCO Japan Trust Fund. Technical considerations for conservation are given in Fujii, Watanabe, and Murakami [2007], and a report from an archaeological perspective is given in Yamauchi [2011a], headed by Yamauchi Kazuya 山内和也.

Next, I introduce the castle ruins of Kalai Kafirnigan, located about 80 kilometers southwest of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. It is located near the border with Uzbekistan on the east bank of the Kafirnigan River, a tributary of the Amu Darya. This site was surveyed by Litvinsky in 1974, and in addition to the citadel, shahristan, and rabat, the ruins of a Buddhist temple dating to the seventh or eighth century were found. As a result of the excavation, it is thought that the temple was built in three phases between the fifth and eighth centuries and that its corridors were covered with wall paintings. A well-known part of the mural paintings features several figures of worshippers holding flowers in front of a red-painted background.

Hasuike Toshitaka 蓮池利隆 discusses the current hypotheses regard-



ing excavated artifacts [Hasuike 2008]. Hasuike's report [2009] covered the joint excavations (including preliminary investigations) conducted in 2006–2008 under an agreement with the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences. It states that a small terracotta mold of a Buddha statue, a Mithra statue, and the foot of a Buddha statue were excavated, showing the state of religious belief in this region.

### 1.6. A Comprehensive Study of Buddhist Sites in Bactria

The above is a brief description of the Buddhist sites in Bactria, based mainly on the excavations of several Japanese research teams and individual studies. The sites can be roughly divided into those from the first to fourth centuries and those from the fifth to eighth centuries. All of the Japanese studies are in close agreement with the archaeological findings and views coming from France and the Soviet Union.

The “Oxus School” proposed by Higuchi [1969] is one such view, which is influenced by the ideas of Daniel Schlumberger and others. It is true that sites such as Ai-hanoum and Takht-i Sangin\* have been discovered along the banks of the Amu Darya of the Bactria region and that the Greco-Bactrian culture or its traditions were inherited by these sites. However, Miyaji Akira 宮治昭, though conceding that the “Oxus School” has different characteristics from Gandhara, states that most of the compositions of Buddhist biographies are derived from Gandhara iconography [Miyaji 2016]. The importance of the route connecting Gandhara and Central Asia via Swat–Chitral during this period is described by Kuwayama Shōshin 桑山正進 [1985, 1990, 2002].

Iwai [2013] discussed the Buddhist monuments in Bactria from a bird's-eye view, based on the state of research up to at least 2012. Iwai argued that the decline of Buddhist sites in Bactria cannot be linked to the period of nomadic invasions and social changes from ancient to medieval times, as previous studies have concluded. One of Iwai's arguments concerns the chronology of pottery. Iwai formally classified pottery excavated from sites in the northern and southern regions of Bactria and created a pottery chronology by relating the excavated stratigraphic layers. Since there is no correlation between the period of nomadic invasions in the region and the period of the pottery chronology, Iwai questioned the dating methods used in previous studies that linked the destruction of archaeological sites to the invasion of nomads [Iwai 2003, 2004]. Iwai argued that the decline of Buddhist monuments in Bactria in the latter half of the fourth century was due to Sasanian King Shapur II's conquest of lands to the east and the expansion of Kidara and Hephthalite, which severed the relation-

ship between Bactria and Gandhara. The eastern expedition of Shapur II and the advance of Kidara and Hephthalite extended to the south of the Hindu Kush Mountains [Inaba 2013], and Kidara's influence is thought to have extended to Chitral and Swat [Alram 2017].

## 2. BUDDHIST SITES AROUND BACTRIA AND THE CURRENT STATE OF KANISHKA CHRONOLOGY

### 2.1. Relationship to Bamiyan Research and Studies

How did the distinctive styles of the Buddhist sites and artifacts found in Bactria develop in relation to the surrounding region? In this regard, the position of Bamiyan, a Buddhist site in the Hindu Kush Mountains, in the spread of Buddhism is of interest. There used to be a theory that the Bamiyan site dates back to the reign of Kanishka I, but it is now agreed that both the caves and the wall paintings were created in the fifth century or later and that the sixth and seventh centuries were the peak period for the site [Yamauchi 2011b].

