

Were **Muslims** responsible for the Decline of Buddhism in India?

Or

Were the attacks by Arabs and Turks responsible for the Decline of Buddhism in India?

Or/and

How did the Decline of Buddhism take place in Sind? Was Muhammad-bin-Qāsim responsible?

Jihad

711 Muhammad-ibn-Qasim-al-Takafi. Qasim son-in-law and nephew of al-Hajjaj of Badhdad to

al-Sind al-Hind

majus

ahl al-kitāb and *ahl al-dhimmah* Zhimmah

(People of the Book) (Protected People)

Hanafi School

Wahabi/Shalafi

Primary focus:

To preserve the economic infrastructure of the region.

Conquest with the least number of casualties.

Conversions are difficult to be attributed to

1. Pressures of a militant conversionist Islam.
2. Attractions of a posited principle of equality in Islam.
3. Active proselytization.

Though some military leaders may have issued calls for jihad to rally troops, geopolitical and economic factors rather than religion primarily motivated the conflicts.

Guarantee of a certain amount of Muslim non-interference in religious matters in return for certain obligations.

Such a policy substantially reduced resistance to the Arab conquest of Sind. Strictly adhering to the Islamic law that once granted a contract was inviolable and not retractable; the Arabs were able to win the trust of their new subjects.

On the whole, as long as the non-Muslims submitted and paid the *jizyah*, their religious beliefs and practices were not of much interest to the Arabs.

Sindī Buddhist merchants found it increasingly difficult to compete with Muslim merchants on an equal footing in the revived commerce: *śulāh*

1. More taxes.
2. New Arab trade patterns which bypassed the credit and transport facilities of the *vihāras*.
3. The new rulers put a stop to the enjoyment of tax-free lands by *vihāras* belonging to the *kāfirs*. *māwālī*

Reduced capacity of urban lay followers to provide economic assistance adversely affected the vihāras.

1193 Bakhtiyar Khalji RC Mitra beautiful sun-set final blow coup-de-grace

There is sufficient literary and archaeological evidence to show that some important Buddhist vihāras were attacked and destroyed by the *Turuṣkas* (Turkish invaders). The monasteries at Sārnāth, Somapura, Odantapurī, Vikramaśilā, and Nālandā suffered massive onslaughts at the hands of these marauders. The Mahābodhi Temple of Bodhgayā was also attacked and the eyes of the Buddha-image in the sanctum sanctorum made of rubies were taken out with a sword.

Dharmasvāmin: (witnessed some of the attacks) the libraries had perished, could not get a scrap of manuscript to copy.

Indus/Sindhu

Tabakat-i-Nāsiri: the ‘brāhmaṇas with shaven heads’ were slaughtered to a man, so that none survived to explain the contents of a large number of books that were found at the Odantapurī Mahāvihāra.

Fearing the terror, many of the surviving monks dispersed and fled with a few bundles of holy texts concealed under their robes and found security in the more hospitable countries such as Nepal, Tibet, and China. Of the remaining monks, some converted to Islam while others tried to manage with whatever

remained. In many cases, monastic lands were confiscated and granted to Turkish occupants.

Though the attacks, neither organized nor systematic, were accompanied, as a matter of routine, by some amount of slaughter and forced conversions.

In some cases, there is also evidence to show that these central Asian tribesmen being ignorant of edifices in their desert homelands, mistook the Buddhist vihāras for military strongholds.

Another reason for attacks by the plundering hordes was the enormous wealth accumulated by these monasteries.

R.M. Eaton: temples had been the natural sites for the contestation of kingly authority and Turkish invaders, while attempting to plant their own rule in early medieval India, they were basically following and continuing the established patterns already followed by both Muslim and non-Muslim rulers in India. More importantly, according to him, **acts of temple desecration typically occurred on the cutting edge of a moving military frontier.**

How do we explain decline in the south India?

How about the situation prior to 711?

By the time the Turkish invaders descended upon the plains of India, Buddhism had gone past its glory.

R.C. Mitra: Beautiful sun set

Though it cannot be denied that the Arab and Turkish attacks were quite ruthless and devastating in some ways, those attacks cannot be considered *raison le plus décisif* of the decline of Buddhism in India.

Thus, the impact of the Arab and Turkish onslaught on Buddhist institutions may have worked at the most only as a *coup-de-grâce* (final blow) in some parts of India.