In the past, Kuwayama [1985] found similarities in the positional relationship between the statues of Tepe Sardar, which was excavated in the Ghazni region by an Italian team, and the huge reclining statue of the Buddha preparing to enter nirvana found in Ajina-tepe in Tajikistan (estimated length: 15 meters and 13 meters, respectively). Kuwayama suggested that the “reclining statue of the Buddha in the [eastern] temple” in Bamiyan recorded by Xuanzang may be the same.

Subsequent excavations have identified the location of Bamiyan's reclining statue (15 meters long) and the temple complex. According to Zemaialai Tarzi's excavation report, the location of the reclining statue matched the suggestion in Kuwayama [1985] [Tarzi 2017]. In addition, a consecrated small stupa with a cross-shaped staircase of the same type excavated at Tepe Sardar and Ajina-tepe has been found in the eastern complex of Bamiyan, and it can be assumed that there was interaction between the three sites. Iwai [2006] agrees with Kuwayama and says, “According to Xuanzang's description, the entire region from Gandhara to Kapisi was subordinate to Kapisi, and Hinduism and other religions were very popular along with Buddhism.” In the sixth to eighth centuries, there was an exchange between the north and the south across the Hindu Kush Mountains, centered in Kapisi. Japanese research has revealed many Buddhist sites in Bamiyan. These have been extensively covered by many previous papers, so here I will not refer to them further.

## 2.2. Survey of Buddhist Sites West of Bamiyan: Did Buddhism in Bactria Spread Westward?

One of the best-known Buddhist sites west of Bamiyan is the site of the Buddhist monastery at Gyaur-kala in Merv (Mary), on the lower reaches of the Murghab River. The site, which consists of a stupa and a monastery, was surveyed by Pugachenkova and Zamira Usmanova in 1994 and was introduced in detail in Japan by Katō Kyūzō [1997]. The site of the temple was located southeast of the capital city of Gyaur-kala, and excavations indicated that the temple reached its peak between the fourth and sixth centuries and that the stupa was buried in the late sixth century. The site of the Buddhist temple at Gyaur-kala is constructed of mudbricks and clay blocks, and the shape of the stupa is said to have similarities with that of the Fayaz-tepe. Pugachenkova pointed out the possibility that Buddhism in this area was introduced from “Tokharistan” (she used the term to refer to Bactria). Katō Kyūzō [1997] also reported that the remains of a stupa, which must have been over 10 meters high when the site was at its peak, were discovered outside the city walls and that a birch bark document containing extracts from Buddhist scriptures was found there.

Irisawa Takashi 入澤崇 reports on a survey of temple sites with stupas and other Buddhist grottoes located in Keligan on the upper reaches of the Band-e Amir River, 150 kilometers west of Bamiyan. A Bactrian inscription discovered in 2003 in a village 25 kilometers south of the Buddhist temple site in Keligan records that a stupa was built by a local lord in the first half of the eighth century, which confirms the existence of the site. It also shows that Buddhist beliefs existed side by side, even in the area where Islam had already penetrated [Irisawa 2007].

Irisawa [2008] wrote a report on the investigation of the Yeki Deshik caves near Tagtabazar in the upper reaches of the Murghab River (now in Turkmenistan), based on the survey records of the Afghanistan Border Commission in the nineteenth century. He found structural features similar to those of the Bamiyan caves and the surrounding grottoes and found a path for the spread of Buddhism along the riverside road from the Band-e Amir River to the Murghab River.

As Irisawa states, it is unknown when many of the Buddhist monuments along the riverside path from the Band-e Amir to the Murghab River were constructed, and it cannot be said with certainty that Merv Buddhism followed that path, but the development of Buddhism to the west is also not monolithic, and multiple routes can be assumed.

### 2.3. The Lineage and Chronology of the Kushan Dynasty

The history of the Kushan dynasty was revealed in part through the collection of excavated coins, the deciphering of stone carvings in Bactrian script, and records of Chinese characters. In Japan, a modified version of Roman Ghirshman's theory, such as that presented by Odani Nakao 小谷仲男, has become a widely accepted interpretation [Odani 2010], but no conclusive evidence has been found as to what year of the Christian era corresponds to the first year of the Kanishka era, which is presumed to be the year of Kanishka I's accession to the throne.

In recent years, a new chronology of the Kushan dynasty, proposed by Harry Falk, has gained wide acceptance. Falk noted that the historical documents show a contrast between the Kushan year and the Saka year used in India at that time. Based on this, he estimated the beginning of the Kanishka era to be 127 CE [Falk 2001, 2015]. The new theory dates the reign before Vasudeva I seven to 20 years earlier than the previous version, which was a modified version of the Ghirshman theory.

By contrast, Kuwayama [2017] questioned the interpretation of previous studies that the title of Kushan yabgu 貴霜翁侯 (Guishuang xihou), from which the Kushan dynasty originated, was given by the Yue-zhi 大月氏 (Da Yuezhi), pointing out that "yabgu" 翁侯 was a title given by the nomadic regime to the ruler of a castle and originated in Tokhara (Daxia). He also stated that the traditional interpretation of the territory of the Yue-zhi as that of the five lords 五部翁侯 was inappropriate and that the territory of the five lords was merely the former territory of the Tokhara.

He also estimated the migration of the Yue-zhi to the upper reaches of the Amu Darya to have taken place around 136 or 135 BCE and that it was around 36 or 35 BCE, about 100 years later, that 丘就卻 (Qiujiu Que: Kujura Kadphises) became the king of Kushan dynasty from Kushan yabgu. Based on the fact that the title "yabgu" is found in the Dunhuang Xuanquanzhi 敦煌懸泉置 wooden slips until 37 BCE, he estimated that Kujura Kadphises became independent around 36 BCE. Furthermore, the Hou Han shu 後漢書 states that "Qiujiu Que died at the age of more than 80 and was replaced by his son 閻膏珍" (Yan Gaozhen: Vima Kadphises). However, this would be incompatible with the interpretation that Kanishka I was three generations after Kujura Kadphises, as indicated by the Rabatak inscription, and the theory that Kanishka I ascended the throne in the second century. Therefore, Kuwayama supported one of the conventional theories, namely, that Kanishka I assumed the throne in the year 78.

When Kanishka ruled is an issue that needs further consideration.

## CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on the study in Japan of Buddhist sites in Bactria from 1990 to 2020. It also touched on the processes since the 1970s that gave rise to this trend. Tanabe and Maeda [1999] and Miyaji [2016, 2017: 3–53] attempted to build a comprehensive view of this region based on archaeological sites and unearthed artifacts. In addition to the Buddhist temples in western Turkestan, Iwai [2019] and Nakamura [2017], which touched on the composition of Buddhist temples in eastern Turkestan, are also examples of such macroscopic attempts.

In addition, new research and excavations have been conducted on the chronology of the Gandhara stupas, statues, and monuments. For example, we reconsidered the chronology of sculptures and clay statues excavated in northwestern India [Naiki 2016] and conducted a close examination of the base of a stupa in Greater Gandhara [Katō N., Yatani, and Masui 2017]. In addition, there is a report on the excavation of the Zar Dheri site, where many relief sculptures were unearthed [Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan Pakisutan Chōsatai 2011]. Odani [2020] describes in detail how the Kyoto University team inferred the date of production from the artifacts and architecture they examined during their survey of Buddhist sites in Gandhara.

Research is underway on written materials from Bactria and surrounding areas. Yoshida [2010] outlines the spread of Iranian script and Buddhism to Eurasia, and Matsuda [2010] outlines the Buddhist manuscripts discovered after 1996 that were written on shell leaves and birch bark in the Kharosthi and Brāhmī scripts, especially the Skøyen collection. In addition, Yoshida [2013] presents a research perspective on Bactrian materials, and Miyamoto [2018a, 2018b] uses Bactrian documents, revealed in their entirety by Nicholas Sims-Williams, for historical research on the Kushan dynasty.

The chronology of the Buddhist sites in Bactria is closely related to the chronology of the Kushan dynasty, which is still a mystery. To solve it, we will need to compare each site with other sites and artifacts in the surrounding area.

## NOTE

- \* The Takht-i Sangin site was surveyed from 1976 to 1991 under the leadership of Boris Litvinsky. Excavations resumed in 1998, and the Miho Mu-

seum has been involved in the research since 2004 [Inagaki 2011]. The Miho Museum owns a part of the Oxus Treasure, which is believed to have been excavated from Takht-i Sangin [Miho Museum 2002].

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